

John 14:1

Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

The night had been crazy. It started with Jesus washing his disciples' feet, which shocked everyone. Then Satan came into their midst and entered into Judas and he left the dinner party to go carry out his betrayal. Then when everyone was trying to process what happened, Jesus just sprang the horrible news on Peter that he would deny Jesus. Everyone must have been a little bit off kilter emotionally. Nothing was really making any sense to them.

Then Jesus radically changes the topic and says something that is nothing short of epic to our Christian faith: "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." If we had to narrow the Bible down to one key phrase, this verse might possibly be a good candidate.

The word "troubled" is in the passive tense which is another way of saying do not be washed over with grief or become disturbed by the circumstances that come into your life. Think about what set's you off and keeps you from experiencing peace and rest. It could be your childhood experiences, family relationships, stress over finding someone to love and become a couple with, your marriage, your job, your sexuality, financial position, career, school, finding meaning and purpose in your life, trying to find happiness, fear over this and fear over that, health concerns, guilt over sinful behavior, or maybe global warming. The list could go on and on and can be as broad as our imaginations.

But the answer to every item on the list is the same: believe in God and believe in Jesus. This point has been made over and over in the gospel of John. However, I think we can actually narrow this notion of "belief" down to 3 primary truths. 3

truths that if we would choose to really believe, and make our decisions accordingly, our stress level and our outlook on life would be radically different.

1. ***Jesus is our “I Am” (John 8:58)***. He is everything we could ever need all the time. He is our Savior, the lover of our souls, our security, our strength, our provision in weakness, our caretaker, our help, our protection, our friend, our rock of safety, our life, the lifter of our heads, the one who will never abandon anyone who searches for Him, the one who knows us completely, the one who teaches us about God and leads us with unfailing love and shows us the paths we should choose, the one who holds our future in His hands and showers down compassion on us, the one who keeps every promise and heals the brokenhearted—binding up their wounds, the one who lifts the burdens of those bent beneath their loads, the one who shares with us His wisdom when we need it. He lives through us, loves through us, and He is everything we need all the time!
2. ***He is the gatekeeper (John 10:7,9)***. Nothing can come into your life or happen in your life that He has not specifically permitted or allowed. Therefore, nothing is random or arbitrary; rather, all things are intentional.
3. ***He is the good shepherd (John 10:11)***. Whatever He has permitted or allowed to come into your life is for your good and is rooted in His jealous Agape love and His desire to see you conformed into His image such that when people welcome you they are welcoming Him in you.

Believing God and Jesus in just these 3 fundamental truths will turn your life inside out and upside down. The Bible seems complex, and it is as we will see with the rest of this passage, but the gospel message—the good news of Jesus Christ—is

so very simple. He loves us and simply wants us to rest in that love. Think of how much time you have spent stressing, worrying and focusing on a future that seems so uncertain and then think about the wear and tear that it has taken on your body, your emotions, and your soul. I for one am convinced that many of the ailments we suffer physically are a direct result of the unnecessary stress and tensions that we let reside in our bodies.

Now if you're like me you might actually be getting stressed out right now just thinking about trying to believe these 3-truths. I understand that stress because the implications of what I am teaching are, as I said before, truly epic. To believe these 3 truths means you would have to place every part of your being (your mind, soul, emotions, and even your body) in the hands of an intangible God who I know so very well is willing to let bad things happen to us just because He cares more about our being separated from our flesh (our old sinful nature) than He does about our comfort. And, if we were all honest, we like our comfort a little too much.

This faith thing may be simple (choosing to believe the truth), but it is a tall order! This is why so many Christians are more than comfortable having Jesus as their Savior but get very nervous when He starts demanding His rightful place as Lord over all areas of their life. But I must tell you the pathway of faith is the only way to experience the freedom, peace, and rest which Jesus has promised to us.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.” If you are a child of God He has your life in His hands. And whether you believe it or not He is your “I Am,” your Gatekeeper, and your Good Shepherd. Therefore, why fight it? Why worry? Why stress yourself out trying to control things yourself. Instead, choose to rest in these 3 epic truths that will guarantee that you will experience a peace that surpasses all comprehension.

