

Why John 14:1-6 Proves Believers Go to HEAVEN after the Rapture

[4 Important Points]

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The Blessed Hope in John 14:1-6

Main Idea: Before he was crucified, Jesus comforted his disciples in John 14:1-6 with the idea that he will "come again," "receive" believers to himself, and usher us into the Father's presence in heaven. This text is about the Second Coming, and it contains arguably the clearest explanation in the entire New Testament concerning where believers actually go *immediately* after the Rapture.

Though the reality that we will one day also reign with Jesus *on the earth*, in the Messianic Age, is equally important, Jesus still made sure to emphasize our fellowship with the Father in heaven as a key aspect of his eschatology. As a result, this aspect of Jesus' eschatology should be a central component of our Gospel message today, especially as we proclaim the "blessed hope" of the Messiah's return to the world.

Indeed, Jesus is coming back to this earth to rule and reign. Yet still, the first event connected to his Second Coming (*parousia*) will occur when he brings believers into the presence of our Creator God in the heavenly realm. Only after this will Jesus descend completely to the earth with his saints to rule and reign from Jerusalem (Rev. 19).

Primary Points

To support this main idea, this article will explore the following primary points in John 14:1-6:

1. Jesus used emphatic Second Coming/Rapture language in John 14.
2. Jesus spoke of a literal heavenly destination in John 14.
3. Jesus said Peter would one day "follow" him to where he was going (Jn. 13:36).
4. Jesus said he is "the Way" into the Father's presence in heaven.

The Two Prevailing Rapture Models

Before we dive deep into John 14, I think it will be helpful to summarize how proponents of the two prevailing Rapture models have approached this text. **(Feel free to skip down to point #1 if you don't want all this background info on the two most popular Rapture theories, or if**

you simply want to jump into the textual analysis of John 14. I include this information only because I know some people will benefit from a brief overview.)

There are essentially two primary models that Christians and Messianic Jews today use to explain both the timing of the Rapture, as well as where believers go after the Rapture takes place.

On the one hand, we have **Pre-Tribulation theology**. Pre-Trib argues that believers are raptured into heaven before the Tribulation (i.e. Daniel's 70th week), and then taken to heaven for roughly 7 years, after which point we will return to the earth to rule and reign with Jesus. **Pre-Trib has traditionally agreed with the idea that John 14:1-6 is about the Rapture.**

Post-Tribulation theology on the other hand argues that believers go through the entire 7-year Tribulation period, after which Jesus will descend from heaven, meet raptured believers in the clouds, and then return immediately with them *to the earth*. I call this the immediate U-turn Rapture theory. From a Post-Trib perspective, there is no evidence that believers are taken up *into heaven* by Jesus after the Rapture, as they view the Second Coming, the Rapture, and the establishment of Jesus' Millennial Kingdom as one cohesive, overlapping, and condensed set of events. **Post-Trib theology has traditionally rejected the idea that John 14:1-6 is about the Rapture.**

As this article will demonstrate, Pre-Trib has mostly gotten John 14 right. However, there are still a number of other problems with Pre-Trib theology, particularly when it comes to the timing of the Rapture. In reality, there are numerous Biblical texts that prove that believers (the *ekklesia*; i.e. the Church) will in fact go through the Tribulation. Thus, just because John 14 is definitely about the Rapture (as we will discover later), this does not mean the entire Pre-Trib view on the timing of the Rapture is accurate.

Since this is not an article aimed at comprehensively debunking Pre-Trib, I will not go into any further details here. (Please see Voice of Messiah's 'Essential Reading List' for other resources on the timing of the Rapture).

After recognizing the numerous texts that indicate that believers will in fact face the Antichrist and go through the Tribulation, many Post-Trib advocates then settle on the idea that since Pre-Trib is wrong on the timing of the Rapture, the entire Pre-Trib system of eschatology

must therefore be wrong as well, including the alleged Pre-Trib idea that believers do spend some time in heaven with Jesus after the Rapture. This has in turn led to the Post-Trib camp completely rejecting the allegedly Pre-Trib view that John 14 is about the Rapture.

One of my goals in this article is to help advocates of the traditional Post-Trib Rapture see that things are not quite as simple as they have been led to believe. In point of fact, both Jesus and his Apostles did teach that believers will be taken into the presence of the Father in heaven after the Rapture, contrary to the Post-Trib immediate U-turn theory.

Essentially, both of the prevailing Rapture models (Pre-Trib and Post-Trib) are partially right and partially wrong. Pre-Trib is wrong about the timing of the Rapture, but right about the fact that believers will be ushered into the Father's heavenly presence before reigning with Jesus on the earth. Post-Trib is right that believers need to prepare to endure the Tribulation, but wrong about where believers go immediately after the Rapture takes place. If we look at John 14 objectively, we will see that Jesus himself taught that he will take believers into heaven after the Rapture.

Ironically enough, I have often found in my conversations with Post-Trib advocates that they can be just as dogmatic, inflexible, and unwilling to look at all of the evidence concerning the destination of believers after the Rapture as Pre-Trib advocates can be about the timing of such events. Just last week I had a lengthy discussion with a sister on Twitter who describes herself as a "Berean" (i.e. someone who diligently searches the Word of God for truth), yet, she emphatically refused to read any books I recommended (one of which is written by a New Testament PhD) that exegetically challenge her idea that believers meet Jesus in the sky and then do an immediate U-turn back to the earth. I believe her exact words were, "I don't need to look into that because I know it's wrong, and you can keep your PhD friend..." or something to that effect.

Such a true Berean!

Honestly, if I couldn't joke about it, I would probably be too discouraged, because such close-minded inflexibility epitomizes the exact opposite of what it means to be a Berean. I also learned a very valuable lesson that theological "discussions" on Twitter will hardly ever lead to a

person changing their view, but they can be great for checking the theological pulse of the broader Christian world, thus proving that social media is a good thing, right?

Perhaps I digress, but in all seriousness, if you are someone reading this article who currently holds to traditional Post-Tribulation theology, my goal is not to mock or belittle you in any way. Personally, I used to believe in the Post-Trib Rapture theory myself, as I completely neglected the possibility that believers could go to heaven after the Rapture, primarily because I thought this idea reeked too much of Pre-Trib theology.

My primary intention in writing this article is simply to help believers understand the glorious hope inherent in the idea that Jesus will in fact take us into heaven after the Rapture. In so doing of course, I will have to lovingly and critically push back on what I see as a number of Post-Trib misconceptions and interpretive errors. Be that as it may, I hope it is made clear from the outset that I am trying to do this in a constructive manner, and in a way that can bring us all into a deeper understanding of eschatology, the return of Jesus, and the Rapture. This is all about Jesus and the glorious hope we have in him!

