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**THE  
IMMINENCY  
OF THE  
RAPTURE:  
fact or fiction?**

**By John C. Ribbens**

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### **DEDICATION**

The admonition of Scripture is that men ought to "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." (2 Tim 2:15). It is my fervent hope that my son, Dan, and his wife, Karen, as well as my son, Doug, and his wife, Ann, may continue to pursue this noble cause to the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## FOREWORD

By Edward J. Michelic

One of the primary areas of interest among a large segment of believers in Jesus Christ today concerns what has been described as "the rapture of the Church." This message is being heralded by a number of evangelical Bible teachers as the ultimate hope of mankind. We are being told that the idea of a secret "rapture" has now become the most important message of the Bible. If, as these thousands of men allege that the rapture is now imminent, it would behoove every believer to think and act as though Christ's coming could occur at any moment.

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, in their book, *Tribulation Force*, described the scene on earth in their Prologue (p. vii) as follows:

*"In one cataclysmic instant, millions of people all over the world disappeared. They simply vanished, leaving behind everything material... Millions vanished, but millions more remained—adults but no children, and only a few young teens. All babies, including the unborn, disappeared— some during birth. Worldwide chaos ensued. Planes, trains, buses and cars crashed, ships sank, homes burned, grieving survivors committed suicide. A transportation and communications gridlock, coupled with the disappearance of many service personnel, left most to fend for themselves until some semblance of order returned."*

Dramatic, even gripping, isn't it? Thousands who have read this passage believe that God will do these things because the Bible predicts them. But is it true? Is that really what the Bible predicts? The answer in this booklet is, "NO!" That unscriptural disaster will be replaced with a scenario of joy and God's marvelous blessing.

The scenario aforementioned is being widely promoted as the "rapture of the Church." That is, the Church, the "true believers" in Christ, will be secretly taken off the earth to meet the Lord before the tribulation, to escape a prophesied worldwide display of God's wrath. The Church insists that God's wrath is the just and necessary punishment for worldwide evils, as follows:

- \* World conditions are deteriorating; societies have become morally apathetic and violent.
- \* The Church is under attack worldwide.
- \* Israel is threatened with extinction.

As world conditions have become worse, the "rapture of the Church" is being proclaimed "imminent"; it could happen any hour, any day now. Books on this theme have multiplied and unfortunately have become read widely.

Granted, sincere Christians are not mistaken about world conditions— they have become worse; worldwide violence is occurring now as is prophesied in 2 Timothy 3:1-13. The opportunity for God to act is evident and conditions do not have to get any worse before He does. But He does NOT have to intervene in the way described in these popular books! In fact, many Bible scholars have written against it; their objections will be included.

Some sincere Christians believe they have found the solution in Scripture. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 describes persons being "caught up... in the air." This is a key passage for the doctrine of the "rapture of the Church." This doctrine will be shown as a misconception of the Scriptures from which it is drawn. The "rapture" passages in the Bible are not for the time nor for the escape that is advocated by its promoters. Instead, that passage will be shown its rightful place in a time and context of blessing.

Among the reasons that the doctrine of the rapture has gained such popularity are conflicting views of what God has been doing over the two millennia since the last Bible books were written. God's long work of grace has not been fully understood for what it is, and how it leads into His next move. God WILL intervene, but not in wrath. When He does, He will restrain evil and shower blessings of health and wisdom according to the words of Christ and His prophets. His actions will be shown as loving and merciful, appropriate for the One who is the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). It will be the time of resurrections, and the training of men in righteousness (Isaiah 26:8-9). In due time, God will test men to see what they have learned. It will be shown further that these acts of God have a marvelous sequel, in which God makes His dwelling place with man.

The author's purpose in this booklet is to present the relevant facts and implore readers to consider them carefully and thoughtfully. I seek to bring them to remember the God who, as the prophet Jonah learned, is the "God of Mercy" before He is the "God of Wrath."

# **THE IMMINENCY OF THE RAPTURE:**

## **FACT OR FICTION?**

**BY JOHN C. RIBBENS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Some 55 years ago I made a serious commitment to the study of God's Word. As I look back on these past years, I can say that God has truly enriched my life with spiritual things. The book of Proverbs declares, "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 23:23). The psalmist David wrote, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these shall see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep" (Psa. 107:23-24). In the course of the years of my life I have realized that God has richly rewarded me in obtaining a knowledge of His truth. My present understanding of the prophetic Word has given me a new perspective on the things God has planned for the future of mankind. I consider these truths to be my most-prized possession.

During my lifetime I have been singularly blessed by the teaching ministry of the late Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992). We first met in 1934 in Chicago, Illinois. Owing to his commitment to the truth of God, while still in his youth, though an ordained minister, he was disfellowshipped from the company of his peers. This stemmed from his position on certain church practices, supposedly based on Biblical elements, dealing with the doctrine of baptism and the so-called Lord's Supper. When faced with the Biblical facts, he valued the truth of God above the doctrines of men. Within the past decade I have had the distinct privilege of preparing a number of Biblical studies dealing with matters of eschatology and the nature and destiny of man. I can honestly say that my commitment to the study of God's Word during these past years has been rewarded with enormous spiritual blessings. The welcome reception to these things I have written have been a source of encouragement to me. I now share a common bond with a number of men, which is our mutual faith in Jesus Christ. About a year ago I wrote a study titled *The Nations Trusting In Christ*. This study was predicated on my belief that world conditions cry out for divine intervention. A recent article appearing in a magazine, published by the United Church of God, stated, "Bible prophecy indicates that as the age of man draws to close, political and military leaders will unleash violence and destruction on an unimaginable scale. Hundreds of millions will lose their lives." This scenario fails to recognize that Jesus Christ is "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

In addition to that effort, I have chosen to write a study dealing with a rather volatile subject called "the imminency of the rapture." My primary reason for preparing this study

is based on my belief that mankind is gradually approaching an end to God's long display of grace. As world affairs become more hostile and this long Day of Man draws to a close, it becomes imperative that men appreciate that blessed hope of which the Apostle Paul spoke in Titus 2:13. Furthermore, I believe that the subject of the "rapture" has been promoted by a number of sincere men as a panacea to these deteriorating world conditions. Men allege that the rapture is now imminent and that it constitutes the final hope for men living today. Another reason for writing this work is to point men to the reality of the manifest Kingdom of God. Whether or not men agree or disagree with my findings is not of critical importance. What matters most is the willingness of men to consider the facts of Scripture that are relevant to this issue.

In the course of preparing this study, I have made a diligent effort to familiarize myself with the writings of a diverse company of men claiming their support for the rapture issue. This booklet includes a bibliography exhibiting the words of many different authors. The overall consensus of these authors favor what they describe as "the pre-tribulational rapture of the Church." My personal study of this subject indicates that the earliest records of this subject dealing with the rapture dates back to the year 1830. That was the year in which a fifteen-year-old Scottish lassie named Margaret Macdonald claimed to have received a direct revelation from God. This subject is explained in greater detail in Chapter 2 of this booklet.

The subject of "the imminence of the rapture" has become a focal point in the writing of most of the authors aforementioned. Some of the concepts discussed in this work are based on my understanding of certain Greek words found in the New Testament. Although some of these words may have a strange sound, their meanings are not difficult to understand. For example, the meaning of the Greek word *parousia* simply means "the personal presence of one because of who he is and what he is capable of doing." When we speak of the *parousia* of Jesus Christ, we are speaking of One who will demonstrate His capability to deal with the affairs of the nations. When we speak of the second coming of Christ, we are referring to both His physical return to rule on earth and to His *parousia*. For the benefit of the beginning Bible student, I suggest the use of a simple Greek concordance.

One that is readily available is titled, *A Critical Lexicon And Concordance To The English And Greek New Testament*, by Dr. E.W. Bullinger. A source for this book can be found at Truth For Today Bible Fellowship, P.O. Box 6358, Lafayette, IN 47903. A lexicon is simply no more than a dictionary listing each of the Greek words found in the New Testament. The reader of this study is strongly encouraged to open his Bible to verify the use of the passages of Scripture that are used to support the position of the author.

I make no claim to being a Bible scholar as defined by organized religious institutions, but I do claim to being a diligent student of the Word of God and fully responsive to Paul's admonition, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). I do believe that I have made an honest and objective consideration of the subject of the rapture. I pray that this study will bring honor to the Lord Jesus Christ and serve in some way to advance the knowledge of His Word among the believers of this world.

## **THE RAPTURE ISSUE**

The doctrine of the "imminency of the rapture" constitutes a masterpiece of satanic deception. As world conditions continue to deteriorate, the current wave of interest in the doctrine of the imminency of the rapture is accelerating. Many sincere Bible students believe that as the result of the world being inundated by wars, natural disasters, panic and fear, the sudden removal of the believers in Christ from earth to heaven will resolve this, at least for a favored few. If the rapture were to occur at any moment, how does one explain the mass confusion that would result in the earth? Is this concept of the rapture consistent with the character of a loving and merciful God?

In his book titled, *The Road To Armageddon*, Dr. John Walvoord quotes Dr. Harold Wilmington, who said, "According to the Bible there is coming a calamity unlike any which this weary world has ever seen. The estimated toll of life lost ranges from 750 million to one billion. An additional 340 million would be seriously injured and 33 percent of those would be incapacitated because of nuclear radiation, and chemical or biological warfare." This is typical of the twisted ideas that are now being proclaimed by men maintaining to be teachers of God's word. They seem to be totally oblivious to the fact that the Bible heralds the fact that "this (Jesus) is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42). What men have failed to comprehend is that the greatest event in the history of God's dealings with mankind is the manifest Kingdom of God, and that, furthermore, this stupendous event must precede the parousia of Jesus Christ. Present world conditions do not set a precedent favoring the so-called rapture of the Church.