John 14:2-4

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Jesus speaks of a promise that can only be understood in light of “end times” events. Jesus tells us that His Father’s house has many rooms and He is going away to prepare a place for us, and that one day He will come back again and take us and literally bring us along side of Him where we will always be. And for some period of time we will get to dwell or live in these rooms that Jesus has been outfitting. This is extremely comforting and nice to know; but the questions that should be circulating in our minds are *when* will this take place and *why* is it even necessary for Jesus to prepare these rooms?

To start, this comes right after the statement about not letting our hearts be troubled which is purposeful because this passage deals with a time that is coming on the earth that will be unlike any time the world has ever known. It is the time of the end when God pours out His judgment on all those who have rejected Him. Further, even though it may not be readily apparent to you, this passage deals with an event we generically call the “rapture” of the church—a topic that has stirred up quite a bit of publicity and controversy.

I have thought long and hard about how much detail we should go into in terms of understanding this passage and I really think the Lord wants us to understand this; especially in light of all the misinformation that has been spread about these “end times” events. Besides, Jesus addressed this so we would not be confused and taken captive by false teaching. Further, the answers are discoverable when we let

scripture speak for itself and don't try and filter things through our own "blessing" oriented agenda of western Christianity. But like many truths, the Holy Spirit spread it out across multiple parts of the Bible so we have to explore, we have to seek and hunt; however, if we do, He assures us that we will discover the truth.

So let's consider what this passage tells us about "when" we will go to these rooms. One thing we know for sure is that believers who have died do not go to these rooms. We can be sure of that because Jesus has not yet come again to receive us and we are not with now with Him. And we know that this phrase "receive us" is not some strange metaphor for "death" because Paul talks about that day when Jesus will come for us and he describes it as follows:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. [Note: those who are asleep is a metaphor for those who have died] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the *trumpet* of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the *clouds* to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

One day Jesus will come back in the *clouds* and He will take all believers away from this earth. There will be the *shout* of an archangel, and a *trumpet* will blast,

then all the Christians who have died will first be resurrected and then those who are still alive will all get caught up, taken up, or raptured, and we will meet the Lord in the clouds. And the best part is that we will then always be with Him. Moreover, if you remember in one of the passages we studied last week we were told that on this special day we will receive our new transformed bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:48-53

We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last *trumpet* is blown (the trumpet referenced above in Thessalonians). For when the *trumpet* sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Taking these scriptures together, it makes sense that these dwelling places won't be inhabited until that special day for they won't really be necessary until we receive our new bodies and the dead once again have physical substance or form. Now, just to clarify, today when a believer dies they immediately go into the presence of the Lord (*Philippians 1:21-23*), but apparently it must be in spirit and not in a physical body. But on this special day, the Lord will 1) raise the bodies of the dead (don't ask me how; He is God and He can gather our dust or the dna of our rotted out bodies from wherever it has wandered over time, 2) reunite our body with our spirit and 3) transform our bodies so that everyone will be with the Lord in a new supernatural physical form ready to occupy these rooms in our Father's house. The crazy thing is that all of this will happen in a blink of an eye.

What else are we able to surmise about the “when”? Well, we know that this “coming again” to receive us is not referring to Jesus’ Second Coming where He physically comes to the earth and sets up His rule over all the nations for a period of 1,000 years. The reason I say this is that the scriptures make it clear that when Jesus sets up His kingdom on earth that we will be with Him and will rule over the nations with Him for this entire 1,000 year period of time; and, if we are here ruling, we won’t be in our rooms up in heaven.

Revelation 5:9-10

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Revelation 20:4-6

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of *those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus* and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the *first resurrection*. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the *first resurrection*; over these the second death has no power, *but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*

2 Timothy 2:11-12

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

Notice in **Revelation 20** that believers are martyred because of their testimony of Jesus and their refusal to worship the Antichrist or take his mark on their forehead or their hands. But they are resurrected in what is specifically called the *first resurrection* where they will rule and reign with Christ for 1,000 years. The key points to remember are that these are believers and they participate with us in the *first resurrection*; hence, there is not a .5 resurrection that occurs before where the Gentile Christians are first raptured. This is the *first resurrection* and there is no other mass resurrection recorded in scripture until the rest of the dead are raised, which occurs immediately before the Great White Throne Judgment.

