

**REVELATION: CALL TO HOLINESS IN VIEW OF PROPHECY**  
**Part III: The Things Hereafter'**  
**"A. Easter's Pretribulation Rapture Hope"**  
**(Revelation 4:1-2a; 1 Corinthians 15:1-12, 51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

How does celebrating Easter Sunday when we recall Christ's resurrection nearly 2000 years ago have for **our** needs *today*?

Consider the following facts:

(1) Marv Rosenthal wrote a book entitled The Pre-Wrath Rapture in which he held we Christians would live on earth during the rise of the anti-christ predicted in Scripture. He believes the cold war tensions, famines, etc. predicted in Revelation will be **our** experience along with the rest of the world. Hence, according to Rosenthal's view, this **Easter** we should be bracing ourselves for worldwide economic, political, health etc. crises predicted in Revelation 6-11.

**Should we have a message on bracing ourselves for the coming world trials predicted in Revelation 6-11 this Easter? If so, WHY recall Christ's resurrection hope of nearly 2,000 years ago?**

(2) A minister in our county was quoted in the Torrington Register-Citizen paper to say "I believe in the resurrection . . . in life *beyond* death because Jesus says it is so." By this statement, he meant he believed in the existence of the soul beyond death, not in a bodily resurrection as we would hold is a miraculous event.

**If by Christ's resurrection is meant only the soul's existence in some spiritual realm beyond death, WHY celebrate Christ's resurrection from the GRAVE on Easter Sunday? How RELEVANT is it for us to decorate our homes and Church with Easter lilies in recalling Christ's BODILY resurrection TODAY?**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . . )

**Need: "Why recall Christ's resurrection THIS Easter Sunday?!"**

- I. **Christ's resurrection in part forms the gospel we Christians believe to receive God's gift of ETERNAL life, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.**
  - A. The gospel we trust to have eternal life contains Christ's resurrection:
    1. Paul claimed he was about to declare the gospel by which Christians gain eternal life in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2.
    2. He then taught Christ died for our sins, was buried and bodily rose from the dead according to Old Testament prophecies, 1 Cor, 15:3f
  - B. Having given this instruction, Paul said this information was the gospel one believes to become a true Christians, 1 Corinthians 15:11.
  - C. Hence, belief in Christ's bodily resurrection is essential to our faith!
- II. **Consequently, Christ's resurrection is the basis for the Christian's own bodily resurrection to HEAVEN, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.**
  - A. Paul had written to the Corinthians about Christ's resurrection as some had doubted a bodily resurrection would occur, 1 Cor. 15:12.
  - B. To counter this error, Paul announced Christ had indeed risen bodily, and that His resurrection is the firstfruits, or the first of coming resurrections involving all believers in Christ, 1 Cor. 15:20-23.
- III. **Well, that resurrection is the VERY NEXT prophetic event God has in mind for US who trust in Christ at NEPAUG CHURCH:**
  - A. Paul described the believer's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 in revealing detail as follows:
    1. Having stated believers will enjoy bodily resurrection after the likeness of Christ's resurrection, Paul described this event:
      - a. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52a, Paul noted the believer's resurrection will occur in a split second at God's "last trump."
      - b. Those who physically died will be raised incorruptible, and those of us who remain alive will have our mortal bodies changed into immortal ones, 1 Corinthians 15:52b-53.
    2. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul gave more details of this event:
      - a. Christ will descend from heaven to the clouds of the air with the souls of deceased Christians at this event, 1 Thess. 4:13-17b.
      - b. The souls of these believers will continue on down to the earth to be joined with their bodies while Jesus awaits in the clouds, and they in these bodies will be raised incorruptible and rejoin Jesus in the atmosphere's clouds, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

