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#MSS06

**THE HOPE OF
MANKIND
IS
GOD
GOVERNING
THIS EARTH
(NOT THE RAPTURE)**

BY JOHN C. RIBBENS

PREFACE

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This booklet is dedicated to the memory of my life-long friend, Robert Johnson. We first met in 1939 in Wisconsin which was his home for all his years. During the years which followed, He, I and his wife Delores, enjoyed great fellowship in the things of the Word of God. He was a loyal friend of the Word of Truth Ministry and made many trips to visit us in California. Even though Bob is no longer in our midst, we have the glorious hope of sharing life again in the manifest Kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION

By M. B. Hammond

Do you know that we are today living in the last days of the dispensation of the grace of God, as Paul describes in 2 Timothy 3:1-9?

If you are aware of this, then you have learned that in this dispensation God is working in secret, and His silence means we must go to the Bible to learn His future purposes.

Do you know that God will bring in His Kingdom, or divine government, when the time is right for it?

Most modern Christians know about "the rapture" and can describe in detail how it is supposed to be the rescue God has provided to take the believers in Christ out of the world before the start of the Great Tribulation. They also will expound the horrors and terrors of life on earth during the Tribulation, and think it is only the destruction of all the evil people on earth.

Such is the ignorance of even some of the most esteemed scholars of Christendom. Most believers are not aware that the term "**the rapture**" is not a valid Biblical concept in either the New or Old Testament passages, but a man-made myth.

The Biblical text, usually referred to (1 Thess. 4:15-16) in support of the concept, is really a description of the "**parousia**" or the second coming of Christ, which is His personal return to earth at the end of the Tribulation. Nor do they understand that the subject of the manifest Kingdom of God is that which occupies the predominant teachings of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist and all the apostles, including Paul (See Acts 28:29-30).

Most Christians are also unaware that the Tribulation is actually a testing time for men who have lived in the manifest Kingdom of God (His divine government), enjoying all its blessings and privileges, while learning about God's righteous order. It tests men to see if they have learned righteousness (have submitted to God's righteous order) and prepares the world for His return. The parable taught by Christ of "growing grain" (Mark 4:26-29) gives us a figurative description of how the manifest Kingdom grows. The man casts seed into the ground and it comes up, he knows not how, for the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest has come (Mark 4:28-29). The first Stages, the blade and the ear, represent the Acts Period, when the Holy Spirit was given to all the faithful ones, and they all could use their gifts to do miraculous things and speak in foreign languages to credential their position as the believers in Christ (out-called ones or "church" in KJV). Another teaching of Christ, the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:24-30, describes how an enemy sows tares into the field of "good seed," and they are allowed to grow together until the harvest, when the tares are gathered and burned, and the wheat is gathered into the bam. In spite of these glowing parables, very few Christians today know about the future manifest Kingdom of God and the great blessings it will bring to mankind in fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham. Scripture is rich in descriptions of how God will resurrect and repatriate the Jews to Palestine, while denationalizing them, causing them to be the greatest nation on earth. Through them all the families of the earth are blessed, fulfilling God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Thus you see, there is no need for a "rapture" when God brings in His Kingdom. However, the "harvest" is really the Great Tribulation, which tests all mankind to see who has learned righteousness in God's righteous order, which is the manifest premillennial Kingdom of God. The wicked are destroyed and the righteous go on to live during the earthly reign of Christ for a thousand years. Is this unfamiliar to you? We ask you to study these ideas, because Scripture is very clear about this point, quoting Otis Q. Sellers, the founder of the Word Of Truth Ministry, "the earth, not heaven, is the future home of God's redeemed."

THE HOPE OF MANKIND IS GOD GOVERNING THIS EARTH (Not The Rapture)

By John C. Ribbens

As mankind enters the dawn of the third millennium, great fearful anticipation and anxiety seems to grip the hearts and minds of men everywhere. The perils now facing mankind will only increase as men's lives are further exposed to waves of terrorism, violence in the streets, the breakdown of law and order, poverty and the disruption of nature. The apostle Paul warned, This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come (recurring times of peril will occur, 2 Tim. 3:1). He was speaking of the concluding days of this present dispensation of Grace. The distorted social conditions reflected in the first five verses therein describe what is happening in the world today.