And on that note, perhaps it would also be helpful here at the beginning to say a few words about why all of this even matters in the first place? After all, does anyone really care where believers go after the Rapture? Isn't the important thing just that we will be with Jesus someday?

I have thought a lot about this particular issue, and I have come to the conclusion that the issue of where believers go after the Rapture is definitely a central issue related to the "blessed hope" of the Messiah's return. This is about what it is that the Lord wants us to be looking forward to as His people at a personal level, and proclaiming to others at a corporate level, even as we face increasingly difficult and dark days on the horizon.

If I am one day going to be supernaturally raptured by Jesus and taken into the glorious presence of my Holy Father in heaven, that is extravagantly good news, and not only something I need to know about, but also a key part of the Gospel message that I should be sharing as part of my ministry. Personally, it both saddens and frustrates me that Post-Trib advocates are depriving the Lord's people of a key aspect of the "blessed hope" and the Messiah's return; namely, that Jesus has great things planned for us in heaven after the Rapture.

It is indeed great news that we will one day reign with Jesus on the earth. But there is also something beautiful and profound about the idea that we will one day fellowship with Jesus and the Father in heaven before the Messianic Age begins. The Lord wants us to have it all, and if this is part of my inheritance, I want to press into it and live in light of this reality right now.

In the rest of this article we will now look at John 14:1-6, and more particularly, four key elements in this text that prove: 1) that believers will in fact be ushered into the Father's presence in heaven after the Rapture, and 2) that Jesus wants His people to be comforted by this beautiful prophetic reality as we await his return.

As a brief side note, Voice of Messiah advocates and teaches the Pre-Wrath Rapture theory, which upholds that believers will go through the Tribulation (contrary to Pre-Trib teaching), but then, after the Tribulation is "cut short," we will also spend a period of time in heaven before returning with Jesus to the earth to rule and reign (contrary to Post-Trib teaching). In my estimation, the Pre-Wrath Rapture theory is the only Rapture model that is able to harmonize all of the eschatological texts into one coherent system, especially those that show believers both going through the Tribulation, and yet just as importantly, also going into heaven after the Rapture.

Throughout this article, I will explain how John 14 confirms a Pre-Wrath Rapture framework, and why this text should be a central component of our proclamation of the "blessed hope" and the return of Jesus. And again, please refer to Voice of Messiah's 'Essential Reading List' for more resources on the Pre-Wrath Rapture.

The Text of John 14:1-6

Now let's dive into John 14:1-6. In this text, we find Jesus delivering the following message to his disciples. Notably, Jesus delivered this message right after he told the disciples that he was about to be betrayed, and then go to a place where they could not follow. To comfort his disciples, Jesus said this:

Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

As mentioned above, Pre-Trib teachers have no problem accepting that this text is about the Rapture of believers into heaven. Though I find the Pre-Trib position regarding the timing of the Rapture highly problematic, I do also find it ironic and refreshing that it has actually been the often loathed and ridiculed Pre-Trib camp that has nevertheless preserved an accurate interpretation of John 14:1-6 for all of us.

It is primarily within the traditional Post-Trib U-turn camp that we find a high degree of interpretive gymnastics routines being performed to try to dilute the meaning of this text, mainly because Post-Tribbers are already theologically committed to the idea that believers could not possibly go to heaven after the Rapture. For a Post-Triber, such an idea is just way too Pre-Trib to be taken seriously.

Below are the top four elements in John 14:1-6 that confirm that believers will go to heaven with Jesus after the Rapture. As we cover these points, I will also engage with and critique the most common Post-Trib interpretation of John 14 (and some other related texts).

#1: Jesus used emphatic Second Coming/Rapture language in John 14:1-3.

(This point is the longest and most technical, but it is vital to understand in order to interpret John 14)

The first reason we know that John 14:1-6 is an eschatological text about the Rapture and the Second Coming, is because Jesus invokes undeniable eschatological language and themes in this passage. In verse 3, Jesus says he is speaking about the time when he will "come again," and "receive" believers to himself. Each of these words signify that the timeframe Jesus has on his mind here is the end of the age. After all, when will Jesus "come again"? Obviously when he returns in glory. These are prophetic phrases connected to His Second Coming, and many scholars have pointed this out.

For example, in his classic commentary on John, Leon Morris writes:

The reference to the Second Advent should not be missed. It is true that John does not refer to this as often as do most other New Testament writers, but it is not true that it is missing from his pages. This is not to deny that John uses the idea of “coming” in more senses than one, nor that in a very real sense Jesus comes to his followers in the here-and-now. But the thought is not confined to this life. Now and then John does look forward to the Parousia.¹

The basic idea of the text is that at the time of his Second Coming, Jesus will take believers into a heavenly dwelling place that he has prepared for us, where we will experience literal and physical fellowship with the Father. It’s really that simple.

The Importance of *Paralambano* (to receive/take)

Besides the phrase “come again” in John 14:3, Jesus also uses another Rapture term in this same verse, which again confirms that he is in fact speaking about the Rapture. This highly important word is translated “receive” in English, and in the original Greek the word is “*paralambano*.” Jesus says, “I will come again and receive you (*paralambano*) to myself.”

It is easy to miss the significance of this word. Yet, doing so is precisely what leads most Post-Trib advocates to the mistaken belief that John 14 has nothing to do with the Rapture of believers into heaven, and more generally speaking, into also leads them to the false belief that believers never go into heaven after the Rapture.

In order to understand what *paralambano* means, we need to look at the basic definition of this word throughout the New Testament, as well as how it is used in a couple of other texts in the Synoptic Gospels, specifically as a technical term for the Rapture.

Paralambano is used about 50 times in the New Testament, often to describe a time when Jesus took his disciples to be with him. For example, in Matthew 17:1 we read: “Six days later Jesus took (*paralambano*) with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves.” *Paralambano* is used in a similar way, in the sense of taking a person (or spirit) along with oneself, in Matthew 1:20, 1:24, 2:13-14, 2:20-21, 4:5, 4:8, 12:45, 18:16, 20:17, 24:40-41, 26:37, 27:27, Mark 14:33, Luke 9:28 & 18:31, Acts 15:39, 16:33, 21:24-26, 21:32. As we see in Matthew 17:1, and in these other verses, *paralambano* is most often translated as “took” or “taken,” in the New Testament, and implies literally taking a person to a

¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel of John*, 568

particular place. **It is also critical to note that in the vast majority of cases *paralambano* has a positive connotation, implying the idea of “receiving” something to oneself in a positive sense.**

Strong’s Concordance gives the following definition of *paralambano*: “to receive near, that is, associate with oneself. [...]”; also “to take (unto, with).”