If ever there was a time in the history of mankind when God needed to act openly, I believe that now is that time. Nations today are in great turmoil, distress and anxiety, and face an uncertain future. Thinking men everywhere recognize the seriousness of these global conditions. In a desperate attempt to circumvent the reality of these times, many presumed Bible scholars have promoted the false doctrine of the rapture of the church. Many hold that the end of the world may soon become a reality. This escapist doctrine

has been heralded in the writings of Dr. John Walvoord, Wayne Brindle, John MacArthur and Hal Lindsey to name a few. They have literally ransacked the Scriptures in defense of this grossly misleading doctrine. Never before in the course of history have men become more despondent because of decadent social and political affairs. We are now witnessing a theological meltdown. The Bible has become irrelevant in their lives, the inerrancy of God's word has been, and continues to be ridiculed. Rather than focusing men's lives and minds upon the fact of the coming divine intervention, they have fallen prey to certain Bible teachers and evangelists who boldly proclaim the false hope of the imminency of the rapture.

The Apostle Paul in writing his epistle to the Ephesians warns us that Satan is "the prince (ruler) of the power of the air (environment), the spirit that now worketh (energizes) the children (sons) of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). The tragedy of this present time is that millions of innocent people are being misled by this illusory "doctrine of the imminency" of the rapture of the Church. Now is the time when men's lives should be directed to the promise of divine intervention of a loving God for the hope of their future. We are currently exposed to a number of books and statements made by presumed Bible scholars intended to strike fear in the hearts of men. Highly charged emotional rhetoric is used by these men whose main purpose is for selling their books and getting recognition from men.

Make no mistake that the nations upon the earth are in great turmoil. In the May 2001 issue of Atlantic Monthly, Jeffrey Taylor cites the gradual disintegration of Russia's 1,000-year history, which is destined to shrink demographically, weaken economically, and possibly disintegrate territorially. This great nation, that at one time was proclaimed by men like Hal Lindsey as the "Gog" of Scripture, has now become a nation lacking political, technical, and financial superiority. Economic devastation has resulted in 36 million of the population of 52 million living below the subsistence level set at a dollar a day. Russia has become a dying economy that threatens the stability and future of the country.

Economic distress and doctrinaire intransigence brought about the fall of the Soviet Union and may bring about the fall of Russia. In view of the ailing economy, Russia's gross national product (GNP) today amounts to just four percent of the United States' GNP. The Russians are likely to face a long slow, relatively peaceful decline into obscurity, a process that is well underway. Hal Lindsey, in his book *The Rapture*, wrote in 1985, "The Soviet Union, already the mightiest military power in history, continues to move in all parts of the globe and wear down the will of the free world to resist." Current conditions in Russia completely contradict these allegations. Even more ludicrous are the assertions made by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins in their book, *Are*



We Living In The End Times?, written in 1999: "The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel was given a detailed prophecy twenty-five-hundred years ago, foretelling that Russia would become a dominant player on the world scene in the last days (Ezek. 38,39). He even predicted that her allies would march with her against the mountains of Israel. Their objective would be to finish what Adolph Hitler had been unable to accomplish, which was the destruction of the Jews from the face of the earth. Ezekiel predicted that God would supernaturally destroy the attacking armies of Russia in order to show His omnipotent power to the world and to demonstrate that He has unfinished plans for the nation of Israel."

Obviously, this scenario has not yet happened nor will this ill-informed event come to pass, as these false prognosticators would like to have men believe. God has indeed planned for the restoration and reconstitution of the nation of Israel. To suggest that the destruction of the nation of Israel is next on God's agenda is a satanic lie. The prophet Ezekiel makes plain that "by a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, that I will rule over you (Israel)" (Ezek. 20:33-38). No nation on the earth, no principality nor power in the heavens is capable of subverting this plan and purpose of God.

What these 'pre-tribulationists' have conveniently ignored is that this awesome work of God will, by divine decree, precede the parousia of Christ (The Day of the Lord). The glaring mistake on the part of these rapturists is their failure to recognize that before the event spoken of by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, God will intervene in the affairs of mankind and establish His kingdom in the earth. If the inauguration of that event were to occur today, it would be at least 500 years before the predicted event of the so-called rapture could take place. This fact alone should dispel the false notion of the imminency of the rapture. John F. MacArthur, writing in his essay "Is Christ's Return Imminent?" states, "There are no other events that must occur on the prophetic calendar before Christ comes to meet us in the air." Obviously, this brother has overlooked the Scriptures that clearly speak of many events which by definition must precede the second coming of Christ. At the same time what most of these men have failed to comprehend is that the literal fulfillment of these myriad number of blessings will nullify all of the anxiety that currently fills the hearts and minds of men everywhere, whether believers or non-believers. These presumed scholars who have incited fear and panic in the hearts of some men ought to be ashamed. This total transformation of life upon earth due to the manifest Kingdom of God far transcends the alleged hope associated with the so-called rapture of the Church. The glorious future of mankind that can be attributed to divine intervention defies description.

These views are ones of being a futurist premillennial believer in Jesus Christ. They differ substantially from those expressed by the overwhelming number of rapturists. If

men could only comprehend the message of Matthew 13:44, those men would eagerly distance themselves from the false hope of the rapture. The "blessed hope," which the apostle Paul addresses in Titus 2:13, is completely foreign to the ethereal, non-Scriptural, escapist hope of the rapture. In Matthew 13:44 Jesus explained, Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for the joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field. We are living in a society driven by the desire of achieving great personal and financial success. Climbing the corporate ladder to success has taken precedence over achieving a fulfilling life of faith in Jesus Christ. In social circles being recognized as a successful business tycoon or a highly proclaimed political leader is of greater importance than being a faithful servant of God or a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The spiritual benefits that will accrue to a man living in the Kingdom of God will exceed the capacity of our imagination. Divine government will create an entirely new sense of well being. If these present-day rapturists could begin to understand the intrinsic value of the Kingdom of God, they would willingly abandon this false hope of the rapture.

In order to place this doctrine of the rapturist into proper perspective, I have drafted a series of questions designed to elicit a spirit-filled response:

1. What explicit Scriptural authority exists for the so-called doctrine of the rapture of the church?
2. Does Scripture support the concept of Christ coming for His saints, and seven years later coming with His saints?
3. When in the course of secular history will the so-called rapture of the church occur?
4. On what Biblical basis are we exhorted to believe that the rapture is imminent?
5. What will be the fate of millions of men left behind who are not raptured?
6. How does the doctrine of the rapture relate to the timing of the Great Tribulation?

7. How does the rapture relate prophetically to the parousia of Jesus Christ?
8. In what manner does the rapture relate to the destiny of the earth?
9. Which prophetic events by definition precede the rapture?
10. What is the relationship between the rapture of the Saints and the ekklesia of God?
11. How does the rapture issue relate to a man's salvation?
12. How does the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant relate to the timing of the rapture?
13. How does the consummation of the Eon relate to the doctrine of the rapture?
14. How does one explain the mass hysteria that would result in the earth if the rapture were to occur now?
15. Is the alleged rapture of the church the real hope of mankind?

## **HISTORICAL BAPTISM**

The roots of historical rapturism can be traced back to the year 1830 AD, when a 15 - year-old Scottish lassie named Margaret Macdonald claimed to have had a revelation from God that a select group of believers would be raptured from the earth before the days of the anti-Christ. Miss Macdonald was born on January 14, 1815, in the city of Port Glasgow, Scotland. She had twin brothers, James and George, who were born on December 11, 1800, at Saltcoats, on the western coast of Scotland. Early in his life James received Christ as his Savior, and a few weeks later George similarly opened his heart to the Lord and became a new creation in Christ. Margaret's older sisters, Mary and Jane, followed in their brother's footsteps and became believers on February 9, 1835. The Glasgow Herald reported the death of James Mac Donald, a ship builder, at 34 years of

age. Shortly after this George's death notice showed he died on September 21, 1835. Both brothers exhibited symptoms of what their doctor described as "incipient pulmonary disease." Not long after, their sister Margaret died.

Secular history records the fact that the pretribulation rapture's birthplace is Port Glasgow, Scotland, and that its birth date is the year 1830 AD. It is of interest to note that Margaret was a contemporary of John Nelson Darby, who was born on November 18, 1800, in London, England, and died on April 29, 1882, at 81 years of age. It was in the spring of 1830 that Margaret, a 15-year-old invalid, claimed to have received a revelation from God concerning the pretribulation rapture. The record of this unique revelation was published in 1846 in Robert Norton's book titled *Memoirs Of James And George Macdonald Of Port Glasgow, Scotland*. The actual record of this revelation was published again in another book by Robert Norton titled *The Restoration Of Apostles And Prophets In The Catholic Apostolic Church*.

The line by line account of this revelation numbers 117. It appeared in a book written by Dave MacPherson titled *The Great Rapture Hoax* in September of 1983 as "Appendix A." A copy of this line by line account is included in this booklet. Norton reported that Margaret "had become increasingly an invalid and was thought to be dying; when all at once she received the gift of prophecy. It was on a certain morning in early 1830, while confined to a sick bed in her home in Port Glasgow that Margaret had a most remarkable experience."

Upon making my own personal examination of this so-called revelation, I discovered that many of Margaret's allegations about her experience did not accord with the facts of Scripture. What Margaret did was to weave a number of her ideas into her concept of the nature of the so-called pretribulation rapture.

Allow me to cite a few examples. Speaking of "the sign of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:30), she stated, "I felt this needed to be revealed, and that there was great darkness and error about it, but suddenly what it was burst upon me with a glorious light. I saw it was just the Lord himself descending from heaven with a shout, just the glorified man, even Jesus; but that all must, as Stephen was, be filled with the Holy Ghost, that they might look up, and see the brightness of the Father's glory" (lines 10-15).

