

R 13

That would be a very, very simple thing to have said and to have taught without a question that this occurs before the tribulation. That would have been very simple. On the other hand it would have been very simple to say, "to meet the Lord in the air and immediately to return with Him to the earth to put an end to the tribulation." Either of those statements could very easily have been made by the apostle, but the apostle hasn't made either one of those statements. Now the view that the Church goes up and meets the Lord in the air and instantaneously and immediately reverses its direction and comes back to this earth with the Lord so there are only a few seconds intervening between when they are raised and when they return to the earth with Him is one which, so far as I know, nobody holds. That is, it is my impression that it is thought that there is something of an interval after the Church meets the Lord before they return to this earth. Now I don't know; I may be wrong, perhaps. There may be those who think that there is no interval, that it is an immediate, instantaneous, but it is my impression that most beliefs would hold there is something of an interval, and the question would be, "Is this interval then something which must be a very short period, perhaps a few minutes, a few hours, a few days, or could it possibly be as much as a period of three or four or seven or ten years?" Now that is the question on which it seems to me that v. 17 is very definitely ambiguous. I don't mean ambiguous, it doesn't leave us in doubt; it just avoids that question. As far as this is concerned we do not know. Well, now, can we know that the tribulation will come and therefore we will feel that it must be very, very near, that we can't go on much longer, or is it possible that we cannot tell and consequently that, I mean that in a way it doesn't make so much difference, you might say, whether the Church goes through the tribulation or not. ~~We've~~ The Church has gone through many tribulations. God has always been with His Church and tribulation has purified the Church. It is a good thing for the Church even though a very greivous thing to bear. It may be the Lord's will for us to go through