- c. Then, we who have remained alive will have our bodies turned into immortal ones, and ascend to meet Christ and the rest in the air, and all of us will return to heaven, 1 Thess. 4:17; Jn. 14:1-3.
  - d. Believers find comfort in thinking on this "rapture," 1 Th. 4:18!
- B. Combining this information with Revelation 4:1-2 **in its context** shows this "rapture" will be **God's next** prophetic event for believers:
1. Over the last few weeks, we have found Revelation 2-3 contains Christ's predictions of events throughout church history!
  2. Well, **after the last** Revelation 3 message to the Laodicean Church, which group we saw pictures **our** Bible Church **era**, Revelation 4:1-2a records an event **recalling** the **rapture** Paul predicted:
    - a. Paul (and John in John 14) revealed the rapture as the believer's ascending to **heaven** similar to the move John was to take up into **heaven** in Revelation 4:1 (1 Thess. 4:17; John 14:1-3).
    - b. That voice was like a **trumpet** (Rev. 4:1b), recalling God's 1 Cor. 15:51 "**last trump**" call for believers to be raptured.
  3. By way of its context, we discover this Revelation 4 event is the **Pretribulation Rapture** of the Church at the close of church history:
    - a. As we saw the Rev. 4:1 call reflects the 1 Cor. 15:51 one, **this** "last trump" is **not** the **seventh** trumpet of **Rev. 11** in the **middle** of the Tribulation (Rosenthal's view); rather, it is God's last **call** to move the **Church geographically** in the Num. 10:5-6 way!
    - b. Well, (a) the "things hereafter" in Rev. 4:1 start to show events to come after the Church era, or after "the things which **are**" have come to pass (as we recall the book's outline in Rev. 1:19); (b) since these Rev. 4:1 "hereafter" events **begin** to occur **before** the **Great Tribulation Period** that occur in Rev. **6-19**, (c) Rev. **4:1-2a then** predicts the **Pretribulation Rapture!**

**Application:** (1) *We must believe Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead that we might have eternal life, 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Jn. 3:16.* (2) *Then, since EASTER is the BASIS of the NEXT prophetic event -- the rapture of the Church, we can view this Sunday as motivation to (a) confess any sins we have done since salvation (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) depend on the Holy Spirit to live godly lives (Gal. 5:16ff) to prepare for meeting our Lord.*

**Lesson:** *Christ's resurrection is the BASIS of God's next prophetic event for US -- our MOVE to heaven! Hence, EASTER should beckon us to FERVENT living for our Lord in preparation for our HOMEGOING! >*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

I once dreaded Easter Sunday!

We once colored Easter eggs with an art kit my mother had given us, so I asked her what Easter was all about, anyway! She **horrified** me by saying it celebrated Jesus' **coming out** of a **grave!**

That sounded dreadful -- why celebrate a dead person coming out of a tomb -- that sounded like Halloween to me! At the time, I did not know Jesus Christ as my Savior, so, like Hebrews 2:14-15 says, the Evil One held the fear of death over my head like a plague!

Years later, at a funeral for a boyhood friend of mine in Africa where my parents served the Lord as missionaries, I felt totally unable to cope with the event! His coffin lay at the front of the Church, and the missionaries present were singing the song, "Day by day, and with each passing moment, strength I find to meet my trials here!" My friend had died in a sudden drowning accident along with his dad who had jumped in the river's whirlpool to try and save him!

I didn't have the strength that song mentioned to handle **this** funeral situation! Death was a **dreadful** event for me!

God led me to see my need was spiritually based, and soon after came to put my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior from sin!

A remarkable result of that change has been my capacity to handle **funerals!** As a **PASTOR**, I have **repeatedly** ministered in front of a casket or sometimes even right in front of an **open** casket! Yet, the **dread** of death has **ceased** to afflict, for I now see the opportunity funerals present to give out the gospel of hope **over death.**

At a believer's graveside in particular, what a **relief** it is to speak of the Blessed Hope of the Pretribulation Rapture by reading and expounding 1 Thessalonians 3:13-18! I do not call it a happy experience, for we all miss the deceased, but the **comfort** God has for us is so very **real** and wonderful at such a time!

IN light of the PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE, Easter Sunday calls us to look FORWARD with JOY as we expect removal from the coming world TRIBULATION and reunion with our Lord and fellow believers!