When the observation is made of her allusion to Acts 7:59-60, it is apparent that in her confused state of mind, she could not differentiate between events that relate to the parousia of Christ and the record of the stoning of Stephen. I find it impossible to accept the notion that this experience was a result of having received a revelation from God. It appears to me to be an emotional event bordering on pure fantasy. Margaret went on to say, "'Tis Christ in us that will lift us up—he is the light—'tis only those that are alive in him that will be caught up to meet him in the air." This statement appears to be a veiled reference to 1 Thessalonians 4:17. She

then added, "I repeated frequently, but the spiritual temple must and shall be reared and the fullness of Christ be poured into his body, and then shall we be caught up to meet him" (lines 31-33, 37-39). This was Margaret Macdonald's concept of the rapture she claimed was revealed to her. She also spoke of this experience as "the glorious inbreaking of God which is now about to burst on this earth" (line 42). She seemed to have a glimmer of truth in regard to divine intervention. What prompted this experience is unknown.

Miss Macdonald's preoccupation with the rapture is also made plain in her words which say, "This is what we are present made to pray much for, that speedily we may all be made ready to meet our Lord in the air—and it will be" (lines 113-115). Several things stand out in her so-called revelation. First, she believed the rapture was imminent. Second, she believed that she was singularly privileged, having received this vision from God. Third, she obviously had no concept of God's plan for a future company of believers, some of whom would remain alive unto His coming, and those who would voluntarily lay down their lives in protest to the satanic demands of the beast (Rev. 13:11-17).

This frail young girl had an enormous appeal to men and women alike living in the early days of dispensationalism in the 1800s. People in her day had begun to progress beyond the first steps of the reformation and were open to new ideas from Scripture almost to the point of fanaticism. Dave MacPherson wrote, "Her revelation was a smorgasbord of unheard-of ideas." I am inclined to agree with his analysis of her writings. I completely discount any "spirit-filled revelation" emanating from the statements made by Margaret Macdonald. The primary value of her "revelation" lies in her two-stage coming of Christ.

It is of historical interest to note that when John Darby of the Plymouth Brethren movement heard about the unusual goings-on in Scotland (circa mid-1830), he decided to investigate for himself. Darby in his book titled *The Irrationalism Of Infidelity* (1863) wrote that he "came to see what was the real truth of the case." He had preserved an understandably special interest in the young and unassuming Scottish lassie from whom he had borrowed a key ingredient for his dispensational system of prophetic interpretation. It was true; Margaret had seen a series of raptures, but we must remember that the first of her visions was indeed a pretribulational rapture which would remove some of the believers from the earth before the anti-Christ was to be revealed. From his later writings, it seems certain that Darby borrowed from her, modified her views and then popularized them under his own name without giving her credit. MacPherson, writing in his book *The Incredible Cover-up*, said, "To charge that Darby could never have been influenced by Margaret's pre- anti-Christ's rapture, with the knowledge of her revelation and his whereabouts in 1830 are now in the open." MacPherson's exhausting research and

discovery of the facts attendant to this issue clearly dispel the idea that the pretribulation rapture originated with John Nelson Darby.

In his book, *The Great Rapture Hoax*, MacPherson made the following statement, "Over the years I've been asked to furnish evidence that the historic view of the Church has not been pretribulation rapturism." He then proceeded to furnish the names and appropriate commentary from the writings of 109 different men dating back to Barnabas. MacPherson cites a comment from Nathaniel West (1826-1906), "[The pretribulation rapture] is built on a postulate, vicious in logic, violent in exegesis, contrary to experience, repudiated by the early church, contradicted by the testimony of 1800 years, and condemned by all the standard scholars of every age (the Apostle Paul and the 'any moment' theory)." Other comments include the following:

1. Robert Cameron (1845-1922) stated, "The coming for, and coming with the saints, still persists, although it involves a manifest contradiction, viz, two second comings which is an absurdity (*Scriptural Truth About The Lord's Return*, p. 16)."

2. T.T. Shields (1873-1955) reports, "I do not believe there is any Scriptural warrant for the teaching that the Church may suddenly, secretly be raptured and taken out of the world ... I believe it is a delusion (*The Gospel Witness*, March 24, 1974)."

3. Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) relates, "... the great majority of dispensationalists themselves reject the doctrine of the secret rapture (*The Second Coming Of Christ*, p. 41)."

4. Oswald T. Allis (1880-1973) said, "The any-moment doctrine of the coming owes its popularity to a desire to escape the evils which are to come upon all the earth (*Prophecy And The Church*, p. 208)."

5. Oswald J. Smith declared, "I am absolutely convinced that there will be no rapture before the tribulation, but that the church undoubtedly will be called upon to face the anti-Christ (*Tribulation Or Rapture—Which?*)."

6. Jim McKeever says, "Nowhere do the Scriptures say that the rapture will precede the tribulation."

The essence of these comments, provided by MacPherson in his book, is that this event commonly known as "the pretribulation rapture" is in direct conflict with the opinions of post-tribulation advocates, including this writer. These individuals believe that the occasion of this event will occur after the tribulation, and not prior to Daniel's seventieth week. This may not seem to be of great importance except for the fact that this fundamental error now promulgated by Dr. John Walvoord, who is acknowledged by some students to be the greatest pretribulation authority in the world, has no valid support in Scripture. These referenced comments aforementioned provide overwhelming evidence that the presumed concept of the pretribulation rapture is completely void of merit and cannot be credentialed by the Word of God. While the concept finds support from Dr. Roy B. Zuck, editor of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, and his peers at the Dallas Theological Seminary, the rapture remains an unscriptural term and difficult even for them to explain. Protagonist Dr. Thomas Ice, author of an essay titled, "Why The Doctrine Of The Pretribulation Rapture Did Not Begin With Margaret Macdonald," has severely castigated MacPherson's book, *The Great Rapture Hoax*. Dr. Ice declares that MacPherson is dedicated to disrupting belief in the pretribulation rapture, since, according to his interpretation, it has been the cause for great disruption in his own life. Dr. Ice made this statement to discredit the work of MacPherson, because of his "expulsion from a Christian college in California for propagating his views that conflicted with the pretribulation view." Being ostracized from a "Christian college," in my view, because of a doctrinal conflict does not invalidate a man's position or the integrity of the Word of God.

By proclaiming a pretribulation rapture, Walvoord and his peer group have ingeniously moved this event forward in time by at least seven years with respect to the parousia of Jesus Christ. This has been done for a twofold reason. One is to circumvent the fact that all men living at that time will experience the great tribulation. Second, by favoring a pretribulation rapture they have serendipitously evaded their concept of a tribulation characterized by God pouring out His pent-up wrath on all humanity. What these pretribulation rapturists have done is to assume that the time of the tribulation will be an occasion of God pouring out His wrath, therefore necessitating the early rapture of the church. This event, they say, will occur at the onset of Daniel's seventieth week. They further allege that the whole of the seventieth week (a seven-year period of time) will be characterized by great ferocity, suffering, and loss of life. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What these rapturists have done is to depict a God harboring repressed anger, waiting to strike humanity with great wrath. This false characterization of the rapture has distracted the lives of many thousands of believers from becoming aware of the fact that God's next

move is to bring in a period of divine government, initiating an incredible time of physical and spiritual blessings. The ultimate solution to the needs of mankind is the manifest Kingdom of God, not the rapture. Historical rapturism has completely failed to comprehend the importance, value and the necessity of the Kingdom of God. God is not about to jeopardize the future of mankind by the badly-flawed doctrine of the rapture of the Church. Also, Scripture makes it abundantly clear that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world (John 4:42, 1 John 4:14).

One writer recently wrote a book in which he claims that, "the teaching of the pretribulational rapture has been a source of blessings for generations." I find no evidence of this blessing in the earth today. I attribute the sense of well being in the lives of men today to the all-pervading influence of the grace of God, not the hope of the rapture. This same writer then claims that "there are no intervening events that must come to pass before the rapture of the Church." It could take place "at any moment." I say to all men who cherish this hope that unfortunately Satan has deceived you and scored a great victory. As we have pointed out previously, the Scriptures declare that certain important events must precede the second coming of Christ.

I first learned of this hope in 1937 as a sixteen-year-old boy. Since that time millions of people have lived and died, having never experienced this false hope. It is once again being promulgated by a number of zealous but uninformed men, many of whom claim to be world-class scholars. Men's eyes have effectively been blinded by this myth for which Satan deserves credit. In 1999 authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins produced a book titled, *Are We Living In End Times?* In this sensational book they wrote, "One of the most compelling prophetic events is called 'the rapture of the Church.'" They point their readers to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 as proof that "the rapture of the Church" is taught in this passage. Indeed, in this passage the phrase "caught up together" is a translation of the Greek word *harpazo*. This word has been used to support the idea of a rapture, or as some prefer to name it, "a being caught up." What these authors have done is to equate this miraculous event surrounding Christ's parousia with the "blessed hope," a term Paul uses in Titus 2:13. That a rapture (*harpazo*, a Greek word meaning to forcibly seize upon or to take to oneself with force) will occur, as Paul makes clear in verse 17, cannot be denied. What these men have failed to recognize is that this event of which Paul spoke in 1 Thessalonians and the "blessed hope" in Titus are separated in time by some 490 years. Furthermore, it is important to observe that the reference in Titus 2:13 anticipates the expectation of the coming Kingdom of God, announced by the epiphaneia or the blazing forth of Christ to begin a time of divine government. In bold contrast the scenario of events in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 -19 concerns a set of conditions early in the Day of the Lord at His parousia. They have absolutely no bearing on the lives of men living today.