We also find the word *paralambano* used in the New Testament as a reference to receiving Jesus (John 1:11; Col. 2:6), receiving the kingdom of God (Heb. 12:28), and receiving teaching from the Lord (1 Cor. 11:23, 15:1-3; Gal. 1:9-12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:3). In a rarer number of cases, *paralambano* can refer to handing over a prisoner at the time of an arrest (Matt. 27:27; Jn. 19:16; Acts 23:18). However, this rare usage only occurs in three isolated cases in the New Testament and is not pertinent to John 14, because no one is getting arrested in this passage.

Simply put, *paralambano* almost always means to physically take a friend or associate with oneself, or to willingly receive something of positive value. In John 14, *paralambano* undoubtedly carries its normal connotation of receiving or taking a friend or associate to a particular place. **Jesus is speaking here of receiving (*paralambano*) believers to himself, and literally taking them to the Father’s house in heaven, when he “comes again.”**

Just as he took (*paralambano*) believers with him literally and physically to various places when he was on the earth, he will do so again when he returns. This can only be a reference to the literal Rapture, and any other proposition to the contrary must rely on a significant degree of either ignorance or denial concerning the definition of the word *paralambano*. The reason I say this is because the only time we are ever told in Scripture that Jesus will literally “come again” and take/receive believers to be with him physically, is when the Rapture occurs.

***Paralambano* in Matthew 24 and Luke 17**

The idea that the Greek word *paralambano* in John 14:3 (receive) refers to the Rapture is also confirmed in two other central Rapture passages in the New Testament. Namely, Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, where Jesus spoke of both His Second Coming (*parousia*) and the Rapture. It is certainly no coincidence that in both of these passages Jesus uses this exact word, *paralambano*, the same word he used in John 14:3, as a technical term for the Rapture.

Matthew 24:40-41 reads:

Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken (*paralambano*) and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken (*paralambano*) and one will be left (Matt. 24:40-41; cf. Lk. 17:34-36).

Notice how Jesus uses the same word *paralambano* to describe those who will be “received” or “taken” when He returns, which is the precise word he used in John 14:3 to describe those who will be “received” to himself when he comes again. All of these passages are about the same thing, and as a matter of fact, it would be more helpful and accurate if the NASB translated *paralambano* with the English word “received” in Matthew 24 and Luke 17, in order to clarify for the English reader that the “taken” in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 are the same raptured saints from John 14:3, who will be received into the Father’s presence in heaven. This way, the English reader could more easily see that we are dealing with the same Rapture event in John 14 and the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 24:40-41; Lk. 17:34-36).

Who are the Taken (<i>Paralambano</i>)?
Jesus says, I will “come again and receive (<i>paralambano</i>) you to myself” (Jn. 14:3).
Two men will be in the field, one will be taken/received (<i>paralambano</i>), and one will be left (Matt. 24:40).
John 14:3 confirms that those taken/received (<i>paralambano</i>) in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 are the same raptured believers that Jesus also spoke of in John 14.

Again, all of this linguistic data and word study proves that John 14:1-3 uses definite Second Coming/Rapture language.

The Post-Trib Confusion Over Those “Taken”

Because most Post-Trib advocates do not believe that believers will be “taken” or “received” into the Father’s presence in heaven after the Rapture, they most often negate the idea that the “taken/received” (*paralambano*) individuals in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 are believers. As a result, we find the idea being repeated *ad nauseum* in Post-Trib circles that the “taken” (*paralambano*) in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 must be those who are in their words “taken in judgment,” whereas those who are “left” at the time of the Second Coming are the righteous.

From a Post-Trib perspective, it is a good thing to be to be “left” (*aphiemi*) on the earth at the time of the Second Coming and a bad thing to be “taken” (*paralambano*).

To support this view, Post-Trib devotees will almost always point out how Matthew 24:39 says that in the days of Noah “the flood came and **took**” away sinners. Their argument is that if the flood came and “**took away**” sinners in Matthew 24:39, it must be the same sinners who are “**taken**” in Matthew 24:40-41 (& Luke 17).

On the surface, this argument seems convincing. For a number of years, I personally entertained this idea myself, that the “taken” in Matthew 24:40-41 are those “taken in judgment.” However, upon closer examination, I realized that there are numerous indications in the text that those whom the flood “took” in verse 39 are not the same people who are “taken” one verse later (vv. 40-41).

In the end, though Post-Trib devotees believes this apparent relationship between the “took” and the “taken” in verses 39-41 proves them right, this view is nothing more than a classic example of “confirmation bias” (i.e. reading evidence only in a way that confirms our presuppositions). It is also a classic example of “eisegesis” (i.e. reading things into the Biblical text, rather than drawing meaning out of the text: exegesis).

First and foremost, we need to recognize that there are two different Greek words used for “took” and “taken” in Matthew 24:39-41. This point cannot be stressed enough, and a failure to engage with the Greek text on this issue is what leads so many within the Post-Trib camp to misinterpret this portion of the prophecy.

Those who were “took away” by the flood are described using the Greek word *airo*, which means to carry away or get rid of in this context. In contrast, and as already mentioned, the Greek word used in Matthew 24:40-41 that is translated as “taken” in the NASB is *paralambano*, which most often means taking or receiving one’s friends to oneself in a positive sense (as in John 14:3). This is really one of those cases where the English translations utterly fail to help people understand the meaning of the text, and worse, end up leading them down the wrong path in their interpretation.

Based on the Greek vocabulary used in Matthew 24, no case whatsoever can be made that those who were judged at the time of the flood (*airo*) are representative of those who are

taken (*paralambano*) in the next two verses. These two groups of people are intentionally distinguished from one another using the negative connotation word *airo*, and the positive connotation word *paralambano*, and no first century Greek speaker would have missed this obvious point, let alone the connection to John 14:3, where it is most certainly believers who are received/taken (*paralambano*) at the time of the Second Coming.

The primary reason many Post-Trib advocates are confused on this point is because our English Bible translators (NASB, KJV, NIV) have done us all a serious disservice by using the same English root word (to take) to refer to both groups of people (i.e. those in Matt. 24:39 vs. those in Matt 24:40-41). This is a serious error, because it causes the unsuspecting English reader who is not familiar with the Greek to conflate both groups of people, as though they belong in the same category, when nothing in the Greek text indicates that they do. Again, *paralambano* could just as appropriately be translated as “received” not “taken” in Matthew 24 and Luke 17, as it is in John 14, and this rendering would help the English reader see what is going on in these texts.

As we have seen, *paralambano* (taken) has a positive connotation within the context of the Second Coming prophecy in John 14:3, implying that it also has a positive connotation in Matthew 24 and Luke 17. We need to interpret *paralambano* consistently in all of these Second Coming prophecies, and Post-Trib fails to do this.