We also can surmise that this taking up or rapture is not at the end of the 1,000 year reign because according to **Revelation 20:7-10**, that is the time when Satan gathers up the nations of the earth and all his demonic hordes and attacks God's beloved people. So we are still with Jesus here on earth and not in our rooms. Then fire comes down from heaven on the attacking armies and consumes them. Immediately after that the Devil is thrown in to the lake of fire where he will be tormented day and night forever.

Then in the very next scene there is the Great White Throne Judgment where all who have ever lived throughout all time are resurrected (the 2nd resurrection) and judged, and those whose names are not written in the book of life will join the Devil in the lake of fire. Then we find out that both heaven and earth are destroyed for God creates a new heaven and a new earth. Thus, if Jesus prepared rooms for

us in His Father's house, they are destroyed before we get to live in them (*Revelation 21:1-2*).

So narrowing the timing of this event down even further, the text also does not let us conclude that this event happens prior to the 7-year tribulation. I know this is contrary to much of the recent folk lore that has emerged from western Christianity with the overwhelming focus on a pre-tribulation rapture. But remember, *I Thessalonians 4:13-18* says that all the dead "in Christ" will rise and meet Him in the air and then those who are still alive will also be taken away and join them—all true believers taken from the earth to meet Jesus in the clouds.

Now the reason I say that this cannot occur before the 7-year tribulation period is that according to the book of Revelation there are still true believers on earth during at least the first 3.5 years of the tribulation doing the work of God. So that's a significant problem to the pre-tribulation rapture theory. Further, the Bible does not classify these "tribulation saints" as some new strange group that is dealt with differently than you or I; in fact, it goes out of its way to make sure we understand that these are fellow Christians—fellow servants and brethren—who are persecuted and killed for their testimony of Christ.

Revelation 6:9-11

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and *because of the testimony* which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until

the number of their *fellow servants* and their *brethren* who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

Now, it is not clear if the souls of those who have been slain because of the word of God are those who die in the tribulation or those who have been martyred since the time of Christ. But either way, it is pretty clear that there were still other believers—fellow servants and their brethren—who were still yet to be martyred as the tribulation unfolds.

Then in the very next scene in *Chapter 7* we see another pivotal event as God seals, or sets apart, 144,000 Jews who will eventually become believers.

Revelation 7:3-4

Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Then John says that He sees this huge crowd of people, who had come out of the great tribulation, gathered before the throne of God worshipping the Lord.

Revelation 7:9-15

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were

in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." For this reason, they are before the throne of God.

Then we get further detail on their deaths in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:4

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of *those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus* and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

So let's review. John sees 144,000 Jews who have been set apart for the Lord. Then He sees that there has been an unbelievable Gentile revival on the earth as he sees a crowd of people that is too large to count from every tribe, tongue and nation. They have washed themselves in the blood of the lamb just like you and I did when we accepted Jesus as our Savior. They were before the throne of God; lost their lives for testifying of their faith in Jesus Christ. We are also told in ***Revelation 11:7, 12:11, 17, 13:7, 14:12*** that the Antichrist is given the authority to wage war against true believers; but the real ironic thing is that we are told in

12:10-11 that even though he killed these believers they were the ones who were victorious because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony. The point is these are Christians just like you and me—fellow servants—brethren.