What the rapturists depict as the time of the rapture occurs at the commencement of Daniel's seventieth week. They believe this to be an event called "Christ coming for his Church." They hold that seven years later, or at Christ's parousia (His glorious appearing), He will allegedly come "with His Church." This novel idea is mere wishful thinking and one of sheer speculation. The pathetic aspect of the doctrine of "the pretribulation rapture of the Church" is that millions of innocent men and women are being led to believe that the event is imminent.

This doctrine of the rapture is also taught in an essay by John F. MacArthur, Jr. under the title, "Is Christ's Return Imminent?" It is of interest to note that within the past several years a number of books have been written by these implied Bible scholars to describe what they allege to be a scenario of events in secular society, which will be the direct result of the sudden rapture of the church. As a result of these ludicrous scenarios which fill myriad pages of these books, these spiritually impoverished men are now enjoying great financial success at the expense of men who are not properly taught the Word of God. The proliferation of these books and their tape recorded messages have deceived vast numbers of men. As mentioned before, Satan has again scored a great victory.

The promise of divine intervention by Christ will ultimately prevail. We are reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul, Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.... for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was (2 Timothy 3:8-9). God will yet stop the mouth of those who gainfully teach error, as Scripture says, "But God will shoot at them with an arrow (of truth); suddenly shall they be wounded" (Psalm 64:7). May we all continue to say "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

## **THE DOCTRINE OF IMMINENCY**

Among that company of men claiming expertise in Biblical interpretation are those who believe that the signs spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 24 point to the imminency of the rapture. During the course of the public ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, He was approached by "certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees, answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee." Jesus responded by saying, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. 12:38-39).

If the book of Jonah be carefully read, it will bring the conviction that God had determined that in spite of the great wickedness present in the city of Nineveh, He would preserve the lives of those men living there. Upon hearing the message of Jonah these wicked men " turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not" (Jonah 3:10).

Robert Jewett, in his book, *Jesus Against The Rapture*, wrote, "The sign of Jonah is evidence of God's will that the wicked of the world may be spared from the burning some people are sure it deserves." Among that company of certain popularly-accepted Bible scholars are those men who claim that "in three and a-half years leading up to the second coming of Christ much of the earth will be devastated and billions of people will be killed. The destruction of millions of soldiers in the Battle of Armageddon is the first of a series of judgments in preparation for the millennial kingdom" (from the book, *End Times, Understanding Today's World Events In Biblical Prophecy*, by John F. Walvoord).

This is the mind-set of scores of men claiming the necessity of an imminent rapture of the Church. By insisting that the Battle of Armageddon and the Great Tribulation are imminent, they have sought to establish a sign for the imminency of the rapture. Robert Jewett, in his book, adds, "seeking signs is a matter of refusing to allow God to control the future as He wills. Sign-seeking is the human effort to manipulate God's open future to penetrate the silence He imposes." What the rapturists have done is to circumvent God's present Dispensation of Grace in the favor of "the doctrine of imminency."

Probably the most controversial and least understood issue that relates to the subject of the rapture concerns "the doctrine of imminency." Before getting into the technicalities, there is one point that is important to make absolutely plain. My position is that I take second place to no man in believing that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day descend from heaven and stand upon an earth redeemed by His precious blood. Two-thousand years ago two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:10-11). Standing between this day of God's grace and the realization of this majestic goal, the parousia of Christ, is a 490-year period of divine government. Perhaps the biggest obstacle in the lives of these presumed Bible scholars is their unwillingness to accept the fact that next for mankind will be the majestic Kingdom of God. These men have completely overlooked the fact of the present dispensation of grace; hence they have no place

for God's important next work. For them, this ubiquitous opinion of God's present purpose has been lost from view.

It has now been almost 2,000 years since Paul's pronouncement in Acts 28:28 that the salvation-bringing message was authorized to the nations. As the result of this momentous declaration, God has been writing into the record of His long dealings with mankind a flawless record of His grace that is so inherent in His character. No man having lived on the earth, nor government, nor nation has during these past two millennia been able to deter God from this supreme purpose. The record may now be nearing completion. The questions we ask are: "What has God accomplished? Is this world now a better place to live in than it was 2,000 years ago?" It cannot be denied, unless we reject the record of the verbally inspired Word of God, that we are now living in what the Apostle Paul describes as "perilous times" (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Given the fact of these frightful conditions, the question arises as to what mankind can next expect from the hand of the Lord. The popular teachers are once again heralding apocalyptic doom for mankind. Dr. Walvoord and his peers at the Dallas Theological Seminary teach that next for mankind is Armageddon, a time when millions upon millions of men will lose their lives when God pours out His wrath. I reject this concept totally, and find it completely inconsistent with the character of a just and loving God. For obvious reasons this deceptive doctrine of total destruction denies the fact that "this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42). I firmly believe that "the doctrine of imminency" completely fails to address the burgeoning needs of mankind.

In reading the writings of a number of otherwise capable scholars one thing that is most obvious is their lack of unanimity regarding the timing of the event (rapture). John F. MacArthur, Jr. in his essay "Is Christ's Return Imminent?" states "that the perspective of imminence prompts three questions. The first question pertains to whether the tribulation will precede Christ's coming for the church." MacArthur answers this question by saying, "It will not, because the church is never asked to look forward to the tribulation, but they are asked to look forward to Christ's coming." The second question revolves around how the return of Christ could have been imminent in the early Church. He answers this question by saying "that no one but the Father knows when the coming will occur." Finally he asks, "Why is Christ's return so important?" He responds by saying that "it relates to the motivation for believers to purify their lives."

My own analysis of MacArthur's questions and answers is that they create more questions than answers, and leave the believers with a sense of ambiguity. One issue that immediately comes to mind concerns the matter of a "two-stage coming of Christ." Paul M. Sadler in his book *The Triumph Of His Grace* makes the

statement, "If there is one word that sums up the teaching of the rapture in the Old Testament and the gospels, it is SILENCE, and so it should be, for the mystery with its secret rapture was kept hidden from the ages and generations past. The author has said many times, and it bears repeating again, the rapture and the second coming are not two stages of the same event, as some have supposed." Sadler goes on to add, "In summary, the second coming of Christ was a prophesied event that promises the Lord's personal return at the end of Daniel's seventieth week (Zech. 14:1-4). The rapture, on the other hand, is an unprophesied event that promises the appearing of the Savior in heaven preceding the tribulation period (1 Thess. 4:16-17)." Sadler predicts a "secret rapture" based on his understanding of Ephesians 3:9.

What Sadler has failed to understand is that the mention of the secret in Ephesians 3:3-13 concerns God's present purpose in this current dispensation of the grace of God and is wholly unrelated to this fictitious, so-called "secret rapture" which he associates with the pretribulational rapture of the Church. Dave MacPherson in his treatise, *The Great Rapture Hoax*, explains, "The fact of the matter is that the early Church did not hold any kind of an imminent coming. The occasional imminence of the middle ages was always post-tribulational imminence; the Lord didn't immediately return. Such faulty unrealized imminence of a one-stage coming is hardly an adequate basis for believing in a two-stage coming. The early Christians didn't see eye-to-eye on a number of things, but they all agreed that the "catching up" is a mere part of the second coming, a one-stage, post-tribulational happening."

This is precisely my view. I find no credible Scriptural evidence favoring a "two-comings" rapture experience. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this concept of a premillennial rapture scenario is an ingenious attempt to circumvent having the believer present on earth during the Great Tribulation. I firmly believe that what Scripture describes as the parousia of Christ is a return which will occur subsequent to the Great Tribulation. The arguments offered by MacArthur in no way substantiate the idea of an imminent rapture. MacArthur also states, "Those who believe the church must suffer through the hardships of the tribulation period invariably cite 2 Thessalonians 1:1-3 as proof." The Apostle Paul makes clear that two specific conditions must be met prior to the parousia of Christ. "For that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition." MacArthur states, "So on the one hand, the New Testament is permeated with an eager sense of urgency and conviction that the blessed hope of Christ's return is imminent. On the other hand, we are warned about trouble and affliction that will precede Christ's return. How can we cultivate a daily expectation of Christ's return if these preliminary signs must be fulfilled before He

returns?"

John MacArthur makes two gratuitous assumptions. One is that "Christ could return at any moment permeates the whole New Testament." This allegation is simply not true as I will attempt to demonstrate by critical review of these so-called "imminency" passages. Secondly, and thus crucial to our conclusions, is that these self-acclaimed scholars have made absolutely no provision within their theology for the fulfillment of the manifest Kingdom of God. We, the saints of this dispensation, have absolutely no necessity to fear trouble and affliction which will come on the breadth and length of the earth in that day. The present generation of believers from this dispensation will not be called upon to face the anguish of great tribulation. We have already been tested regarding our attitude and faith in Jesus Christ in a day when it is the uncommon thing to do. Secondly, it is critical to our understanding of the Great Tribulation for us to note it is the people of Israel who are living on earth at that time who are miraculously preserved by God Almighty.

This time of tribulation is described symbolically under the sign of the seven vials of the wrath of God upon the earth in Revelation 15 and 16. This speaks of a time when the nations of the earth, "and the peoples imagine a vain thing" (Psa. 2:1). Dr. Joseph Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible* reads, Wherefore have the nations assembled in tumult? Or should the peoples mutter an empty thing? The kings of the earth take their station and grave men have met by appointment together against Yahweh and against His appointed one (king David) saying, Let us break asunder their bonds, and cast from us their cords! He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh, my Lord will mock at them (the nations). Then will He speak to them in His anger, and in His wrath confound them: yet I have installed My king on Zion My holy mountain (Psa. 2:1-6). This scenario describes a future time when the nations of the earth, acting under the influence of the beast seek to exterminate the people of Israel. But God resists and does not permit the nations to unilaterally mount a crashing offense against them. The apocalyptic seer (John) makes the statement, ". . . for in them (the nations) is filled up the wrath of God " (Rev. 15:1). At this critical moment God acts openly and swiftly to overthrow the enemies of Israel. John writes, And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints (Rev. 15:2-3).