I recently had a discussion with someone who is Post-Trib and they kept repeating over and over that because their ENGLISH Bible uses “took” and “taken” in verses 39-41 (which are two forms of the same word *in English*), those whom the flood “took away” (*airo*) in judgment in verse 39 must be the same people who are “taken” (*paralambano*) in verses 40-41. Thus, for them, the “taken” in verses 40-41 have to be those who are judged. They literally sent me multiple screen shots of their English Bible with these words underlined to “prove” that it is the nonbelievers who are “taken” in verses 40-41. I explained that their view utterly fails to take into account the inspired Greek words used in all of these verses (remember, our English translations are not inspired), but they remained undeterred.

Dogma dies hard, and tragically, most Post-Trib advocates simply cannot fathom that believers will actually be “taken” by Jesus into heaven after the Rapture.

Even a brief study of the Greek text using a free Bible software tool such as E-Sword could have revealed to my Post-Trib friend that she was misrepresenting the words of Jesus, and failing to take into account the important linguistic nuances in the Greek.

Here is a better translation of Matthew 24:38-41 that takes into account the important nuances in the original Greek:

For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away (*airo*) [or “destroyed them” (*apollumi*); Lk. 17:27], so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken (*paralambano*) [or “received” *paralambano*; cf. Jn 14:3] and one will be left [...].”

As we can easily see, those destroyed by the flood are described using negative Greek terminology compared to those who will be “taken” and “received,” which is depicted using the most often positive Greek term *paralambano*. There is no Biblical basis to conflate these two groups of people (i.e. those who were destroyed in v. 39 vis-a-vis those who are taken in vv. 40-41).

Apollumi (Destroyed) vs. Paralambano (Received)

Another important linguistic detail that is not appreciated in the English text, is the juxtaposition in Luke 17 (which is Luke’s version of Matthew 24) between those who were destroyed (*apollumi*) by the flood, and those who will be received/taken (*paralambano*) by Jesus. Both of these terms, “destroyed” (*apollumi*) and “taken” (*paralambano*), are compound Greek terms, meaning they are each two words combined into one (similar to English words like, “preconceived,” where the English word has a prefix, “pre,” added to the word “conceived.”)

In the Greek, both of these words start with a prepositional prefix, *apo*, in the case of *apollumi* (destroyed), and *para* (taken/received) in the case of *paralambano*. *Apo* means “away from” and denotes separation, whereas *para* denotes something that is near, alongside, or brought near.

Preposition <i>Apo</i> (used in <i>Apollumi</i>)	Preposition <i>Para</i> (used in <i>Paralambano</i>)
Away from; In compound words, “as a prefix, it usually denotes separation, departure, cessation, completion...” (Strong’s Definition)	Near, beside, alongside of, at or in the vicinity of, above, among, before, in the sight of, with, etc.

The meaning of these two prepositions in Luke 17:26-36 is highly significant. They indicate that those who were destroyed (*apollumi*) or taken away by the flood, are being purposely contrasted by Luke with those who will be taken/received (*paralambano*) in the subsequent verses, and this is an important detail that is not found in Matthew's text (because Matthew uses a more generic word, *airo*, compared to Luke's more emphatic *apollumi*, to describe sinners at the time of the flood). Those whom the flood destroyed (*apollumi*) are presented as those who will be pushed away, destroyed, and separated, which is signified through the verb that starts with *apo*. Those who will be taken however, are those who will be brought near and received, which is signified through the verb that starts with the preposition *para*.

These two preposition-linked verbs communicate such a strong contrast and juxtaposition between those who were destroyed by the flood, and those who will be taken when Jesus returns, that it is absolutely tragic that this contrast is not more plainly visible in the English text.

With a little bit of study however, we can come to appreciate that with the use of these two opposite connotation prepositions (*apo* vs. *para*), Luke is trying to make sure we don't equate those who were destroyed or taken away by the flood (*apollumi*) with those who are taken/received (*paralambano*) later in the passage. This is basically Luke's way of telling us who is who, and he does so in a way that is even more clear than what we see in Matthew's text.

Through the use of categorically different prepositional verbs, Luke is showing us that one group will be destroyed, removed, and pushed away (*apollumi*), these are the ones who will be "left," while the other group will be taken, received, and brought near in a positive sense (*paralambano*).

Unfortunately, the Post-Trib idea that those who are taken (*paralambano*) are the same as those who were destroyed (*apollumi*) in Luke 17 and Matthew 24, fails to take into account how Luke in particular has intentionally distinguished these two groups of people with strategic word usage and prepositional-compound verbs. No first century Greek speaker would have missed these basic linguistic details.

Contrary to Post-Trib thinking, it is a good thing to be “taken” and “received” (*paralambano*) at the time of the Second Coming (Matt. 24:40-41; cf. John 14:3). We want to be taken!

Alternatively, it is most certainly a bad thing to be “left” (*aphiemi*), swept away, and “destroyed” (*apollumi*) by the judgment that will take place after believers are raptured into heaven. Though some Post-Trib thinkers say that believers should want to be left behind, nothing could be further from the truth!

Noah and Lot Represent “the Taken”

This view that the taken (*paralambano*) of Matthew 24 and Luke 17 are the righteous, whereas those who are “left” are the ungodly, is also confirmed by the illustration Jesus uses to describe these two groups of people. Jesus uses the illustration of Noah and Lot to depict the Rapture and the judgment upon the ungodly at the time of his Second Coming. We read in Luke 17:26-35:

And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating and drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that **Noah entered the Ark**, and the flood came and destroyed (*apollumi*) them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that **Lot went out from Sodom** it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed (*apollumi*) them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. [...] I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken (*paralambano*) and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken (*paralambano*) and the other will be left.

There is a clear symmetry in the Noah and Lot illustrations that present Noah and Lot as representative of those who will be “taken”, whereas the unrepentant sinners in both Genesis stories are representative of those who will be “left.” First of all, both Noah and Lot were the ones who were taken somewhere by God. Noah “entered” into the ark, and Lot “went out” of the city with the angels. Then, after Noah and Lot were taken to their respective spheres of protection, the sinners were destroyed.

What this means is that Noah and Lot left their original location before the judgment came down, while the sinners were left where they were. So once again, this illustration confirms that in an analogous fashion to what we see in the Noah and Lot stories, it will be believers who

will be “taken” (*paralambano*) somewhere by God and received into His presence, just as Jesus also says in John 14:3, so that we can be protected in heaven from God’s judgment and wrath on the earth.

Hypothetically, God could of course also protect us from His wrath while we are still on the earth, and this is what proponents of Post-Trib say will happen. The problem with this view however, is that although it is hypothetically possible, it does not harmonize with what the Scriptures teach. Jesus said believers will go into the Father’s house in heaven after we are “taken” (*paralambano*). Our going into heaven is analogous to Noah being taken into the Ark and Lot leaving the city.

