

A KEY FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE

- Understanding “mystery” in the Bible will help us to understand why the rapture has to be pre-tribulational.
 - Mystery: YOU CANNOT SEARCH IT OUT IN SCRIPTURE PRIOR TO THE TIME IT IS REVEALED.
 - Some mystery has shadows which cannot be understood until the fulness is revealed, other mysteries (like the Pauline mystery) does not even have a shadow or a hint, these are untraceable.
 - **An Example: The Mystery of the Gospel of Christ**
 - The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ can be seen in shadows in the Old Testament, but absolutely cannot be (and was not) understood prior to its revelation.
 - It was foreshadowed:
 - "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)
 - "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (Psalm 16:10)
 - "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son." (Zechariah 12:10)
 - It was not seen:
 - Jesus predicted His death and resurrection: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." (Matthew 16:21)
 - The disciples did not understand: "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." (Luke 18:34)
 - "But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him." (Mark 9:32)
 - "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." (John 20:9)
 - After the women had seen the risen Lord they report to the disciples, "And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." (Luke 24:11)
 - After the resurrection, those who did not know were not chastized, they were educated by man.
 - **The Road to Emmaus:** "
 - These disciples clearly did not recognize Jesus nor understand what had happened:
 - And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." (Luke 24:13-16)
 - Jesus then had to personally reveal the meaning of Scripture to them:
 - "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27)
 - Even after extensive teaching, they still didn't understand until Jesus specially opened their understanding:
 - "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45)
 - This pattern demonstrates that even though the information was available in Scripture, it remained a mystery that needed direct revelation .
 - **The Ethiopian Eunuch:** "And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30-31)
- **Paul's New Revelation is the same: it could not be seen nor understood until it was revealed.**
 - The information in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 is presented as a completely new revelation
 - Unlike other instances of “ignorance,” when someone does not know information available, they are rebuked, not informed.
 - Rebukes in the Gospels
 - Jesus rebuked Nicodemus: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10)

- Jesus rebuked the disciples: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25)
 - Jesus rebuked the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29)
- Rebukes in the Epistles
 - In Hebrews, believers were rebuked: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" (Hebrews 5:12)
 - Paul rebuked the Corinthians: "I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" (1 Corinthians 6:5)
 - Paul rebuked the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Galatians 3:1)
- Rebukes in the Old Testament
 - God rebuked Israel through Hosea: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6)
 - Isaiah's rebuke: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:3)
 - Jeremiah's rebuke: "For my people is foolish, they have not known me" (Jeremiah 4:22)
- An exception comes in sharing the Pauline mystery because IT WAS UNKNOWABLE without direct testimony of the information.
 - **Apollos and Aquila & Priscilla:** "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." (Acts 18:24-26)
 - **Revelation of the Mystery to Paul:** "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:11-12)

DIVINE AUTHORITY OF PAUL'S REVELATION

- This forces an important question: If Paul has new information, is it from God?
 - Paul claimed his writings were "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37)
 - He stated Scripture is "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16)
 - Peter classified Paul's writings with "other scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16)
- Rapture content (1 Thessalonians 4:17) is a fresh revelation entrusted specifically to Paul
 - see v. 15, "by the Word of the Lord."
- **Dispensational Implications**
 - New revelation means this cannot be found in earlier revelations / passages. It is therefore information for the new "dispensation of the grace of God" (Ephesians 3:1-2).
 - This revelation belongs to Paul's program, not Israel's prophetic timeline
 - This information won't be found in John 14, Matthew 24, or other gospels/prophets
 - The rapture must be understood within the Pauline framework of the age of grace
- **Pre-Tribulation Rapture Implication**
 - The logic necessitates a pre-tribulation rapture
 - The tribulation belongs to Israel's kingdom program (old dispensation), not the dispensation of grace. To put the body of Christ into Israel's program mixes dispensations.
 - The catching away of the Body of Christ's is part of Paul's mystery revelation, and belongs exclusively to the Body of Christ.
 - Logical conclusion: if this is new, inspired, and Pauline, it must belong to believers today
 - It cannot be part of Israel's prophetic tribulation
 - It can only be a distinct deliverance for the Body of Christ before Israel's prophecies are fulfilled

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **Key Premise:** Paul's revelation is new truth that must stand in its own light rather than being folded into previous prophecy
 - **The Pretribulation Argument:**
 1. Distinction between rapture and second coming
 - Rapture is imminent: it can happen any moment, with no warning or precursor
 - The Second coming has specific prophesied signs
 - Signs to occur before Christ's Second Coming:
 - Covenant made with Israel (Daniel 9:27)
 - Abomination of Desolation set up in the temple (Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)
 - Great tribulation period (Matthew 24:21-22, Revelation 7:14)
 - Cosmic disturbances (Matthew 24:29, Revelation 6:12-14)
 - Global economic system with mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-18)
 - Gathering of armies at Armageddon (Revelation 16:16, 19:19)
 - Israel's national repentance (Zechariah 12:10-14)
 2. Different purposes
 - Rapture: comfort and hope
 - Second coming: judgment and kingdom ("day of the Lord")
 3. Natures of the Body of Christ and Israel
 - 1. Distinct Biblical Identities
 - **Foundational Differences in Origin**
 - Israel: Established through Abraham's physical lineage (Genesis 12:1-3)
 - Church: Established through spiritual rebirth in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)
 - **Different Compositions**
 - Israel: A national, ethnic entity with citizenship requirements
 - Church: A spiritual body where ethnic distinctions are abolished ("neither Jew nor Gentile")
 - 2. Separate Covenantal Relationships
 - **Israel's Unique Covenants**
 - Governed by the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New covenants
 - These covenants contain specific promises regarding land, nationhood, and kingdom
 - **Church's Distinct Position**
 - Operates under the mystery revelation given to Paul
 - Not a party to Israel's national promises and covenants
 - 3. Prophetic Programs
 - **Israel's Program**
 - Tribulation period specifically designed for Israel's national restoration
 - Called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7) - Jacob being Israel
 - **Church's Program**
 - Exists in the current "dispensation of grace" revealed to Paul
 - Has no prophetic role in Israel's tribulation period
 - 4. Mutual Exclusivity
 - **Logical Incompatibility**
 - The programs for Israel and the Church cannot operate simultaneously
 - The Church represents a parenthetical period in God's dealings with Israel
 - **Dispensational Necessity**
 - God deals with humanity through distinct administrative arrangements
 - Mixing Israel and Church programs creates theological contradictions
 - 5. Eschatological Distinctions
 - **Different Destinations**
 - Israel: Promised earthly kingdom with Jerusalem as capital
 - Church: Heavenly citizenship and dwelling (Philippians 3:20)
 - **Different Deliverances**
 - Israel: Preserved through the tribulation
 - Church: Removed before the tribulation (via the rapture)
- **Conclusion:** The rapture must occur before the tribulation for biblical consistency