There can be many discussions and misunderstandings when we speak about such a topic like the rapture. There are people that state that there will be pre-tribulation rapture and others saying that it will be post tribulation. What we need to do is to go to the word of God. We can discuss and go over and over on this, but I think that we are not meant to know some things with a purpose. No one knows the exact time of the Lord’s returning and no one knows the exact time of his own end also. Why is that? Because we need to be always ready.

 Because somethings need to be taken by faith. We mustn’t be always in control of everything. The man by his nature likes to control things and be over everything, knowing everything, but it mustn’t be always in this way. If you see the exact meaning of faith, you will see that it doesn’t have to do with knowing, seeing and controlling. It is God who must be in control and be over us. If today we can know, see and have things under control (under God’s control), it is because we believe, not the other way around.

 Just imagine how it would be if we knew everything, even the time of our own death and also the time of His coming. What do you think we would do then? Well, most of the people, if not all, will do whatever suits them and whatever they like with the thought that when the day comes, they will repent. Do you think that they will really repent on that day? I don’t think so. Most of the hearts of those persons will be so hardened already that they won’t probably do it. God knows our hearts and wants to save us from that. He has established everything perfectly and in our favor, so that we can believe in a genuine way. And while here on earth, we will need this kind of faith. The faith that trusts God and believes what He says and is not inpatient when something doesn’t happen in the way or the time we expected it to be. I am not saying that Christians believe blindly in God. They are able to see and experience certain promises and have experiences in their hearts, but there are somethings for which we need just to believe and **wait**.

 Yes, faith sometimes is having to do with patience. We usually want everything now. We say: “Where is the success that you promised me Lord?”, when maybe that success will come in a different way, or “Where is the wife You promised me?”, when this could come in His time, that is the right time or “Where is the rapture that You promised it will happen, Lord? Why is it not happening yet?”. In general, we are always inpatient, but faith sometimes means to have patience. I am not referring to faith for salvation. The Bible says that it can happen in any time and that “now” is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Why does it say that? Because tomorrow can be late. We don’t know what can be of tomorrow. Our life is like a vapor (James 4:14). See, for somethings we are impatient and for others we can delay and that won’t be problem for us. This is how our heart is. The nature of our heart.

 Let’s see one of the verses in the Bible speaking about rapture. Event though we don’t find the exact word there, we see a clear description of what will happen.

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught** **up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17

The word for “caught up” in the Greek Bible is “άρπαγησόμεθα” that derives from the word “αίρέομαι” that basically means “grab”, “grasp”, “seize” or “to take up”, “to pull”, “to take with force”.

We see the clear meaning of this word and we can say that even if we don’t find the exact word “rapture” in the Bible, this word describes exactly the same what “rapture” means.

I can’t tell you if this occurrence will be before what the Bible calls “the great tribulation” or after it or in which way exactly it will happen, but from what we see from the scriptures, something will happen.

 Let’s see another story that is having to do with the topic. We all know when God destroyed the city of Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of their sin. They were destroyed by fire. Very similar to how this world according to the scriptures should end. The question was that there were not many righteous people in Sodom. The only one, that was Lot the Abraham’s nephew, was spared because of his righteousness and was **taken away** by the angels that were sent to destroy that city.

 There is a time in which God’s patience is over. I mean that even being a patient God as 2 Peter 3:9 describes it, He is still having limits regarding His patience and bearing toward sin. The only reason for Him to have patience is because of the lost souls that still need to be saved. I mean that, if there is still some possibility for the gospel to be spread and for the people to have opportunity to hear the gospel, He will still bear and have patience with the sin, but when that possibility is no more and the people after hearing the gospel are so hardened and darkness is too much, meaning that there won’t be chance for the good news anymore, then the end comes, then He can not bear anymore with the sin. Why do you think that Jesus bared on the cross and left Himself to be slain and to suffer? Because He knew that this was about the salvation of the souls of the lost. And if God is having patience with us today, it is for this sacrifice. Jesus represents this mercy and patience of God.