In addition, notice that in Luke 17:26-30, Noah and Lot are mentioned first in Jesus’ illustration, whereas the sinners are mentioned second, and then in the subsequent verses, in Luke 17:34-36, it is those who are “taken” who are mentioned first while those who will be “left” are mentioned second. This is what I mean that there is a nice symmetry in the illustration as Luke presents it. The first group of people in the first two illustrations (i.e. Noah and Lot) are being compared to the first group of people in the actual explanation (i.e. the righteous who will be taken). Then, the second group of people in the first two illustrations (those destroyed by the flood, and the fire and brimstone), are being compared to the second group of people in the actual explanation (i.e. those who will be “left”).

To say that the “taken” (*paralambano*) somehow represent the ungodly not only ignores and negates what this Greek word means (remember, *paralambano* most often has a positive connotation in the New Testament), but it also violates the symmetry in Jesus’ illustration. The righteous get taken. The unrighteous get left behind and “destroyed” (Lk. 17:27).

Those Who are “Left” (*aphiemi*)

Another point worth mentioning is that when we stop to think further about the Post-Trib idea that believers are not the “taken,” it becomes even more illogical. I say this because Post-Trib advocates do believe in the Rapture, and that we will meet Jesus *in the sky*, which means they do accept that believers will go somewhere besides the earth when Jesus returns. So how then can they say in the same breath that believers are the ones who are “left,” when they don’t believe we will be left on the earth throughout the duration of the Second Coming?

Even if they say they only believe that believers are taken into the sky *for a brief time*, Post-Trib nonetheless has to concede that believers will technically be taken somewhere when Jesus returns, which completely undercuts the entire foundation of their argument that believers are the ones who will be left where they are. Believers are either taken somewhere or left on the earth. We can't have it both ways as the Post-Trib camp supposes (i.e. the idea that believers will be raptured to meet Jesus, thus taken into the sky, but also the ones who are left on the earth). Such reasoning just doesn't work.

To try to defend the idea that believers most certainly are those who are "left" in Matthew 24, I have heard some in the Post-Trib camp say that believers will ultimately be "left" because we will be the ones who will survive the judgement and be "left alive." It is true of course that we will survive the judgment by being raptured into heaven (Jn. 14:2-3), but it is not true that we will survive the judgment by being left on the earth.

A central problem with the Post-Trib view that "left" could mean "left alive" in Luke 17 and Matthew 24, is that although the word translated "left" (*aphiemi*) in English does have a number of applications in Greek (including: to leave a place, to leave someone, to forsake a person, to omit something, to let something happen, and even to forgive sin in the sense of remittance; i.e. leaving sin and not imputing it to someone's account),² in the context of these Second Coming prophecies, it most naturally just means "to leave" in its most basic sense, that is to say, to leave someone where they are, since they will have missed out on being "taken/received" (*paralambano*). Furthermore, this word very often has a very negative connotation in the New Testament, implying the idea of forsaking or rejecting someone (see Matt. 19:27-29). *Aphiemi* ("left") is used in Mark 14:50 to describe how the disciples forsook or left Jesus after he was betrayed. Also, in Revelation 2:4, *aphiemi* is used to describe those who have "left" or "forsaken" their love for Jesus. So here we have a positive connotation word for "taken" (*paralambano*), compared to an often negative connotation word (*aphiemi*), and many

² Some might wonder if in Luke 17 and Matthew 24, "left" could mean "the forgiven," since the word is used many times in the New Testament to describe forgiveness. The problem with interpreting the word as "forgiven" in Luke 17 and Matthew 24 is that there is no mention of sin or forgiveness in these passages, as there is in the other passages that use the term in this way. So the context does not suit this rendering. Those "left" are being compared to those "taken." All we have here is a basic comparison of one group of people who go somewhere, and another group of people who does not.

people still want to argue that the “taken” are those who will be judged and those “left” are the ones who will be saved. Such an idea only results from confusion.

In light of the definition of the word *aphiemi* (“left”), it is completely outside the bounds of the Greek language to read some sort of technical meaning into the word “left” (*aphiemi*) in Matthew 24 and Luke 17, as though it could mean those who will be “left alive,” precisely because the text does not say these are people who will be “left alive.” It only says they will be “left” in comparison to those who will be “taken” (*paralambano*)! There is no connotation of survival here, and actually, quite the opposite.

Furthermore, based on the Greek word usage, I believe it would not be too far-fetched to say that those “left” could actually be described as those “forsaken.” **“One will be received (*paralambano*), and one will be forsaken (*aphiemi*),” would be a viable interpretation of Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36.** These people, the ones left, will be those not received (*paralambano*) by Jesus at the time of his Second Coming, as he predicts in John 14:1-6. They will be left on the earth, forsaken by God (*aphiemi*), and destroyed (*apollumi*), just like sinners in the days of Noah and Lot.

Those Taken (<i>Paralambano</i>) = The Redeemed	Those Left (<i>aphiemi</i>) = The Destroyed (<i>apollumi</i>)
Noah taken into the ark by God.	Sinners left on the earth, destroyed by the flood.
Lot “went out” of the city with the angels.	Sinners left in Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed with fire and brimstone.
One taken (<i>paralambano</i>) while sleeping in bed...	One left in their bed and judged...
One taken (<i>paralambano</i>) while grinding at the mill...	One left while grinding at the mill and judged...
One man taken (<i>paralambano</i>) while in the field...	One left while in the field and judged...
Believers will be received (<i>paralambano</i>) into the Father’s presence in heaven (Jn. 14:3).	The unrepentant will not be able to enter the Father’s presence in heaven because they do not accept that Jesus is “the way” (Jn. 14:6).

The cool thing about John 14:1-3 is that when we compare this text to the two Rapture accounts in Matthew 24 and Luke 17, John 14 completes the picture of the raptured “taken” (*paralambano*) in the other Gospels by showing us where believers go after the Rapture, which Matthew and Luke do not specifically tell us. It is very common in the Bible for one passage to complete another. This is why it is so important to let “Scripture interpret Scripture” as we build our theology.

Matthew and Luke focus on believers being “taken” (*paralambano*) out of the judgment through the Rapture. John shows believers being “taken” or “received” (*paralambano*) into the Father’s presence in heaven after the Rapture. In essence, John 14 is John’s version of the Rapture, but in a typical fashion, he focused on certain unique relational components of our experience with God at this time, namely, our fellowship with the Father in heaven.

The basic point of all of these Rapture texts is that through faith in Jesus we will be rescued from the wrath of God, and ushered into the presence of the Father in the heavenly realm. What a beautiful message of deliverance and hope!