This sea of glass mingled with fire appears here, according to the *Commentary of the Apocalypse* by Joseph A. Seiss, "being likened to a mighty reservoir of

judgment about to be precipitated on the world below." It is my understanding that this sea has symbolic reference to the judgment of God which will be poured out by Him against those nations that threaten the security of the nation of Israel. Seiss explains, "The picture of these victorious ones standing on the shore of this sea, holding the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses, directly recalls the rescued and victorious children of Israel on the further side of the Red Sea, beholding the discomfiture of their foes and singing and rejoicing in the mighty accomplishments of this wonder-working Jehovah." As viewed through the eyes of Jehovah, this experience of Israel in the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) will, in fact, become a time of great victory on behalf of the nation of Israel. In contrast we are reminded of the great victory in the life of God's ancient people as they fled the advancing armies of Pharaoh. It was in that day when a song was sung (Exod. 15:1-21): Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider (symbolic of Pharaoh and his army) hath He thrown into the sea (Exod. 15:1)... The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them (Exod. 15:9). This is the arrogance of men who would take action against the chosen people of Israel. But note further the song of Moses, Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them (Exod. 15:10-12). . . . And Miriam answered them (the children of Israel), Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea (Exod. 15:21).

This same God who acted openly and powerfully in the days of Moses will once again cause His voice to be heard in defense of that people of Israel as they pass through the deep waters of the Great Tribulation. John, the seer, asks rhetorically, Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest (Rev. 15:4). As believers in Christ, we have nothing to fear or be apprehensive about regarding the day of the tribulation. Where we might be upon the face of the earth in that day, we, the believers from the Dispensation of Grace, cannot say, but we can be certain that because of our faith in Christ, we will be privileged to experience the great triumph of God over that satanic host of the tribulation, and those nations who have determined to exterminate the people of Israel and destroy her land. In the words of the psalmist David, The Lord is King forever and ever (in relation to Eonian Times and beyond): the heathen (nations) are perished out of his land (Psa. 10:16). It is important to remember that the outcome of this major confrontation between God and the nations will result in "the sheep and goat judgment" (Matt. 25:31-46) immediately following the parousia of Jesus Christ.

I frankly have little sympathy for these religious teachers who are guilty of promulgating this false hope of an imminent rapture of the church in favor of the future Kingdom of God. Another fallacy which continues to deflect men's hope from the Kingdom of God in favor of the rapture is the oft-repeated statement, "There are no other events that must occur in the prophetic calendar before Christ comes to meet His saints in the air." But rather, I find it absolutely awesome to believe such statements which convincingly point to the future day when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. 40:5). Speaking to Moses, God said, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

Robert L. Thomas, dealing with "the doctrine of imminency," makes the statement: "To say that the New Testament teaching of imminence has become garbled in the systems of pre-wrath rapturism and post-tribulationism is probably not an overstatement." He asks, "What is left of imminence?" And he explains, "The doctrine of imminence has fallen on hard times in contemporary evangelicalism. The imminence of Christ's return, including His coming to deliver the faithful and His coming to reign, inflicting wrath on all the world, is repeatedly taught in the apocalypse as well as in other portions of the New Testament. No prophecy of Scripture remains to be fulfilled before either of these events occurs." These views expressed by Thomas indicate clearly the bankruptcy of the pretribulationist position. It violates every revelation of Scripture that positively establishes the time of the so-called rapture at the parousia of Christ. In the next chapter we will make an examination of these presumed witnesses favoring a pretribulationist rapture.

## **BIBLICAL EVIDENCE CLAIMING SUPPORT FOR THE RAPTURE**

Within the past decade a number of factions have surfaced each claiming the imminency of the rapture. What is not generally recognized is that within the cluster of rapturists there exists two distinct groups of men, as follows: pretribulationists and post-tribulationists. Although these groups appear to have much in common, they exhibit remarkable differences within their theologies. Pretribulationists hold steadfastly to the doctrine of Christ coming for His Church at the inception of Daniel's seventieth week, then returning to heaven and after an unexplained seven-year hiatus Christ returns to earth with His saints. This has been described as a "two-stage" coming of Christ.

A second company of rapturists (the post-tribulationists) rightfully allege that the Bible knows nothing of a dual coming of Christ. They contend that there is but one

second coming of Christ which will be accomplished at His parousia. They claim that this coming is supported by reference to Matthew 24:27, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Whereas most pretribulationists claim to believe in a so-called secret rapture, many post-tribulationists believe that the second coming of Christ will be heralded by the sound of a great trumpet and embellished with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).

Whatever view the reader may conclude on this subject, the fact remains that both the pretribulationists and the post-tribulationists have committed a colossal error by virtue of their complete failure to recognize that the 490-year period of divine government is next on God's prophetic calendar. Since, in fact, the truth of the impending Kingdom of God is taught in Scripture, all mention of an imminent rapture will collapse under its own weight, disappointing millions of sincere men and women now clinging to this false hope. In order to substantiate my claim to the fallacy of this hope, I cite the words of three distinguished rapturist teachers. The first, Robert H. Gundry, retired professor of the New Testament and Greek at Westmont College, wrote in his book, *The Church And The Tribulation*, "By common consent imminence means that as far we know, no predicted event will necessarily precede the coming of Christ." The second, John F. MacArthur Jr. in his essay "Is Christ's Return Imminent?" wrote, "From the earliest days of the church, the Apostles and first generation Christians nurtured an earnest expectation and fervent hope that Christ might suddenly return at any time, to gather His Church to heaven." The third, Paul M. Sadler, president of the Berean Bible Society, has said, "Perhaps the most convincing evidence that the rapture will be pretribulationist is the imminence of Christ's return. In other words, there are no intervening events that must come to pass before the rapture of the Church."

In the course of this chapter, I will seek to demonstrate the gross error of these allegations. As the result of these false claims, tens of thousands of men and women have been deprived of the truth of the blessed hope, which is the reality of the manifest Kingdom of God upon the earth. It will follow this, the dispensation of the grace of God, and it will fulfill God's promise to Abraham: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice (Gen. 22:17-18).

A number of sincere Bible students firmly believe that hundreds of Bible passages refer to or discuss the second coming. Solomon declared, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered" (Eccl. 1:15). One reason for this study is to demonstrate that many of the opinions held by these men regarding the interpretation of Scripture are "crooked and wanting." Many of the opinions expressed by these men claiming the pre- and post-tribulationist coming of Christ cannot be made



straight and should be disregarded.

We recognize that Satan by his very nature has been filled with deceit, lies, and hatred of God. He is described in 1 Peter 5:8 "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." At no time in his infamous career has Satan been more aggressive than in these closing days of the Dispensation of Grace. Satan's present activity is to draw men's minds away from the epiphaneia of Christ by encouraging them to live in expectation of the imminent rapture of the Church. This Satanic activity is exemplified by his unrelenting attempt to deceive men into believing that Christ could come at any moment. In a recent issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Wayne A. Brindle wrote an essay titled, "Biblical Evidence for the Imminence of the Rapture." Throughout the course of this dissertation Brindle makes reference to a number of passages which he claims support "the doctrine of imminency." What Brindle has done in his argument is to superimpose his concept of the rapture on God's word without giving adequate consideration to the facts of Scripture. Having given considerable time and thought to this complex subject, I am convinced that there are some major flaws in his interpretation of Scripture. I will now deal with some of the problems created by his presentation of this imminency theory:

1. The verses chosen in support of the rapture have been taken completely out of context. This practice has led to serious errors and false conclusions.

2. Neglect of the fact that the Day of Christ (the Kingdom) is next on God's prophetic calendar, which constitutes an essential part of the plan and purpose of God, distorts the truth seriously. The fact that this Day must, by definition, precede the Day of the Lord has been almost completely ignored by the rapturists.

3. Few, if any, of the rapturists have any room in their theology for the manifest Kingdom of God. This amounts to a significant refutation of God's next program for mankind.

4. Rapturists have interpreted Scripture to match a preconceived doctrinal error. They have erroneously decided the outcome of the rapture event.

5. Rapturists have a preconception of God as the One who is waiting with pent-up anger, prepared to destroy unbelieving humanity. This is clearly an act of defamation of a just and merciful God.

6. Most rapturists have portrayed the time of the tribulation as a time of unprecedented wrath and suffering. This concept has seriously compromised the truth about and the character of our magnificent God.

7. Meanings have been assigned to certain Greek words which cannot be supported by the context. This practice has led to many erroneous conclusions.

I cite these problems because they relate to a proper understanding of this subject. Further, my belief is that the deliberate neglect of these problems is satanic in origin and in harmony with his attempt to blind men from perceiving the truth of God. The Apostle Paul declared, But (we) have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. 4:2). While I am willing to concede the fact that men can and will differ in their understanding of the Bible due to imperfect knowledge, there is no justification for men who deliberately misrepresent Scripture in order to capitalize on the fears of innocent or unsuspecting men.