“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for the fire until the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men.” 2 Peter 3:7

 Notice that it says that the heavens and the earth are preserved by “the same word”. The same word through which everything was created. Jesus is the word of God as John 1:1-3 states. As Christians we also need to bear with the others and be patient with them. Not to tolerate their sinful life, but to be patient.

“And the Lord said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is **very grave**, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.” Genesis 18:20,21

Here we see the reason why the Lord reacted in this way toward The city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because their sin was too grave. The unrighteousness was at its full. What does come to your mind when you think about this? Doesn’t this remind you of the times we are living in now?

 We are certain that God can brake any chain and any hardened heart, but looking at the scriptures in general, we are warned not to harden our hearts. “…Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” Hebrews 4:7 It results that if they are over hardened, He can not just work there and in a way do it by force or save someone by force. We and everyone is warned not to get to that point. When the sin of Sodom an Gomorrah was so great and they were hardened, there wasn’t more to do. We are not talking about someone who is just struggling with some issues and is worried about his condition and heart in front of God, but about someone who is not worried at all and after hearing, he perseveres more and more in stubborn way in his own direction. This is a limit that is been surpassed. The end and the tribulation will come when there won’t be much possibility for Him to work anymore, because of this hardness.

 Maybe the last trials will be the last way which God will use to try to awake the people, show them their condition and need, and warn them. It is because He loves them so much that He can not just leave them in their condition. Why is that He can’t just touch them in the way they are? Because it works in this way. People need to realize something first. They can not just repent without coming to this realization, without acknowledging their sin. And He is the one that can take them to this condition, to acknowledge their sin. No one can do it alone. Only He can do it. The only thing people mustn’t do, is to resist. God wants to take them to this realization. He loves us and He died for us. In this is shown His love. We need to go to Him as we are, but we need to change by His power afterwards. We need to go “as we are” to Him, but if we truly have gone to Him, then we don’t come back “as we were”, but different. We are not the same after a true encounter with Him.

 We need to realize something and in this way to trust in His power that can regenerate us and perform a miracle in us. We see anyway in the book of Revelation that even going through trials and tribulations, some people will still harden themselves even more.

 The world in which we are living also goes in this way. The unrighteousness and the tolerance to sin is every time more and more. There is this “free thinking “ that is on fashion now and things that time ago were considered as taboo, now are seen as something almost normal. This is one of the reasons for which the Lord would return, but what else? For which other reason, He can make His return and finish everything? It will be, when the hardness of people will be so great that they will be not able anymore to receive the gospel. It will be when the gospel won’t be preached anymore and won’t find anymore good ground. Just see something. If the world still exist today, if the birds are still singing and we can laugh and live today, it is because the gospel is been preached. This is the reason why God is patient. Because He still wants and awaits for people to be saved.

 When there will be no more possibility for this and it will be so hard to do it, almost impossible, then the end as the end of Sodom and Gomorrah will come. People don’t know what are they doing when prohibiting and obstructing the spread of the gospel, when they are preventing it from happening. In a way, we can say that they are accelerating the end, even though we know that God knows the exact time and He is in control.

 We also know that the gospel is been persecuted throughout the time and is been hindered, but what we will probably see in these last times will be totally opposite to what God wants and the opposition against the gospel will be way too much.

Let’s have a look on the conversation that Abraham had with the Lord just before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

 “Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

 So the Lord said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.”

 Then Abraham answered and said, “Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?”

 So he said, “If I find forty-five, I will not destroy it.”

 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose there should be forty found there?”

 So He said, “I will not do it for the sake of forty.”

 Then He said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?”

 So He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

 And he said “Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?”

 So He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty.”

 Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?”

 And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.” So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.”