Is there something God can do to extricate mankind from this present flow of evil? Can God stem the vast capability of destruction man has in his power? I believe, with all the assurance of my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the promises in His Word, that there remains a great future for the people of this world. This hope (expectation) is not based on mere wishful thinking; it is not founded on mesmerism, but on the indisputable fact of divine intervention, also known in Scripture as the divine assumption of sovereignty. The incontrovertible fact is that God is going to break His present silence, to act openly, decisively and positively demonstrating that He is indeed "the Christ, the savior of the world" (John 4:42). Mankind will be preserved. Death will be abolished. Evil men and seducers will be paralyzed in their tracks, as it says in 2 Timothy 3:8-9. The question remains, "How and when will God do this great work?"

The Rapture Examined

In 1957, Dr. John F. Walvoord, then the president of Dallas Theological Seminary, published a popular book titled *The Rapture Question*. In this book he placed great emphasis on what he called, "The Doctrine of Imminency." This teaching was based on the idea that Christ could remove believers from the earth at any time and transport them to heaven (1 Thess. 4:16-17). He referred to John 14:1-3 in support of his belief in what he termed, "the translation of the church;" in which every believer would on that occasion be transformed from a body of flesh to an immortal body to be caught up from the earth. Walvoord also based his belief, in part, on the premise that the phrase, "My father's house" found in John 14:2 means "heaven." However, this idea cannot be supported by Scripture, because the identical word for "house," used here, also appears in John 2:16 where Jesus said, "Take these things hence, make not My Father's house an house of merchandise." This phrase, "My Father's house" spoken figuratively of the temple in Jerusalem, also signified that great temple not made with hands.

As the Scripture says, Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet: Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool: (Acts 7:48-49, compare Isa. 66:1).

Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). The Greek word for "mansions," *monee*, does not mean "magnificent palaces" as we understand it. Even the Elizabethan English word "mansion" is not a habitation, since it is derived from the French word "maison" which means "an establishment." Jesus did not say He was going to heaven to build the Twelve Apostles a mansion in which to live, but rather, that He was going to the cross to make possible for them to have positions of service to God. In the resurrection these twelve men will be raised to "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). His "going away" was not a spiritual departure, but an actual physical one, and on the day of Pentecost they were awaiting not His return, but the advent of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Walvoord's "Doctrine of Imminency" is also linked to what men popularly speak of as, "the second coming of Christ" *It is believed by the vast majority of Christians that at any moment Christ will leave His throne in heaven, resulting in the "translation of the church" at which time they will "be caught up together with them (the dead in Christ) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air"* (1 Thess. 4:17). In his book, Walvoord wrote, "In this generation there has been much discussion on the relation of the coming of Christ to the predicted time of the Tribulation which will overtake the world." He added, "The inspired prophecy of Peter predicts that the skeptics would ask the question, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' (2 Peter 3:4) and it is still being fulfilled." That position he postulated in 1957, and now, over 40 years later, it still remains unfulfilled. Men still ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Proverbs declares, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12). Permit me to say with all the strength of my being, that I believe in the second coming of Christ as reported in Acts 1:9-11. However, the indisputable fact remains that since Dr. Walvoord wrote his book, Jesus has not returned to earth.

There has been no "second coming of Christ." Many skeptics have seized on the reality of this fact, including the Preterists, who believe that the second coming of Christ has already occurred. Ward Fenley, in his book *The Second Coming of Christ Already Happened*, points to a number of New Testament passages which he alleges provide proof that Christ came about 70 AD, at the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. In his book he states, "It is very dangerous to say that Jesus would emphasize His two-thousand year future coming just to keep first century Jews on their best behavior. . . This would not only be deception by our Savior, but it could be terribly disappointing to those whom He loved so much." With this I would agree. Fenley supports his position by referring to passages such as Matthew 16:28, as proof. This passage reads: **Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.** Fenley fails to recognize that "Christ coming in His Kingdom" and "they shall see

the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30) are two separate and distinct events. Matthew 16 clearly points to the events of the day of Pentecost, which inaugurated the "blade and ear" stages of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:26-29, the parable of "growing grain"). This is the initial phase of the Kingdom, marked by the Holy Spirit being given to the believers. The Matthew 24 passage speaks of the future parousia when Christ returns to earth in person to assume the reins of government.