Let us give consideration to some of these important rapturist passages. Brindle opens his essay with the statement, "John 14:3 is the only verse in the gospels that is commonly accepted by contemporary pretribulationists and post-tribulationists alike as a reference to the rapture. In this text, when Jesus said, 'If I go,' He was not only speaking of His death and resurrection. His going 'to the Father' (vs. 12) included a complete departure, in which He went bodily from earth to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). His next statement, 'I am coming again,' is a futuristic present, meaning 'I will come again.' It must also include a literal and bodily return to earth from heaven. When Christ returns He will take believers to be with Him forever. In verse 2 the close connection between the 'dwelling places,' and 'My Father's house,' almost certainly locates the dwelling places in heaven. Unless Jesus was being intentionally devious, it must be assumed that He was still speaking of heaven." Brindle's statement is a fairly accurate representation of the commonly held views most men assign to the meaning of John 14:1-3. Brindle's doctrinal bias is clearly in evidence by virtue of his statements. He is obviously reading into this passage his interpretation that the subject of John 14:1-3 is the rapture. He makes plain that his concept of Christ coming again has reference to a physical experience. He appears to believe that reference to "My Father's house" implies that Christ was preparing a place for believers to live in heaven. In order to understand the meaning of our Lord's words in these verses, it is essential that we ask a few basic questions first: "To whom were these words addressed? What message did Jesus intend to convey by His statement in John 14:2, 'in My Father's house are many mansions?' How can a house ever conceivably have 'mansions' within it? What did He intend by His statement, 'I go to prepare a place for you?'" Finally, what did Jesus mean by His words, "I will come again and receive you

unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also?"

These are crucial questions that demand an honest answer. If ignored, they can lead to a number of erroneous conclusions. In no way did Christ intend to convey the idea that He was going to heaven for the purpose of building a number of mansions for believers. The phrase "My Father's house" is a figurative expression used to describe our God's domain which includes heaven and earth. In His prayer of dedication for the temple Solomon declared, But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (1 Kings 8:27). Recognize that God is infinite and fills the universe. He is present in all regions of creation. God can choose to be anywhere at any time He may wish.

Understand that in the days of Christ's humanity the oikos, or temple, was far more than an impressive building. It was here at Jerusalem at the feast of dedication that, "Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch" (John 10:22-23). This was a spectacular edifice. It was there that Peter and John went up together into the temple where a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple (Acts 3:2). It was within the confines of this majestic structure, which became a scene of great activity, where many essential functions pertaining to the God-fearing life of Israel were performed. The question before us is, how does reference to "My Father's house" relate to our understanding of John 14:1-3? The term "My Father's house" in John 14:2 reads in the Greek: en te oikia tou patros. What the rapturists have done is to interpret this phrase found in John 14:2 to refer exclusively to the place called "heaven" in Scripture. They have conveniently ignored the fact that this identical Greek phrase also occurs in John 2:16 where Christ said, "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." This passage has clear reference to the temple in Jerusalem.

Understand first of all that the broader context of John 14 includes John 13-17. The late Charles Welch pointed out that these chapters are an organic unity, "and that much of the teaching found in the first four chapters is expressed in the sublime fullness of the fifth." If the content of these four chapters is carefully examined, they will reveal the fact they were spoken just "before the feast of the Passover" when Jesus knew that His hour was coming "that He should depart out of this world unto the Father" (John 13:1). During this solemn feast He made clear that He would soon make His journey to the cross. In John 14:2 Jesus clearly stated, "I go to prepare a place for you." What rapturists have failed to grasp are two important facts. The first is that these words in John 13-17 were spoken directly to the twelve disciples. Soon that number would be reduced to eleven as a result of the defection of Judas Iscariot, whose position was later filled by Matthias (Acts 1:24-26). Second is the irrefutable fact that Christ was about to go to the cross. Even though Jesus Christ would soon physically ascend into heaven (following His resurrection), this is not the message of John 14:2-3. What men in general have failed to appreciate is the

fact that Christ would soon suffer the agony of the cross, as foretold in Isaiah 53. By means of His sacrificial death every one of these chosen disciples (to become apostles) would be assured, both of the gift of eonian life, and also a position of distinguished service in the Kingdom of God.

This important truth is established in Matthew 19:27-28 where Peter ... said unto Him, Behold we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This promise has exclusive reference to a company of men who will function in a judicial capacity with respect to the nation of Israel in the Kingdom of God. This important truth is based in part on the meaning of the phrase, "in My Father's house are many mansions." This word translated "mansions" is the Greek word *mone*. Robert H. Gundry points out that "unfortunately the familiar term 'mansion' does not project the correct connotation in contemporary English." The word *mone* appears only once elsewhere in the New Testament. It is located here in John 14:2 and then again in John 14:23. J.H. Thayer, in his Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament, says, "The word means 'staying, abiding, dwelling, abode,' metaphysically of God and Christ by their power and spirit exerting a most blessed influence on the souls of the believers."

While I recognize the significance of the indwelling presence of Christ, it is most important to remember that this word (*mone*) is rendered in the plural form in John 14:2, as "abodes." What Jesus taught in this passage is that in the vast realm of His coming Kingdom there would be "many mansions." This does not teach that in heaven there would be countless residences for the believers, but rather that there would be many positions of exalted service which men would render on behalf of the Judge of all the earth—they who are part of the Kingdom ekklesia. The Apostle Paul alluded to this fact in Ephesians 4:10-11, where he spoke of the Lord who had "ascended up far above all heavens." This is a clear reference to the exalted positions men will enjoy in the Kingdom of God. Christ was not speaking of a "rapture of men," but He was setting forth His intention of providing these disciples with a guaranteed place of special service under divine government. What the rapturists have done is to make this glorious message spoken to the apostles and the description "My Father's house" to mean "to take all believers off to heaven"; the term "mansions" to be luxurious homes; the statement "I go to prepare a place for you" to mean "Jesus was going to heaven"; the promise "I will come again and receive you to Myself to mean that "the rapture of the church is imminent." This is sloppy exegesis and completely fails to recognize the glorious future of the apostles of Christ. This rapturist mentality grossly distorts the truth of God and leads millions of innocent men and women into darkness. Those men who promote this false doctrine deserve to be ashamed for not encouraging the truth nor glorifying the Lord of their salvation.

## **THE RAPTURE AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION: WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN**

**During the course of His Olivet Discourse Jesus declared, For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21). That there will be a time of great tribulation cannot be denied; however, the statement made by our Lord raises a number of issues that relate to the character and purpose of this event. Without any doubt the overwhelming number of men claiming to be believers in Christ and a number of presumed Bible scholars contend that this event is now about to burst forth upon mankind, bringing with it an incredible period of human suffering. It has been depicted by some men as a scenario during which God will unleash His pent-up anger against mankind.**

**Dr. Mark Bailey, president at the Dallas Theological Seminary, writes, "It will be the worst hour in human history, for the world and for Israel" (The Road To Armageddon). These ideas stem from the supposed meaning of the Greek word thlepsis, which is translated "tribulation." Otis Q. Sellers stated, "This term has been lifted from the Word of God, embellished with every possible crude idea of sadistic torture, then used in a mystical manner to support every statement made by the present day prophets of doom" (Seed & Bread, No. SB039). One of the major concerns expressed by the rapturists is: "Will the church go through the Great Tribulation?" It is almost universally acknowledged that whatever meaning men may assign to this period of time, this work of God has now become an imminent event of global expectations. In the course of this chapter we will address several specific issues having a direct bearing on this subject. We need to ask the following questions: "When in time will these things come to pass?" "Who are the subjects of this time of tribulation?" "What is the character of this event?" "Why will God cause men to experience this time of tribulation?"**

**In order to grasp the significance of this time of tribulation, we need to understand the relationship this event bears on the overall plan and purpose of God. If this event is imminent, is there something God is presently doing that will precipitate this occasion? It is my unwavering conviction that mankind is currently living in the waning days of the Dispensation of Grace. As I have previously mentioned, I believe God is now writing a record of the grace inherent in His character by means of the present administration of grace. As the result of this divine activity, every man, woman and child has become the recipient of the love and compassion of God. God's grace has triumphed in the lives of men. This long display of grace had a beginning and it will have an ending. But "how" and "why"? It is my firm conviction that God's present**

**Dispensation of Grace will end as the direct result of divine intervention.**

**During the closing days in the life of the Apostle Paul, he made a treacherous ocean journey from the harbor at Caesarea to Rome. Paul sailed in the company of certain other prisoners, and from every nautical consideration this was the wrong season to attempt making such a voyage. Luke revealed the fact that Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives (Acts 27:9-10). Not long after they sailed there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon, and when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive (Acts 27:14-15). It appears that the violence of the wind was such that they lost control and had to take strong measures to prevent a total catastrophe. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away (Acts 27:20).**

**As we consider the extreme perils of this voyage of Paul's, we are reminded of the great perils mankind is experiencing today. Indeed, as mankind is called upon to sail on the sea of this great peril (the 21 st century), we are made aware of the gravity of the times in which we are now living. Understand that when "neither sun nor stars appeared" in the course of Paul's journey, the probability of a major disaster loomed imminent. The word "appeared" in Acts 27:20 is translated from the Greek word epiphaino. This same word is also used in Titus 2:11 where we read, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." In this use it is not difficult to understand that the chief characteristic of this word contains the element of being rescued and preserved. Understand that in those ancient days men who sailed the open seas had no navigational aids to warn of impending disaster. Therefore the appearing of the sun and the stars were crucial to men's preservation. We are now similarly facing a world-wide tempest. The clouds of darkness lay heavily upon mankind. The rise of terrorism, the incivility of the nations seem to extinguish any real hope for the deliverance for mankind.**

**What then can mankind next expect? Is it what so many men call "the rapture," or is it the hope of divine intervention? Paul made this point clear that we ought to be "looking for that blessed hope, and (even) the glorious appearing (epiphaneia) of the great God and (even) our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). This is the ray of God's sunlight that will penetrate the darkness of these closing days of grace. The prophet Isaiah declared, For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His Glory shall be seen upon thee (Isa. 60:2). The rapturists say the hope of mankind lies in a secret rapture of the Church. The**