Genesis 18:22-33

 We see how Abraham asked the Lord if He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if there were at least fifty righteous within the city. The Lord told him that He won’t do it for the sake of those fifty. The conversation continued and Abraham kept on asking the same question, but assuming that there were less than fifty and thus going from forty-five, then forty, thirty, twenty and at the end ten. The Lord told him all the times that He would spare the city for the sake of the righteous and in this way they were not going to perish together with the wicked. Unfortunately, there were not found ten righteous, but only one and that was Lot. Was it because Lot didn’t proclaim the Lord to the others? We don’t know for sure, but nevertheless this is the duty of all Christians. To proclaim the Lord’s name to the lost and to warn for the wrath to come, for the judgement and for salvation that God offers in Christ.

We can also see that if there were enough righteous people, then the city was not going to be destroyed. The righteous are like the salt of this world. They preserve it from destruction. One of the qualities that the salt is having, is to preserve things from spoiling, speaking about certain foods or meat for example. The Christians preserve this world at the moment. They are this salt. When I speak about Christians, I’m speaking about new born persons who truly know Christ and walk righteously, because He makes them righteous. They do mistakes, but the righteousness prevails, because it comes from God.

The last number that Abraham mentioned was ten righteous persons. As they were less, there was nothing to prevent from the destruction of the city. One day the righteous people won’t be anymore among us. They will be taken out, so that they can not be judged together with the wicked and experience the wrath. The case of Lot was just about being taken away from the city, but the case of the righteous of our time will be, to be taken out of this world. This is how God acts in these situations and if He did it in this way in that time, He will do it in a similar way in the next one, because He doesn’t change.

 Now, we don’t know, if this rapture will happen before the great tribulation, in the midst of it or after it. We don’t know as well if this refers just for the very last part of times and also what does it mean when we read about wrath. Does it refer for the destruction and the very last times or also for the great tribulation? **To me this tribulation and the fact that God will not just end everything in a moment, means that He does it with a purpose that people can reflect on their condition and repent. This is what trials are for.** The ones that we are going now trough and those that have to come to the whole world, otherwise He would have end everything in a moment without any warning. But He is a God that has a compassion and warns about danger, He warns about things that could happen, because He doesn’t want us to perish. Unfortunately, as we read throughout the whole Bible, there will be people that won’t hear and pay attention to this.

 Maybe we are not meant to know exactly all things, but something will happen. When the few Christians will be left there and when they will be not able anymore to do much more for the Kingdom, because of the great opposition, then they will be taken. We are starting to see this opposition now anyway. In the times that maybe no one expected it, due to the freedom speech and rights everyone is having, results that the Christians don’t benefit these rights at their maximum. There are certain laws that don’t allow them. So we don’t know how much more time is needed, but since these past years we can see this direction taking form.

 As we said before, we don’t know the exact way this event will happen. We’ve seen movies about it, we’ve heard stories and opinions, but the question is not how exactly, but the purpose with which will happen and for us is nothing else left, but to listen to the warnings in the Bible telling us to be always ready.

“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. **Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”** Matthew 24:40-42

Notice that these verses speak about persons that will be taken and others left behind. Exactly before the exhortation to be watchful, because we don’t know the exact hour in which He is coming. Now, we don’t know when exactly will happen and in which way. It is wrong to say and define with precision the time and the way in which it will happen. Most of the people did a mistake when doing this throughout the history. God doesn’t want us to know all the things at ones and somethings are not meant to know, exactly because they are meant to be taken by faith. Because a faith is needed for the salvation. We might have an imagination of how it could happen, but it doesn’t necessary mean that it will be in this way. The movies that we watch about these things (about the rapture) have as a purpose to give us an idea and to warn us maybe to be ready, but what they are showing us, is just the way they imagine it could happen.

 The question is that people want this to happen tomorrow and when they don’t see it happening, they start to question the word of God. But Peter wrote it fine in His second epistle in chapter 3, verse 1 to 4

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: **that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”**  2 Peter 3:1-4

A bit further in v.8 and 9 it is said:

“But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:8,9

 We see here the main purpose of God “delaying” His promise of coming back and redeeming finally His elect. It is because He still wants for people to know Him and get saved. He looks differently at time and His eyes see beyond and much further than what we can see or imagine. He sees the complete picture of our redemption. What an amazing God we’ve got! The best thing we can do is to trust Him!