#2: Jesus Spoke of a Literal Heavenly Destination in John 14

So far we have looked at how the specific Greek terms in John 14:1-6 (and Matthew 24 and Luke 17), especially the terms “come again” and receive (*paralambano*) in John 14:3, confirm that this prophecy is about the Second Coming and the Rapture. Establishing based on linguistic research that this prophecy is concerned primarily with the eschatological future is important, because in the other parts of the prophecy, Jesus also gives us more details concerning where he will be taking us when he raptures us and receives us to himself.

Notably, John 14:2 begins with Jesus speaking about his Father’s house (*oikos*), and saying it is filled with many dwelling places. Sometimes “dwelling places” (*mone*) is translated as “mansions” (KJV). This is a poor translation based on the Latin vulgate rendering (*mansiones*), not the actual Greek word. Jesus is not speaking about “mansions” here, he is only speaking of a dwelling place in the Father’s house in a more generic sense.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that when Jesus uses this language of “many dwelling places,” he is referring literally to an actual location in heaven. This is confirmed when Jesus says that he has to “go to prepare a place for” us there. Well, where was Jesus going? To heaven, after

his crucifixion and resurrection, which is where the Father's house is. What would he be doing there, in heaven? He tells us. Preparing a place for us, so that he can "come again and receive" his disciples to himself, as he says, "so that where I am, there you may be also."

The natural flow of the passage is that Jesus is going to heaven to prepare a place for believers, and after he does so, he will come and take believers to the exact same location where he has prepared the aforementioned "dwelling place." As appropriately stated by New Testament scholar Leon Morris, in his classic commentary on John: "'My Father's house clearly refers to heaven.'"³

If believers don't ever go to heaven at the time of Jesus' *parousia*, then it would make no sense that Jesus would be there preparing a place for us. Furthermore, it would make no sense for Jesus to say, "that where I am, there you may be also." This is literal spatial language. The whole point is that Jesus is going as our forerunner into the Father's presence in heaven, but while he is there, he will not forget about his disciples, but instead, will make preparations for us to eventually go with him to the exact same place.

Post-Trib Can Only Allegorize John 14:2-3

In response to this straightforward reading of John 14:2-3, Post-Trib scholars are forced to spiritualize and allegorize the meaning of these verses. After all, from a Post-Trib perspective, believers never go into heaven after the Rapture, so proponents of this view have to find some alternative explanation for what Jesus is saying here.

We see this allegorical/spiritualized interpretation of John 14 in the popular Post-Trib Rapture book, *Not Afraid of the Antichrist*, by Dr. Craig Keener and Dr. Michael Brown. Though he devotes only one short paragraph to John 14, Keener writes that the Father's house and Jesus' coming do not prove that believers go into heaven after the Rapture, "since in context they refer to Jesus bringing believers into the Father's presence by his coming after his resurrection; see John 14:5-6, 18-20, 22-23, 28; 20:22)."⁴ In other words, for Keener, John 14 is not about the Second Coming at all, but simply refers to how Jesus brings us into a relationship with God the Father through the Holy Spirit, after his resurrection. For Keener, this is not literal language about

³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 567.

⁴ Michael Brown & Craig Keener, *Not Afraid of the Antichrist*, 158.

a physical place where Jesus will take us at the time of his return. It is all just metaphorical and symbolic. Keener's (and Brown's) perspective typifies the Post-Trib interpretation of John 14 that one will find in many other commentaries and books as well.

While I am very glad that Dr. Keener and Dr. Brown refute Pre-Trib theology in their book, I believe that Keener's interpretation misrepresents the face-value message of what Jesus says at the beginning of John 14.

First, Keener's (Post-Trib) view of John 14:1-6 is a classic example of "realized eschatology," which is a theological error that occurs when eschatological passages are interpreted as though they apply exclusively to the present spiritual experience of believers. It is important to emphasize that we can have a spiritual relationship with the Father now. However, Jesus is not speaking of a mere spiritual reality in John 14:1-3. He is speaking literally, and as we have already seen, the strategic Second Coming/Rapture language in this text, where Jesus says he will "come again," and "take/receive" believers to be with him, is language that he used in other passages specifically when referring to his *parousia* and the Second Advent.

Though I am exceedingly grateful that I have the presence of Jesus and the Father in my life right now through the Holy Spirit, Jesus has never in my lifetime "come again," received me to himself, and let me be with him in the Father's house. I am afraid that the Post-Trib interpretation of this passage proposed by Keener utterly dilutes the beautiful message communicated in this prophecy.

Second, Keener's realized eschatology view of John 14 is rooted in the common interpretive error known as reductionism. He believes that because Jesus does speak of the believer's experience with the Spirit *at the end of John 14*, in verse 16-31, he must be speaking of the same thing *at the beginning of John 14* (vv. 1-6) as well. However, this is not the case.

It is true that in John 14:18, Jesus says to his disciples, "I will come to you," implying that he and the Father will come to believers through the Spirit, and make their "abode" with us. As we read in John 14:23, Jesus said: "[...] we will come to him and make our abode with him [i.e. the believer]."

Based on this verse, I understand Keener's logic when he proposes that because Jesus says later in John 14 he will "come" to believers and make his "abode" with us, he must be

speaking of the exact same thing here as in John 14:1-6, which would prove that the beginning of the chapter is not about the Rapture, but simply our spiritual fellowship with Jesus and the Father through the Spirit. I also recognize that Jesus does use the same word for “come” (*erchomai*) and abode/dwelling place (*mone*) in John 14:23 as he uses in John 14:2-3 when he says he will come (*erchomai*) again and that he is building us a dwelling place (*mone*). In light of the similar language used in both portions of John 14, I definitely take Keener’s position seriously, and see why he attempts to harmonize all of John 14 as though it is only about a spiritual reality. For Keener, we are already in the dwelling place that Jesus spoke of in John 14:2 because the Spirit has been poured out and given freely to his disciples (John 14:16-31).

The Flow of Thought in John 14

As convincing as this purely spiritualized interpretation of John 14 may seem on the surface, the reason I believe Keener’s (and other Post-Trib advocates’) view of John 14 is reductionistic, is because it misses that Jesus is speaking of two closely related, but still different topics in John 14:1-6 and John 14:16-31. In essence, the spiritual fellowship we have with Jesus and the Father now (the topic of 14:16-31) is a foretaste of the literal fellowship we will one day have with them in heaven when Jesus returns (the topic of 14:1-6). That’s the point Jesus is making. By no means does the fellowship we have with the Father now through the Spirit cancel out the literal and physical fellowship we will have with Him in the future when Jesus takes us into heaven. These are not mutually exclusive realities. They are complementary aspects of our inheritance in the Lord. They are two sides of the same coin, both/and, not either/or.