The important event in Matthew 24:29-30 corresponds in time and character to Revelation 11:15-17. At that time, The kingdoms (governments) of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever (in respect to the eons of eons). And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned (do reign). During this 2,500-year time interval, between the time of His future parousia, and when these words were first spoken in Matthew 24, mankind has been privileged to live during the greatest display of grace this world has ever known. When this present dispensation of grace comes to its climactic end, the Kingdom of God will become manifest in all the earth. This enormously important event will fulfill the Biblical acclamation that indeed the Messiah (Christ) is "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

The Blessed Hope

First century believers in Jesus Christ were waiting for the coming (Gk.-apokalupsin, the unveiling) of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:7). We, who are now living in the concluding days of this present eon (the Day of Man, the dispensation of grace), are "looking for that blessed hope, even the appearing (Gk.-epiphaneia, the blazing forth) of the glory of the great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). This majestic expectation was first heralded by Moses who wrote, ... And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord (Num. 14:17-21). It was later confirmed by the prophet Habakkuk who declared, For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). These two distinct events are synonymous expectations. The realization of this hope marks the inception of divine government. Once God intervenes in the affairs of men, and He positively will, the flood gates of His manifest Kingdom will open, unleashing a tidal wave of physical and spiritual blessings unprecedented in God's dealings with mankind.

A vast number of concomitant blessings will occur including the fulfillment of Psalm 110. It says, "The Lord said unto My Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Psa. 110:1). This awesome work of God has never yet been accomplished. His enemies still prevail. The psalmist David declared,

Arise, O God, plead Thine own cause: remember how foolish man reproacheth Thee daily. Forget not the voice of Thine enemies: The tumult of those that rise up against Thee increaseth continually (Psa. 74:22-23). This will be a sad commentary on the lives of God's enemies living today. Psalm 46 reveals, Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations (awe inspiring things) He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear insunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still (cease and desist) and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen (nations), I will be exalted in the earth (Psa. 46:8-10). This is the kind of glorious day which lies ahead for mankind in God's plan.

The fulfillment of this majestic declaration will mark the final and definitive end of all warfare and the weapons of mass destruction that mankind has imposed on other men. Imagine a world void of all the weapons of warfare. There will be no military institutions, and no anxieties over the use of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Note the poignant word of Isaiah, And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke (enlighten) many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isa. 2:4). At long last all men will live in peace. The implementation of these awesome promises is solely contingent upon the divine assumption of sovereignty.

John 16:7-11 describes a work of the Holy Spirit of such enormity, that the fulfillment of this work will cause every man, woman, and child to experience the blessings of divine enlightenment concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. Never again will men remain ignorant in regard to the person of Christ. God will yet exalt Him and give Him a name (reputation) which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (render submission), of things in heaven (mighty ones), and things in earth (rulers among men) and things under the earth (commoners); and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). What a day of rejoicing this will be! All the ignominy, ridicule, shame and rejection Christ has endured for centuries will forever be eliminated. The result of God's determination to enlighten mankind will create a society of men having complete and accurate knowledge of Jesus Christ. No man on earth will ever again be able to hide behind the cloak of darkness and ignorance. It will result in every living being on earth being brought under a new responsibility and accountability before God.

The entire fabric of society will be transformed by the knowledge of God's judgments and His righteous order. All standards of conduct and behavior will have to conform to the principles (law) of the government of God. All who submit and yield will be enormously blessed. All who remain recalcitrant and refuse to conform to the judgments of God will be eliminated from the earth. Note the Psalm which says, For evildoers shall be cutoff: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, Thou

shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit (enjoy an allotment) the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Psa. 37:9-11). What a contrast to life as we know it today. God's righteous order (His judgments) will fill the earth. God is a God of order and righteousness, and Psalm 119 is a divine commentary on God's laws, commandments, testimonies, precepts, statutes, judgments and words which all have to do with the righteous order of God. For more commentary on His judgments, take note of verses 7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, and 62. The impact of mankind living in subservience to the righteous judgments and precepts of God will radically transform society. All human institutions and governments of men will, of necessity, have to conform to the principles of divine government.