**futurist premillennialists believe the hope of mankind lies in the promise of divine intervention. This fact is of great importance in that it explains what mankind can next expect at the hand of God. It is not the rapture, nor Armageddon, nor nuclear extermination of the human race, but it is of God invading the earth and enlightening it. We do not know how much longer it will be before this event will take place. But of one thing we can be absolutely certain; God will speak from heaven and usher mankind into almost five centuries of unprecedented peace, tranquility, health, joy and life.**

**With these thoughts before us we raise the question, "How does the impact of divine intervention relate to the Great Tribulation spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 24:21?" First of all we need to recognize that mankind as a whole is about to enter a school of great learning. In the words of Isaiah, "... for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). The psalmist David declared, Good and upright is the Lord: therefore He will teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek (submissive ones) will He teach His way (Psa. 25:8-9). This points to a future time in the life of the nations during which sinners shall be directly taught by the Holy Spirit of God. Nothing of this magnitude has ever yet occurred. This process of teaching sinful men will become a universal experience. Mankind, including men and women from every ethnic background will yet enter God's school of learning with the result that no man living on the face of the earth will fail to achieve a basic knowledge of the truths of God.**

**The absolute necessity for God to enlighten and instruct men has become overwhelming. To explain the depths of this grave peril, it becomes essential to comprehend how far men have drifted away from the truth of God. A recent book titled, *Here I Stand*, by a retired Episcopal bishop, John Shelby Spong, of Newark, New Jersey, he sets forth a list of twelve theses to define his concept of a new Christian reformation. A few of his theses follow:**

**1. "Theism, as a way of defining God, is dead. God can no longer be understood with credibility as a being supernatural in power, dwelling above the sky and prepared to invade human history periodically to enforce the divine will. So, most theological God-talk today is meaningless unless we find a new way to speak to God." This statement reflects the current depth of spiritual depravity among men.**

**2. "Since God can no longer be conceived in theistic terms, it becomes nonsensical to seek to understand Jesus as the incarnation of the theistic deity. So, the Christology of the ages is bankrupt." These are the words of a Christ rejecter.**

3. "The virgin birth understood as literal biology, makes the divinity of Christ, as traditionally understood, impossible." Here is an example of a man who openly and defiantly rejects the deity of Jesus Christ.

4. "The miracle stories of the New Testament can no longer be interpreted in a post-Newtonian world as supernatural events performed by an incarnate deity." This statement denies the power of God to work miracles.

5. "The idea of the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world is a barbarian idea based on primitive concepts of God that must be dismissed." Here is a flagrant rejection of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary.

6. "Resurrection is an action of God who raised Jesus into the meaning of God. It therefore cannot be a physical resuscitation occurring inside human history." The Apostle Paul declared, For if the dead rise not, then Christ is not raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (1 Cor. 15:16-19). This would be the miserable fate of men were it not for the fact of the resurrection of the dead.

7. "The hope for life after death must be separated forever from the behavior control mentality of reward and punishment. The church must abandon, therefore, its reliance on guilt as a motivator of behavior." This man does not want to see himself as a sinner saved by God's grace. This statement of unbelief is in direct and open conflict with the words of our Lord in John 3:36, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

These seven theses propounded by a Christ-rejecting bishop of the church illustrate the enormity of the task God will assume when He invades the earth to enlighten mankind. At long last God will shatter the darkness that now prevails on the earth. This learning process will completely alter the fabric of society. The imposition of this divine learning process will result in complete eradication of these lies promoted by many of the present-day clergy. It will result in the creation of new music, new literature, and a completely new understanding of the world in which we live. The purpose of having men taught the judgments of God is to provide mankind with a knowledge of those things which relate to the character of God. In the words of the Apostle John, And this is life eternal (life flowing out of God), that they may know Thee the only true God, and (even) Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent (John 17:3). No man privileged to live in the Kingdom of God will be denied the opportunity



to learn about the things of God, because of inferior intellect, poor health, social injustice or negative influences.

These barriers to learning about God will cease to exist. Only God is capable of bringing men into a knowledge of Himself. This awesome work of God will meet with resounding success. It is difficult for men living in these closing days of the Dispensation of Grace to fully appreciate or to comprehend the magnitude of this important work. The prophet Habakkuk 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).

The question we now need to address concerns the matter of how this program of God will terminate. If possible we need to project our minds into the 26th century. By that time 490 years will have elapsed, assuming the time of divine intervention to be in the 21st century, in that scenario, the time has come for the manifestation of the Day of the Lord. The long-awaited prophetic events associated with Daniel's seventieth week are on the verge of becoming reality. Billions of men living on the earth in that day, will have been taught by God Himself. As God lifts the divine restraints which He has imposed on mankind for some five centuries, a major confrontation looms between the "beast" and the nation of Israel. Satan senses his time is limited and this is his final opportunity to destroy the nation of Israel, with whom God has openly identified Himself during the entire Kingdom of God. These crucial events associated with the prophecy of Daniel now begin to unfold. At the onset of the final week, or seven-year period, the beast appears on the scene and enters into a covenant with Israel. He is described in Daniel 9:26-27: . . . the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary .... And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it (the temple) desolate, ... He is further described in Daniel 11:36 as the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

It is not possible to misconstrue the fact that this being is identical to 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, showing himself that he is God (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Daniel 12:11 adds, And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the

abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. This translates into a time period of three and one-half years plus a 30-day period of time. This is precisely the duration of time beginning with the occupation of the temple by the beast or as Paul explained, "the man of sin," plus a 30-day period of time known in Scripture as the time of indignation (refer to the booklet by the author titled, MSS004 - Matthew 24 And The Consummation Of The Eon, Chart 2).

The beginning of these 1,290 days corresponds to the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. It also corresponds precisely to our Lord's words in Matthew 24:15-16, When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place... then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains. This arrogant satanic being can be none other than that individual mentioned in Daniel 9:26-27 and again in 11:36. The timing and appearance of that man of sin corresponds precisely to our Lord's words in Matthew 24:21: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. What I find absolutely amazing is that these presumed Bible scholars have such a great difficulty understanding when in the order of events the tribulation will begin. It is also amazing to observe that this time of tribulation could not possibly occur within our life expectancy. No sooner will this man of sin make his intrusion into the holiest place on earth in that day, than the day of Jacob's trouble or the Great Tribulation will commence. This brings into focus the issue as to what purpose this time of tribulation will serve. As to the scope of this important event, we know from Revelation 3:10 that this marks the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world (the inhabited earth) to try them that dwell upon the earth.

The infinitive "to try" is a translation of the Greek word *pirasmos*. It occurs 21 times in the New Testament. This word is found in Luke 22:28 in which Jesus, speaking to His disciples said, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." This was not a solicitation to do evil, but to experience the testing brought upon Him because of a diverse situation. Let me illustrate. We know from Luke 11:16 that Jesus was tempted by the Pharisees. He was accused of casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub (Satan). Jesus could have instantly struck down these lying Pharisees, but He chose not to do so. On yet another occasion Jesus was being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered. And the devil said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man should not live by bread alone, but by every word of God (Luke 4:2-4). Jesus could have

**immediately destroyed him, but, being the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, Jesus did not succumb to this temptation. John the Baptist said, Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham (Luke 3:8). Since Christ could perform this miracle, He could just as easily have commanded that "this stone be made bread" (Luke 4:3). Paul reminded the Corinthian believers, There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13). With Christ on our side we can undergo severe testing and yet prevail.**

**If both the Greek verb *pirazo* and the noun *pirazmos* are examined, it will bring the conviction that the basic idea inherent in these words means "testing" or "proving." As mankind enters the Great Tribulation, every living man, woman, and child can expect to be tested with respect to what they have learned at the hand of God during the five centuries of Eonian Times. Men who have been taught of God will have risen to new levels of understanding and knowledge. It is inconceivable to conclude that men will not have gained increased understanding of what sin, righteousness and judgment is in the sight of God.**

**The Great Tribulation is not something men need to fear. What rapturists have done is to create a concept of the Great Tribulation in which God acts in violence and wrath to destroy unrepentant mankind, which is everyone but them. What God will in fact do is to instruct men and then subject mankind to a time of testing to determine what they have learned of the judgments of God. This event, called "the Great Tribulation," will serve a two-fold purpose. The first is one in which billions of men will have enjoyed the beneficial results of having been taught by God. The second, and in some sense most crucial, relates to the men's attitudes and response to Israel's presence in the earth in that day. Understand that by the time the Great Tribulation becomes a reality, God's instructions given to His disciples, so noted in Matthew 28:18-20, will have been fulfilled. Jesus instructed His disciples saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them (identifying them) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Spirit): teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (the consummation of the eon) (Matt. 28:18-20). This anticipates the successful ministry of the apostles of Jesus Christ.**

**God has promised 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). By**

**the time this promise is fulfilled, Israel will have become a mediator nation to extol the glory of the God of government. Her place of prominence in the earth, as she enters the Great Tribulation is exemplified as the result of divine intervention, and God working openly on behalf of that favored nation. The prophet Micah, speaking of that time, declared, But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house (or the dynasty) of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and 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 of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Micah 4:1 -2).**

**Israel has never yet enjoyed this exalted status. What an awesome sight this will be as flocks of humanity stream toward Jerusalem to be taught in the ways of the Lord God of Israel. This majestic work of God is but one of thousands that will come to fruition prior to the parousia of Jesus Christ. Following His triumphant resurrection from the dead, Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Spirit): teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20). The enormity of this work defies description. Obviously, this great work of God has never yet been accomplished. The present role of Israel in the affairs of nations is completely foreign to this awesome work of God. It cannot be fulfilled apart from the literal fulfillment of a New Covenant God will make with the houses of Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31 -34).**