Then in **Chapter 11** we see that God has sent 2 witnesses who are preaching the gospel to the world and who are probably responsible for this great revival. They are described metaphorically as the 2 lampstands and the 2 olive trees that stand before the Lord of all the earth. Based on **Revelation 1:20**, it is clear that the lampstand is a reference to the Gentile church and according to **Jeremiah 11:16**, **Zechariah 4:2-3, 10-14** the olive tree is symbol for the Jews. So I believe what we have here is a picture of the Jewish believers (those represented by the number of 144,000) and the Gentile Church finally operating as one (fulfilling Jesus prayer in **John 17:20-21**) and proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ to the world with unbelievable power. I believe this is the reason why in **Chapter 10:7** (right before this vision of the witnesses) a mighty angel said:

Revelation 10:5-7

When the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound [which is a reference to the 7th and last trumpet which is blown—which parallels the trumpet reference in both Corinthians and Thessalonians], then the *mystery* of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.

So what was the mystery of God that was preached to His servants the prophets? What has been finished before these witnesses do their thing? Paul explains:

Ephesians 3:1-6

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles ... that by revelation there was made known to me the *mystery*, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the *mystery* of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

So the mystery is that the Jews and the Gentiles are united as *one* in Jesus Christ. This is critical. Remember, as we studied in ***John 12***, the historical unbelief on the part of the Jews resulted in their becoming blind and hard hearted such that they could not receive Jesus. And we know that this condition is ongoing and will continue until the time which God has appointed for them to be “grafted” back into the vine, so to speak. Biblically, we see this happening with those represented by the 144,000 that were sealed to become true believers. Paul makes reference to this in ***Romans 9-11*** and specifically in ***11:25-27***.

Romans 11:25-27

I want you to understand this *mystery*, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts,

but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say, “The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness. And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins.”

So to recap these events: 144,000 Jews are sealed. Then there is a great revival amongst the Gentile nations—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will come to the Lord. Thus, the full number of Gentiles will be saved. Then we will see that God will save a remnant of Jews, those whom He has sealed, and in so doing the mystery of God will be fulfilled. Together, as one, the Gentiles and the Jews will preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Remember, **Matthew 24:14** says that the end won’t come until the good news about the kingdom of God is preached throughout the whole world so that all the nations will hear it. **Revelation 11:3** says that these 2 witnesses will be given authority for 1,260 days or 3.5 years—the first half of the 7-year tribulation period, and when their testimony is complete, the Antichrist will declare war against these witnesses and he will conquer them and kill them.

Further, we can be confident that these Jews are fellow Christians because **Revelation 14:3-5** tells us that the 144,000 have been redeemed from the earth, are spiritually undefiled, and they follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Then in **14:12-13** an angel tells the believers on the earth to continue obeying and trusting Jesus and remain faithful to the end and be comforted by the fact that all those who follow the Antichrist will suffer the eternal wrath of God. Then an angel says: “blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on.” So not only do they live for the Lord they die in the Lord. There is no question they are fellow servants and brethren—part of the church—the bride of Christ.

So we have narrowed the fulfillment of the passage regarding the “rooms.” The scriptures do not *naturally* allow for this to be during Jesus Second Coming, after the 1,000 year reign, or before the tribulation. So that leaves one possible time and I would suggest that it is after the first 1,260 days (or 3.5 years) in which the 2 witness are on the earth doing their work, after the 2 witnesses are killed, but before the Great Wrath of God which is poured out on the world.

So what is this Great Wrath? Many people think that this refers to the entire 7-year tribulation period. But that would make no sense given the fact that there are so many Christians around during the first half of the tribulation period and *1 Thessalonians 1:10* clearly says that Jesus will rescue us from the wrath to come and *1 Thessalonians 5:10* says that we have not been destined for wrath. Besides, the Bible is very specific about the time of God’s Great Wrath.

Matthew 24 speaks of a time when there will be great tribulation on the earth, but when we see the Abomination of Desolation, as spoken about in the book of Daniel (which is a reference to the Antichrist setting up an idol in the Holy Place) then there will be a “great tribulation” such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world and it will never be so great again. *Daniel 12:11* places this event exactly half way through the 7-year tribulation period (3.5 years or 1,260 days).