Imagine mankind living in a society which worships the One true God; call it a "religionless society" in complete freedom from the oppression produced by men claiming to speak for God. The success of God's program to enlighten mankind will not be contingent upon church programs however lofty these may appear to be. The knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ will not be the result of men building new churches, creating new missionary programs, filling the halls of seminaries, or forming new coalitions. Instead, it will be the result of the manifest work of the Holy Spirit. These glorious conditions involving the well-being of mankind, the absence of natural disasters, the end of all hostilities between nations will not be the result of human government or the success of religious or social programs. It will be the result of God imposing His divine government and His righteous order on all living beings upon planet Earth. At long last God will break the shackles of sin and death in place of sadness, crying and the outpouring of grief; praise unto the Lord God will fill this firmament. This glory belongs to God. **In the words of the psalmist David, O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our Lord (Psa. 98:1-3).**

Words fail me to express the glory of the coming eon in which God will flow out to the nations. I cannot adequately express the ultimate success of God's programs for mankind. However, the victory is assured, as Isaiah says, Behold my Servant (God's choice of Messiah), whom I have chosen, My beloved, in Whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My spirit upon Him; and He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles (nations). He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust (Matt. 12:18-21, a quotation by Christ from Isa. 42:1-4). These glorious conditions will prevail in the earth for over five centuries before the parousia of Jesus Christ.

As mankind then approaches the Day of the Lord, and the consummation of the eon (KJV-end of the world, Matt. 24:3), numerous changes will begin to occur in the earth, related to God's testing of men. As the day of the Lord draws near, God determines to lift the restraints produced by the work of the Holy Spirit. Nations, having lived long in a subservient position to the divine government, become openly rebellious and hostile, especially toward the nation of Israel. For centuries, nations will have enjoyed the blessings God promised to the patriarch Abraham. Recall God's unconditional promises to him, ". . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). At that time Israel will have grown to a place of prominence and size unlike any other nation on earth. God Said to Abraham, And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing (Gen. 12:2). No nation on earth, during the manifest Kingdom of God, will fail to recognize that innumerable spiritual blessings have come to them because of God's direct involvement with the nation of Israel. Numerous Old Testament prophecies attest to that fact.

Both Micah and Isaiah provide the same vivid picture of the Kingdom: But in the last days (concluding days of man's day) it shall come to pass that the mountain (figure of government) of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains (leadership over the nations), and it shall be exalted above the hills: and peoples (streams of humanity) shall flow unto it (Micah 4:1, Isa. 2:2). We need to know that in that day Jerusalem will have become the capital city over all the earth. God's government will be localized in Zion, a city of spectacular beauty and prominence. Scripture goes on to say, And many nations shall come, and say, Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the god of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Micah 4:2). We have here an incredible picture of the nations from every corner of the earth coming to Jerusalem seeking truth from God. Nothing of this kind has ever yet happened. The spiritual wealth of the nations will in large measure flow out to them through Israel. Nations having lived long under the government of God will be blessed, but not apart from recognition of their responsibilities toward God and the nation of Israel as an instrument of blessing in the plan and purpose of God. In speaking of that city the prophet Zechariah stated, Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain (Zech. 8:3). What a contrast to the present city of Jerusalem, which is constantly filled with violence and strife.

The Divine Restraints Lifted

The lifting of the divine restraints will result in an unprecedented, ferocious attack on the part of the nations against Israel. The result of this attack is given in Joel 3. At that time Jehovah declares, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land (Joel 3:2). This is a future dispersion of Israel which is also referred to in Revelation 12:6, reflecting Matthew 24:15-22, where the Jews are forced to flee from Judaea in the Tribulation. This Satanic attack is on the nation of Israel and her leadership in Jerusalem, including David and the Twelve Apostles. Scripture says, When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains (Matt. 24:15-16). This verse refers to Daniel 9:26 which says, And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. The Hebrew word for "messiah" as used in Scripture literally means "anointed" and here it is not referring to Christ but to David, who is God's appointed ruler (prince) on earth in the Kingdom of God (Ezek. 34:24; 37:24-25). Many Bible teachers apply this reference to the death of Christ in 29 AD. In so doing they have severed the sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy from the seventieth week. I believe that the entire seventy weeks of Daniel belong to the time of the Kingdom.

At the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week David is "cut off, but not for himself. The Hebrew word for "cutoff" is korath, and it signifies a total severance from previous activity, power and influence. In Genesis 17:4 it says, The uncircumcised man whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off (korath) from his people. Once the "man of sin," or "the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3), also known as the "vile person" (Dan. 11:25) and "the abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15), appears on the scene, mankind will witness the most insidious attack upon the people of Israel the world has ever seen. Jesus said, in response to the disciples' question, What shall be the sign of Thy coming (G\aparousia)l, Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake (Matt. 24:3, 9). These events mark the time of "Jacob's trouble" spoken of in Jeremiah 30:7, and also known as the "Great Tribulation" spoken of in Matthew 24:21. This time is also described as "the hour of temptation, which shall come on all the world, to try (Gk.-peirasmos, put to the proof) them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10). This is not a time of sadistic torture, but rather the universal testing of mankind in respect to the people of Israel. No God-fearing believer will have any reason to fear this time of testing. It marks the time when the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the

Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rev. 12:9).