When we follow the natural train of thought in chapter 14, Jesus is saying, “Do not be troubled, I am going to heaven to prepare a place for you, and will one day come again and take you there, so you can be with me and the Father in the place I am preparing for you (vv. 1-6). But in the meantime, and until that day comes, I will not be leaving you as orphans. I will give you the Spirit and me and the Father will still be with you in a spiritual sense, to lead you, teach you, and comfort you now. In the future, you will come into our abode in heaven. But in the here and now, we will make our abode with you through the Spirit.” This both/and, eschatological/spiritual view of John 14 is the only view that fully accounts for all of the details in the text, as well as the progress of Jesus’ thought in this discourse.

By collapsing all of John 14 into the category of our spiritual experience in the here and now (i.e. realized eschatology), and interpreting John 14:1-6 as nothing more than a spiritual metaphor, Post-Trib causes us to miss out on the instructive and comforting lesson Jesus conveys in this passage. This passage is about both eschatology (vv. 1-6), and our present experience with the Spirit (vv. 16-31). There is an intentional juxtaposition in John 14 between how Jesus comes to us now, through the Spirit, versus how he will one day literally “come again” and “take/receive” us to himself (*paralambano*) in the future. Tellingly, Keener says absolutely nothing about the meaning of the Greek word *paralambano* in John 14:3, including how this word most often refers to taking *a physical person to a physical place* in the New Testament, as well as how this exact word is used in the Second Coming passages in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 to describe the Rapture.

Also, to say that believers are currently dwelling in the abode of God just because we have the Spirit is an extremely far-fetched idea. Jesus may have come to us now already in a certain sense, but our day to day realities of suffering and struggle in this life hardly qualify as dwelling in God’s house. Yes, God has come to make his abode with us temporarily, but this does not negate the reality that Jesus will one day also take us into His true abode in heaven. God has made *us* his dwelling place in this broken world so that we are not completely deprived of His presence. But one day, He will also bring us *into His own dwelling place* in heaven, and that will be even better. Keener misses this important distinction in John 14:23 and John 14:2-3 between God coming to us (v. 23), versus us going to God (vv. 2-3). These are not the same thing.

To summarize point #2, Jesus speaks of a literal and heavenly destination in John 14:1-6, and says that he will one day take believers to the same place, when we are raptured. A merely spiritualized and metaphorical interpretation of this passage, which is required by Post-Trib theology, contradicts the details of the text, and undermines Jesus’ message of hope to his disciples.

#3: Jesus told Peter he would one day “follow” him to where he was going (Jn. 13:36).

In addition to the words of Jesus within John 14, the prior context of this passage in John 13 also harmonizes with the idea that his disciples will one day follow him into heaven. Jesus plainly said to Peter in John 13:36: “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; **but you will follow later.**”

As we have already seen, in John 14:2, Jesus continues his discussion with Peter and the other disciples by elaborating on where he was going (i.e. to the Father’s house). Of particular note, in his conversation with Peter, Jesus used 2nd person singular pronouns and verbs forms (Jn. 13:36-38). However, in John 14, Jesus switched back to 2nd person plural pronouns and verb forms, indicating that not only Peter, but all of his disciples would one day partake in the following “later” that Jesus mentioned first to Peter in John 13:36.

When we read John 14:2 in light of this prior portion of the conversation, it becomes obvious that Jesus was telling his disciples that although they could not follow him into heaven at that time, they would indeed eventually follow him into heaven, at a “later” time (13:36), which is clarified in 14:2-3 to be the time of the Second Coming and Rapture.

It is these time-specific terms, “now” and “later,” as well as the verb “follow,” that are connected to the Second Coming prophecy in John 14, that completely disprove the idea that the relational encounter in John 14:1-4 could be merely spiritual, and not literal. Put simply, Jesus speaks of a real event, one that will occur at a real time in the future, when his people will follow him to the place where he currently is (the Father’s presence in heaven), and in John 14:3, he clarifies for Peter and the disciples exactly when this will happen. “I will come again and receive you (plural) to myself, so that where I am, you may be also.”

In response, some might say perhaps Jesus was only telling Peter that one day he (Peter) would also be martyred, and thus, follow in the footsteps of his Master, Jesus, by going into the Father’s presence when he died. The problem with interpreting Jesus’ statement to Peter as a reference only to his martyrdom, is that such a view divorces Jesus’ statement from the eschatological prophecy in John 14:1-6. John 14 is part of the same conversation as the one in John 13 (there is no chapter division in the original manuscript), and in this portion of the

conversation, Jesus clarifies that the events spoken of a few verses prior in John 13:36 (i.e. the disciples following him), will occur at the time of the Rapture and Second Coming.

Others might argue that maybe Jesus was only speaking of the disciples being with him in a general sense when he returns, without any specific indication of location. The problem with this objection is that Jesus has already told us he is going to the Father's house in heaven, which means that the disciples being with him "where" he is, would indicate the same specific location, not merely being with Jesus in a general or spiritual sense.

On the eve of his betrayal, and on the eve of Peter's impending failure, Jesus comforted Peter and the other disciples with the idea that he will one day come back to take them into heaven with him, at the end of this age. Might we also find comfort in these words as well, even as we too struggle with our own weaknesses, failures, and difficulties this side of the Second Coming?

#4 Jesus said he is the "the Way" into the Father's presence in heaven.

At the end of his second coming prophecy in John 14:1-6, Jesus said, "And you know the way where I am going." In response, "Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?"

To this Jesus replied with the famous words, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (Jn. 14:4-6).

When these verses are referenced by believers today, they are almost always applied as though they refer exclusively to the salvation of our souls in a general sense. I am sure we have all heard evangelistic sermons or seen evangelistic tracts that quote John 14:6 as a way to communicate that no one can be saved or have a relationship with God apart from Jesus.

While this is all technically true from a theological standpoint, I submit that in John 14:4-6, Jesus wasn't only speaking generally of the salvation of our souls, or of the experience of fellowship we can have with the Father right now. Instead, he was again speaking literally of how he is the only way we will be able to go into the Father's presence in heaven, at the time of his Second Coming.

When this statement in John 14:6 is read in context, it is easier to see that Jesus wasn't only saying, "believe in me because I'm the way you can know the Father right now and be

forgiven.” Though again this is true at a certain level, there is more to it than that. In reality, Jesus was saying to Thomas, “walk in my ways and believe in me now, and I will be your access to the Father in heaven when ‘come again’ (v. 3).” “No one comes to the Father but through Me” (v. 6) is a literal statement of how Jesus will one day grant believers access to the Father in heaven after the Rapture (vv. 1-4).

Many will be surprised to learn that the famous lines of Jesus in John 14:6 are in fact connected to the Rapture and his Second Coming. Yet, this is exactly what the context requires. We follow his way, and his truth, and his life now, so that we can truly and literally follow him into the Father’s presence in the future.

Do We Believe in Jesus?

