

pure



Russia

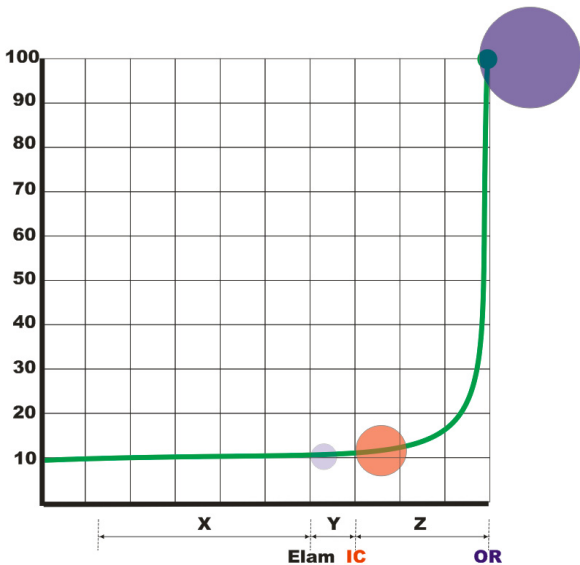
The Bible is clear that Russia will attack Israel and the church will be raptured. The Bible also foretold the rebirth of the nation of Israel. According to Ezekiel 37, after the Jews were dispersed throughout the nations and seemingly dried up and died as a result of the holocaust, they would be reborn as a nation and become a mighty army. These miraculous prophecies were fulfilled in 1948—as a result of two world wars (WWI and WWII). In the next two chapters, Ezekiel foretells the events of WWIII in the *Battle of Gog and Magog (BGM)*, wherein an *outer ring (OR)* of nations (depicted in purple on the globe) will attack Israel. This Russian-Iranian led coalition will be destroyed by God, which commences the *Day of the Lord (DOL)*—a period of wrath from which church-age believers will be spared via the rapture (1Thess 4:13-5:11).

The absence of the *inner circle (IC)* of nations (pictured in red) from this *OR* attack is best explained by a complementary prophecy (Ps 83). The *IC* nations apparently will have attacked Israel in a previous genocide attempt. Israel will defeat this Syrian-led *IC* coalition. Acting in self-defense during this *IC* battle, Israel evidently destroys Damascus overnight via a nuclear counterattack (Is 17). Possibly, Israel will have attacked the nuclear facilities in Iran (e.g., Elam) preemptively (Jer 49:34-39), thus explaining the temporary absence of Iran from the *IC* battle.



IC and **OR** take place before the seven years of tribulation, in which the Antichrist will ratify a peace treaty with Israel, then break it 3½ years later, and then attempt to destroy the Jews, culminating in the *Battle of Armageddon* (**BOA**). The millennial kingdom comes after the tribulation. In the meantime, the Bible has foretold the Palestinian terrorism that is currently taking place, of which 9/11 was but a part. Accordingly, the peace talks will ultimately fail.

Placing Elam, **IC**, and **OR** before the tribulation does not detract from the fact that the **imminent rapture** (pictured in green on the following chart) can happen at any moment. Notwithstanding, the probability of the pretribulational rapture increases as each of these other pretribulational prophetic events comes to pass. The probability of the rapture occurring immediately increases exponentially after the **IC** attack and must occur at least by the initial phase of the **OR** attack, which commences the **DOL**.



Surprisingly, not all committed Christians will be raptured. Unfortunately, because many committed Christians will be left behind after the rapture, many of those left behind will seek some other explanation for the rapture (such as alien abductions). Their rejection of the biblical rapture will be premature, however. According to the Bible, the rapture is for all *believers* in Christ, but not all *followers* of Christ will qualify. A simple syllogism will suffice to illustrate:

1. Christians are public followers of Christ.
2. Not all public followers of Christ are believers.
3. Therefore, not all Christians are believers.

Not all of Jesus' public followers were believers. (Jn 6:64-66). Many of His disciples never had a saving relationship with Him because they never believed in Him for eternal life (Jn 6:47). Jesus also foretells that He will reject many of those who consider themselves to be His committed followers (Mt 7:20-23). They will point to their performance as proof that they are saved; He will reject them on that very basis. When it comes to being saved from hell, our works can only condemn us, not justify us. The Lord will deny ever having had a saving relationship with those public followers who were never genuine believers.

The reason is simple. To be a believer one must believe. Those who believe in Christ for eternal life are believers (1Tim 1:16). Those who believe in their performance for eternal life do not qualify as believers in Christ for eternal life. They get a deadly wage rather than a life-imparting gift: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). The gift of eternal life must be received as a free gift rather than earned as a wage (Rom 3:28; 11:6; Eph 2:8-9).

By redefining believing in Christ for eternal life as committing to Christ to live a good life, many Christians are insulting God by trying to earn His free gift. They think that they will qualify for heaven because they have repented of their sins and promised to be better—through God’s enabling grace, of course. Many such committed Christians will be left behind as “false brethren” who are trying to reach heaven by means of their Christian performance (2Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4).

Repenting, committing, and living better are very important for believers. To be considered worthy of the kingdom—in terms of heavenly rewards—believers must do such things (1Thess 2:12; 2Thess 1:5). But no one is going to get into heaven because they are worthy of doing so. Christ died for ungodly sinners so that He might offer them eternal life as a free gift and thus freely save them from the coming wrath of God (Rom 5:6-9; 1Thess 1:10). His resurrection proves that He was successful in securing both the gift and reward aspects of salvation.

- Gift: Mt 27:42; Lk 7:50; 8:12; Jn 3:17; 12:47; Acts 15:11; 16:30; 1Cor 1:21; 3:15; Eph 2:5,8; 2Tim 1:9; Tit 3:5
- Reward: Mt 24:13; Lk 9:24; Rom 5:10; 10:10; 1Thess 5:8-9; 2Thess 2:13; 2Tim 2:10; Heb 1:14; 2:3; 5:9; 7:25; 9:28; Jam 1:21; 2:14; 1Pet 1:5,9.

Being saved from tribulational wrath and eternal damnation is a free gift, but being saved in terms of qualifying for kingdom rulership is a reward: “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for winning salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, with the result that whether we are [morally] awake or asleep, we will live together with Him” (1Thess 5:9-10).

All believers who are physically alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will be raptured (1Thess 4:17). Even believers who morally are unprepared will be raptured because being with Him is conditioned on His death for us, not on our life for Him. Therefore, being a committed Christian is obviously not a requirement to be raptured. However, believers must be morally awake (i.e., committed Christians) if they are going to do well at the Bema (i.e., the Judgment Seat of Christ) that follows the rapture (2Cor 5:10).



Our *daily experience of salvation* can vary widely, as pictured by the ups and downs on the salvation chart. But regardless of this daily variation, the *gift dimension* of salvation is unaffected and unconditionally assures all believers of being raptured and entering the millennial kingdom. The *reward dimension* of salvation conditionally promises an abundance, regal entrance to those believers who develop a Christian character (2Tim 2:12; 2Pet 1:11).

Christians who never genuinely believed that the free gift of eternal life is actually a free gift are left behind to go through the **DOL** (including the seven years of tribulation on Earth) because they wrongly conditioned this free gift on their performance in terms of their repentance and commitment. In attempting to make a reward out of this free gift, they failed to receive the gift. Do not make this mistake.

If you believe in Jesus (rather than in your performance) for eternal life as a free gift, then you genuinely can place your name in the following blank.

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that _____ believes in
whoever
Him will not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).*