This is in alignment with *Revelation 11:15-18*, which says at the time of the 7th and final trumpet blast (remember the last trumpet will sound when Jesus comes to receive us unto Himself and take us to these rooms) there will be loud shouting in heaven (the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel) then 3 things will occur: 1) the wrath of God will come, 2) believers will be judged and receive their rewards, and 3) God will destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth. In other words, the end has arrived.

But right before this wrath is poured out on the earth, John sees another vision (*Revelation 14:14-20*). He saw Jesus sitting on a white cloud (remember, He will come in a cloud), and He had a sharp sickle in His hand and an angel called out from heaven and told him to harvest the earth for the crop is ripe. So Jesus swung His sickle and harvested the whole earth. This is a picture of Jesus gathering together all who belong to Him from the 4 corners of the earth—this great gathering which we call the rapture.

Then immediately after that an angel comes from heaven and he also has a sharp sickle and he is told to gather the clusters of grapes from the vines of the earth, for they are fully ripe for God's judgment. He swung his sickle and loaded the grapes into the great winepress of God's wrath. In this we see a picture of how once God's people are removed from the earth, then judgment begins and it is bad. *Chapter 15* then details these events. John sees 7 angels holding 7 last plagues that would bring God's wrath to completion. John also sees in heaven all the people who had been victorious over the Antichrist and did not take his mark or the number of his name. They were worshiping the Lord, safe and protected from the wrath to come.

Then he looked and the 7 angels came forth and each one had a bowl filled with the terrible wrath of God and no one could enter the Temple of God until the angles had finished pouring out the 7 final plagues. They began to pour out judgment on the world and when the 7th angel poured his bowl, we are told that it is finished (*Revelation 15-16*).

So during this time that the angels are pouring out the wrath of God (which is sometime during the last 3.5 years of the tribulation), I believe that we will be hidden safely in our rooms protected from all harm. *Revelation 19:6-9* tells us that that the bride (which is a metaphor for the church) has prepared herself (through the judgment of believers) and is allowed to wear the finest white linen because

she is entirely clean (all the deeds of the flesh have been removed). After this the marriage supper of the Lamb occurs, which is a metaphor of our becoming forever and all time united with Christ.

I know this was a big journey, but there is so much misinformation and distortion of the scriptures when it comes to this subject that I thought we should take the time and dig in. I am not saying that I have it 100% right but I have not had to stretch the text to reach my conclusions, they *naturally* flow from it and they do not contradict.

But in closing and to tie off a couple of loose ends, I want you to notice something else. In the story of the two witnesses, guess what happens after they are killed? We are told in ***Revelation 11:11*** that they lie dead in the streets for 3.5 days and then “the Spirit of life from God entered them and they stood up! And terror struck all who were staring at them. Then a *loud voice* shouted from heaven, “Come up here!” And they rose to heaven in a “*cloud*” as their enemies watched. They are resurrected and raptured just like what is expressed in ***1 Thessalonians 4***.

And finally, to underscore the consistency of the Bible, I want us to quickly look at what I believe is a parallel passage in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 26:19-22; 7:1

Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. [the first resurrection] Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you [the rapture]; hide for a little while until indignation [which is another word for wrath] runs its course. For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the

earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed and will no longer cover her slain [the Great Wrath of God].

Then just to make sure we know this prophecy is about the time of the end, Isaiah goes on to say that in that day, Satan Himself will also be judged:

In that day the Lord will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.

I love the way God paints a consistent picture all throughout the Bible. Now, I am sorry this was so long, but I thought it was necessary for us to not only be aware of what the Lord's plan is (because He tells us not to be misinformed) but also to know that when you come to a difficult and confusing passage, if you do the work, if you search out the scriptures, they will *naturally* speak to you the truth. It will be like putting together a beautiful jigsaw puzzle—piece by piece.

So to conclude, God wants us to learn to rest entirely in Him because if we believe in God and believe in Jesus we will be able to endure absolutely anything. Further, we know that no matter what we might go through, we will forever be victorious for we are destined to rule and reign with Him. And to boot, we will be safe and sound tucked away in our rooms protected from the Great Wrath of God. This is glorious and just one of the myriad of reasons why God is worthy of our praise.

Let's Pray