This hostile scene is characterized by John who recorded, I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy (Rev. 13:1). Whenever we are confronted with such figurative terms, we should ask, "What is represented by this beast which shall arise out of the sea?" Many diverse opinions and ideas have been expressed in regard to what is meant by "the beast." But Scripture is its own best expositor, and when we go to Revelation 17, we find many of the symbols explained. The "great red dragon" of Rev. 12 was Satan in a figure (12:3, 12:9). In Rev. 17 the great whore is seated upon a scarlet dragon having seven heads and ten horns. The "woman" was Babylon, the seat of power of that time. The "heads" are kings given power in a sequence and the "ten horns" are ten kings "which have power for an hour" (probably the final attack on Jerusalem). These "beasts" are a symbolic presentation of Satan regaining his power and political sovereignty over the world (as he has today), during the beginning of the Day of the Lord. Just as the "waters," out of which the first beast (a man) came, stand for (Rev. 17:15) peoples, multitudes, tongues and nations, so the beast is given his power by the dragon (Satan), the manipulator of kings.

The "beast" is said to possess a mouth which speaks great things and blasphemies, and exercises power and dominion over tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:6-7). The first "beast" is followed by a second "beast" (Rev. 13:11), coming up out of the earth having two horns like a lamb and he speaks as the dragon. This beast gets his power from the first beast to make fire come down from heaven and do miracles in the sight of the people. He appears as a being full of blandishments, attractions, allurements, and pleasurable activities, which will all be put forth in the interests of human greatness and happiness. This seduction of mankind prepares the way for the "man of sin" and the "lawless one," who shall be a law unto himself and the whole world. Many men will be deceived into having delight in him and regarding him as the greatest benefactor the world has ever known. It says of him, And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given to him to continue forty and two months (three and one-half years). And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven (Rev. 13:5-6).

The Beast And The Tribulation

The conclusion we must come to is that this "beast" is none other than that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God (2 Thess. 2:3-4). All indications are

that this sinister being is "the prince that shall come" (Dan. 9:26); "the abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15), and "the anti-Christ" (1 John 2:18). This being is the one that deceiveth them that dwell on earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had a wound by the sword and did live. And he had power to give life unto the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save that he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Rev 13:14-17). I would advise all believers who expect the imminent return of Christ, that before His parousia, this "man of sin" must make his presence known to all men. If he is on earth today, where and who is this anti-Christ? The Scripture plainly says, That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:3). This "falling away" is characterized by a final Satanic attempt to usurp control of the nations and the reigns of government.

This Satanic activity also gives rise to a monetary economy in which men will no longer be able to "buy or sell" unless that person receives the mark of the beast as defined above (Rev. 13:14-17). I ask you to tell me if you know what evidence there is in the world today of such activity? I have found none. This scenario seems incredible when, for centuries prior to the Day of the Lord, men will have enjoyed every physical and material blessing without obligation. Note that Psalm 145:15-16 shows that under divine government, hunger and deprivation will be abolished. In Revelation 14 John adds, If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke (shame) of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and who receiveth the mark of his name (Rev. 14:9-11).

It is most important to recognize that these events belong to the future Day of the Lord, and all attempts to read these apocalyptic scenes into the present time are doomed to fail. These events, as revealed by Paul and in the book of Revelation, will occur during the final or seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, and in particular, to the final three and one-half years of that seven-year prophecy. What will the future hold for these billions of men living upon the earth during this time of tribulation? Unfortunately, many men have seized upon this end-time scenario to depict a time of global catastrophe in which believers are "translated" or caught up from earth, while the unbelievers are put to death during the Great Tribulation. Let us be clear here: five centuries of divine government will not come to an end with the decimation of mankind. Heaven's government does not end in the cataclysmic destruction of the human race. It ends in a

period of testing for every living being on earth. The overwhelming billions of men who have enjoyed the extraordinary joys and privileges of living upon a redeemed earth will go on to enter the parousia of Jesus Christ. The vast numbers of men, living on the earth prior to the second coming of Christ, will have been made ready by the work of the Holy Spirit to live on into the thousand-year reign of Christ. As a result of that final period of testing, those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (2 The. 1:7-9). I believe this to be a small number out of the total sum of mankind, and I do NOT ascribe failure to the goals of God in imposing His divine government upon the earth.