In this article, we have looked at four primary reasons why John 14:1-6 does in fact prove that believers will go into heaven with Jesus after the Rapture. Personally, though I love studying Bible prophecy, I often find myself discouraged by the atmosphere of division and argumentative hostility that is created when prophecy and the eschatology are discussed by believers today. Tragically, we so often suck the life out of these topics with our constant debate, and pervasive unwillingness to humbly and objectively study the Word.

Be that as it may, I remain committed to studying and teaching prophecy, in large part because in my own life, I have found the study of prophecy to be an extremely helpful, instructive, and inspiring endeavor in my walk with the Lord, and I know many other people who feel the same. These are very practical issues, and they have the potential to radically improve our relationship with Jesus, and our understanding of the ways of God.

As I’ve studied John 14 over the past couple of weeks, I have come to appreciate in an even deeper way that this passage was given to us because the idea of our Rapture into heaven at the time of the Second Coming, is meant to be a central part of our faith in Jesus, and something that we draw encouragement from on a daily basis. That is why I am so committed to sharing this message, and that is why I believe John (who didn’t speak a whole lot about eschatology outside the book of Revelation), made sure to put this in his Gospel.

John wanted us to believe not only in the reality of the Messiah’s return, but also in the reality of the Messiah bringing us into glorious heavenly fellowship with the Father. This is a

message that is supposed to invigorate us spiritually, and inspire us with a renewed sense of hope and spiritual energy as we serve Jesus this side of glory.

At the end of his Gospel, John said, “these things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31). In light of this purpose statement, one of the most important things to understand about John’s theology in his Gospel, is that the entire Gospel is structured in a way that is supposed to help us believe in Jesus and “have life in his name.”

For John, believing in Jesus is not some static or one-off experience where we pray a prayer and accept Jesus “into our hearts.” Rather, believing in Jesus from John’s vantage point is entering into a dynamic relationship with the Son of God, and experiencing all of the multifaceted theological and spiritual realities that he communicates in his Gospel.

To believe in Jesus is to know him as the preincarnate Word of God, co-equal, and co-eternal with God the Father (Jn. 1:1). To know Jesus is to know him as the Lamb of God, offered for the sins of Israel and the nations (Jn. 1:29). To know Jesus is to be born again through the Spirit and to experience the abundant overflow of living water in our souls, “a well of water springing up to eternal life” (Jn. 3-4). To know Jesus is to know his resurrection power, his healing power, and his forgiving power. It is to feast upon his divine glory like manna in the wilderness. It is to live off of him, to yearn for him, and to eat his flesh and drink his blood through daily fellowship and reliance upon the Spirit. To know Jesus is to know him as our Shepherd, Protector, and as our guiding Light in the darkness of this world (Jn. 5-12).

This is what John is doing throughout his Gospel. He is giving us a multi-faceted portrait of the divine glory of the Son, what it means to know him in a relational way, and what it means to experience eternal “life in his name” (Jn. 20:31). And without a doubt, Jesus’ description of the Rapture and our heavenly fellowship with the Father when he returns, is most definitely an integral part of this vision of the Son of God, and what it means to be in relational unity with him, that John wants us to understand and press into.

For John, the Rapture, or, the time when believers will be received (*paralambano*) into heaven, when Jesus comes again (Jn. 14:3) to show us “the way” into the Father’s presence, is part of the Good News. This is part of the Gospel message according to John, and it is there to

give us a spiritual energy in this present life, so that our hearts will not be troubled and weighed down by the difficulties of this broken world (Jn. 14:1). We are meant to find encouragement and consolation in this message as we meditate on what God has in store for us in the future.

In a certain sense then, I would say that from John's perspective, if we don't believe that Jesus will take us into heaven after the Rapture, then we don't really believe in the Son and "have life in his name" in the way that we should (Jn. 20:31). This of course doesn't mean a person isn't saved if they don't believe in the ideas I have articulated in this article. But I do believe it means they are missing out on certain key theological truths that could greatly help them in both their theology, and their own daily walk with the Lord. John's teaching on the Rapture is as central a component of his Gospel message as his teaching on being born again (Jn. 3), and we should give as much weight to this portion of John's teaching as we do to all of the other portions of his Gospel.

Personally, I can say without equivocation that understanding John 14 has helped me in both of these areas of my life. It has helped me sort out my eschatology, including what will happen when Jesus returns. But just as importantly, it has also encouraged me in the midst of my trials and difficulties, which is exactly what Jesus intended, and exactly why he prefaced his teaching on the Rapture in John 14:1 with these words: **"Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Me."**

Part of the concern I have with Post-Tribulation theology, and the idea that believers only meet Jesus in the sky after the Rapture, but never even go into the Father's presence in heaven, is that it deprives believers of Jesus' glorious message of hope and encouragement in John 14:1-6. From my perspective, we are going to need all the hope and encouragement we can get in the days ahead, so I am somewhat baffled by the resistance I see in Post-Trib circles to the idea that Jesus takes us into heaven, before we actually come back with him to the earth. Why resist the straightforward message of Jesus in John 14? How does anyone benefit from that? I understand that Post-Tribulation teachers rely on other passages to try to bolster their case, but I have never heard any objection or interpretation of Scripture from a Post-Trib teacher that truly supports their theories. All Post-Trib objections can be answered in a satisfactory manner if we slow down and do proper exegesis of each individual Biblical passage.

Also, the typical Post-Trib scenario is problematic because it upholds that believers who survive the Tribulation will never even get to be with the Father in heaven at all. From a Post-Trib perspective, believers who survive the Tribulation will meet Jesus in the sky, come right back to the earth, and never go to the Father's house in heaven in their glorified bodies. This scenario directly contradicts what Jesus says in John 14.

In reality, ALL believers will have a unified experience of going into the Father's presence in heaven at the time of the First Resurrection/Rapture, and then we will all have a unified experience of coming back to the earth with Jesus at a later stage of his *parousia*, when he descends to the earth on the white horse to wage war and conquer his enemies (Rev. 19). As I explain in detail in my book *The Passover King*, the *parousia* (i.e. Second Coming) of Jesus will be a complex series of events that will begin with the Rapture and the Day of the Lord's wrath, which will then culminate with the return of Jesus to the earth, Jesus' military conquests, and the establishment of his kingdom. (I suspect these events will cover a time span of at least one year, give or take.) To give credit where credit is due, I am greatly indebted to Dr. Alan Kurschner, and especially his book, *Antichrist Before the Day of the Lord*, as his ministry helped me sort out many of the confusing aspects of eschatology and the return of Jesus that I could never quite piece together before (including who is "taken" and "left" in Matthew 24 and Luke 17).

In closing, I hope this article has offered some insight into both the message and practical importance of John 14. To reiterate, Voice of Messiah teaches the Pre-Wrath Rapture. For more information and resources please visit our website voiceofmessiah.com.