The Majestic Parousia of Jesus Christ

As the result of Satan's final attempt to deceive and corrupt God's creation and all mankind, there will be an attempt on his part to induce men to worship his false benefactor claiming to be God, Scores of men will refuse to submit or yield to the pressure he will invoke upon mankind. As a consequence of their obedience to Christ, and to the living word of God, they will patiently await His return. They will not be swayed by all of Satan's deceptions, and are even willing to lay down their lives if need be, knowing full well they will quickly be returned to life. These faithful men are the martyrs who refuse to accept the mark of the beast; they are the "blessed, the dead which die in the Lord" of Revelation 14:13. They are the "martyrs of Jesus" who die in the Lord (Rev. 17:6). These martyred dead, which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming (parousia) of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:14-17).

This global extravaganza will be seen and heard world-wide. It will mark a supreme moment of triumph for Christ when He descends from heaven to be personally present upon the earth for a thousand years. This majestic and mighty scenario occurs after the Tribulation when at that time, Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30). These martyred dead are part of Christ's honored escort to meet the Lord as He descends to the earth to take up His earthly reign in the Millennium. This glorious event which involves the resurrection of the saints from the dead to join in the triumphant return of Christ to the earth belongs to the future—it is NOT imminent at this time. We who have now placed our faith in Christ and made our commitment to Him as the out-called ones of God, in this present day of grace, may indeed share in the honor of His triumphal return to earth, even as we have served Him in glorifying the God of every grace during the premillennial Kingdom of God. We say

to Him, "May He impose His divine, and glorious government over the earth," even as we pray the words, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Summary

The Christian who reads the Bible to understand the truth that God has placed there, will find that many things he previously believed are false and not supported by that ultimate source. There are many concepts men have incorporated into their doctrines simply to support their prior beliefs. The "rapture" is simply a man-made concept to compensate for other falsehoods that creep into theology. The manifest Kingdom of God is a Biblical concept based on hundreds of passages. The fact that modern Christendom has misunderstood much of Scripture should not deter our further study. If we really seek after truth, the Holy Spirit will help us in our efforts, but let us be ready to change our views, when they appear to be in direct conflict with the truth of Scripture. "Truth" is that which accords with the facts, and "the facts" we have gained come mainly from the Scripture we possess. The false ideas of men, such as that we go to heaven when we die, the soul is immortal, the salvation of the believer requires water baptism, the sacraments of the church, and a human mediator to lay-on hands, cannot be supported by Scripture if we continue to "rightly divide the Word of truth." Thus, our responsibility is to go on following Paul's direction to Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). When we do this we will grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:16). With our salvation assured, and with our names in God's Book of Life, we can concentrate on knowing Him more deeply and intimately. We will be able to boast about this, as Scripture says, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord (Jer. 9:23-24).

End MSS06

THE HOPE OF MANKIND IS GOD GOVERNING THIS EARTH

**OTHER MATERIAL AVAILABLE ON THIS AND RELATED
SUBJECTS**

Suggested reading:

BOOKLETS by Otis Q. Sellers,

THE STUDY OF HUMAN DESTINY, #SS01

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF MANKIND, #SS25

SEED & BREAD PAMPHLETS by Otis Q. Sellers,

INHERITING THE EARTH, #SB073

THE BELIEVERS DESTINY, #SB074

EARTH OUR FUTURE HOME, #SB075

ISRAEL'S PROMISED RETURN, #SB154

EZEKIEL'S AMAZING PROPHECY, #SB155

KING DAVID'S GLORIOUS FUTURE, #SB156

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD, #SB174

MORE ABOUT THE WORLD, #SB175

THE KINGDOM IS COMING, #SB194

TL CASSETTES by Otis Q. Sellers,

THE HOPE OF MANKIND, (4 sides) #TL43, TL44, TL45, TL46

THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD, #TL257, TL258

MORE SEED AND BREAD PAMPHLETS by others,

THE RESTORATION OF THE DAVIDIC SCENE, jcr , **MSB203**

INDIVIDUAL JUDGMENT, drh , **MSB204**

INSTEAD OF THE THORN, drh , **MSB213**

THE HOUSE GOD MADE FOR DAVID, mbh , MSB _____

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT, jcr , **MSB224**

GOD'S NEXT MANIFEST ACT, jcr , **MSB227**