**Given the reality of these irrefutable facts, Scripture paves the way for an understanding of the necessity for the Great Tribulation. Recall from the parable put forth in Matthew 13:24-30 where He said, The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way (Matt. 13:24-25). This parable describes a condition of things that will prevail in the earth as the manifest Kingdom of God draws to a close. It has absolutely no relevance to our lives in the closing days of the Dispensation of Grace. Following the proclamation of this parable, His disciples came unto Him saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children (sons) of the kingdom; but the tares are the children (sons) of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (the consummation of the eon), and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world (Matt. 13:36-40).**

**To repeat, let it be absolutely clear this parable is not a description of how life will end up in the closing days of this Dispensation of Grace. This phrase "the end of the world" is the translation of the Greek phrase en te sunteleia tou aionos or "the consummation of the eon." This phrase offers a description of the culmination of events as mankind approaches those events that relate to Daniel's seventieth week. Once God lifts the divine restraints, spoken of by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9, an entirely new scenario of events begin to unfold. Satan, who has experienced a series of crushing defeats, is once again permitted by God to exert his powerful influence. By this time Satan is fully aware of the enormous stature of the nation of Israel in world affairs. This cannot possibly relate to the present time in which we live. The time of Jacob's trouble has arrived in full fury. In the book of Revelation we are told, And the woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days (1,260 days) (Rev. 12:6). This event corresponds to the words spoken of in Matthew 24:16 where we are told, "Then let the people which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." While these instructions pertain specifically to the people of Israel who are dwelling in Judaea, there will also be a company of God-fearing Israelites scattered around the earth.**

**In preparation for the battle of Armageddon we read in Joel: I will also gather all nations, and bring them down into the valley of Jehosophat, 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). Revelation explains that at that at that time there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon (Satan); and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven (Rev. 12:7-8). Understand that during the Kingdom of heaven, Satan, spoken of here as "the dragon," will remain in heaven along with his angels. However it becomes crystal clear that this same angel, Michael, spoken of in Revelation 12:7, is the one being spoken of in Daniel 12:1. In that highly significant passage we are told: And at this time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. There can be absolutely no doubt but that the event spoken of in Daniel 12 is identical with the event in Revelation 12.**

**During this confrontation, the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent,**

called the Devil, and Satan, which deceived the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rev. 12:9). At long last Christ will triumph over this sinister being: And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night (Rev. 12:10). At the same time the apocalyptic seer says, Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she (Israel) is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent (Rev. 12:12-14).

Although Satan and his angels are determined to destroy the people of Israel, they will be met with stunning defeat. God has determined to preserve His people, as well as all mankind. We are reminded of the words of the psalmist David who declared, The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore (Psa. 121:5-8). God's preservation of Israel is also clearly implied in the words of Moses, When thou are in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He swear unto them (Deut. 4:30-31).

It is during the course of this time of tribulation that Israel, then scattered world-wide, will face extreme physical hardships. Her vulnerable position will not fail to attract the attention of the nations. During the course of the "sheep and goat judgment" (Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus said, When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of his glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31-32). This separation process will be based on the treatment accorded to Israel by the nations during the tribulation. He goes on: Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me (Matt.

25:34-36).

**This treatment of the people of Israel during the Great Tribulation will be the deciding factor in determining the future of the nation. At that time the King will address these derelict nations on the left, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me (Matt. 25:40). These conditions have never yet prevailed upon the earth, but they will during the time of Jacob's trouble. If I am alive during that time, I look forward to being of service to anyone who is part of that favored nation. Israel's presence in the earth in that day will provide a time of testing and proving the hearts and minds of all the nations, regarding the treatment of the people of Israel. Those nations who are kindly disposed toward the people of Israel will enter into life eternal. Those nations that fail this test will experience everlasting punishment, that is, deprivation of life upon the earth during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on this earth.**

## **THE DAVIDIC COVENANT, THE RAPTURE AND THE PAROUSIA OF JESUS CHRIST**

God has planned a triumphant future for mankind. Words fail me to express the glories of that future day. This time is described in the Bible as a period of divine government or the Kingdom of God. Nothing comparable to these times has ever yet occurred. The realization of that day will result in the Father making Himself known over all mankind in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. The inauguration of the Day of Christ will mark the definitive end of the Day of Man. This will not be a gradual transition, but it will result in the blazing forth of the glory of the Lord in the manifest Kingdom of God. Every man, woman and child living on the face of the earth will immediately experience the effect of God acting in government.

An instantaneous gift of perfect health will abruptly terminate every trace of sickness and death: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart (deer), and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert (Isa. 35:5-6). The need for medical and mental services will cease. Hospitals, mortuaries and medical facilities will become extinct in the Kingdom of God. Men's preoccupation with having to sweat in the brow of their face will no longer be a burdensome experience. For the first time in the history of the human race man will focus their attention on learning and knowing the judgments of God. Men's fascination with the stock market, the entertainment industry, and the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will come to an immediate halt. God is not going to dilute the blessings of divine

government with men's commitment to secular affairs.

Human government will yield to divine government: Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:7). These are the conditions that will prevail upon the earth during Eonian Times. They will define the character of the Day of Christ. What the rapturists have failed to comprehend is that these glorious conditions will come to pass before the parousia of Jesus Christ. They will precede His second coming to the earth. Failure to understand that these blessings are next for mankind is an impediment to an appreciation of these miraculous events leading into the fulfillment of Daniel's seventieth week. These events, which will in time lead to the orderly fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, are next on God's prophetic calendar. They will include the literal fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. The implementation of the Davidic covenant will have a profound effect not only on the nation of Israel, but on every nation on earth in that day. No nation on earth will fail to feel the impact of the Davidic covenant. The words of 2 Samuel 7:4-17 provide the majestic details of this unconditional covenant. These truths should be ingrained in the heart and mind of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Speaking through the prophet Nathan the Lord said, Now therefore so shalt thou say unto My servant David, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: and I was with thee withersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thy enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth (2 Sam. 7:8-9). David's success and rise to prominence in the earth in that day will be overwhelming. The word "ruler," appearing on verse 8, is a translation of the Hebrew word nagid, and signifies one who is both a prince, a governor and a leader. Confirmation of this glorious role is revealed in Isaiah where the Lord says, Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and ye shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people (Isa. 55:3-4). According to J.B. Rotherham's Emphasized Bible, this word "people" in verse 4 is plural and should be read "peoples." Not only will David be a leader and commander over the people of Israel, but over all the peoples of the earth once he is enthroned in power by God. His influence will be felt world-wide.

We know from the record of 2 Samuel 11-12 that David, during his reign, became involved in the commission of a great sin in which Uriah the Hitite, an innocent man and the husband of Bathsheba, was slain in battle. Scripture



declares, "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam. 11:27). Following this incident, the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to David to expose this immoral deed: David then said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die (2 Sam. 12:13-14). What a tragic consequence to the sin of this man. Upon the death of this child, David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him (2 Sam. 12:24). Solomon was somewhat older when this transpired: Now the days of David drew nigh that (near the time) he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: that the Lord may continue His word which He spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said He) a man on the throne of Israel. . . .

So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David (1 Kings 2:1-4, 10). What a majestic, yet unfulfilled, promise of God!

Some 1,000 years after the death of David, Peter declared, Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day (Acts 2:29). Although these words of Peter were spoken some 2,000 years ago, the day is forth coming when God will raise David from the dead to fulfill his majestic role in the earth as God's anointed king. Speaking of that glorious day, we read, I have found David My servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm shall also strengthen him.... Also I will make him My first born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him forevermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him (Psa. 89:20-21, 27-28). These words of God clearly demonstrate the powerful role David will yet play in the earth. These words were recorded almost 3,000 years ago; nevertheless, the time will come when these prophetic words will turn into reality.

Speaking of that glorious day Jeremiah declared, For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them (Jer. 30:8-9). What most men, including the rapturists, have completely failed to grasp is that the restoration and reconstitution of the nation of Israel must by definition occur before the

Day of the Lord. In the closing prayers of David, the son of Jesse, we read: His name shall endure forever (in respect to the eon): His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever: and let (cause) the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen (Psa. 72:17-19). What a glorious day this will be for the whole of mankind! Regrettably, we are not capable of understanding the full impact that these blessings will bring into the earth.

This glorious truth is embellished in the words of the Psalmist: For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed. The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it. Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.... For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There (in Jerusalem) will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish (Psa. 132:10-11, 13-18). These awesome blessings defy description and must be fulfilled before the second coming of Christ. No wonder when the "abomination of desolation" is seen dwelling in the Holy place that the wrath of God is revealed against this satanic monster.

During the course of the so-called Jerusalem conference, the Apostles Paul and Barnabas declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the nations by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles (nations), to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up (Acts 15:13-16). This descriptive phrase, "I will build again" occurs twice in verse 16. It is a translation of the Greek word *anoikodomeo*. This represents the only occurrences of this word in the New Testament. This passage has specific reference to the Old Testament prophecy of Amos: In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:... And I will bring again (remove) the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they also shall make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God (Amos 9:11,14-15).

For the first time in the history of the nation of Israel, that people will be firmly implanted in their land and enjoy physical security and an abundance of peace. What a contrast to the life of these men living in the land of Palestine today. The realization of these blessings is contingent on the literal fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. The word "tabernacle," found in Acts 15:16, is a translation of the Greek word *skene*. It is used figuratively to designate a dwelling place, or more precisely, a center of life or activity. While the word originally meant a "tent," in time it came to mean a "center of activity," the stage or scene on which a person acted out his life. Once God acts to reconstitute the nation of Israel, an entirely new scene of activity will develop on earth. The prophet Isaiah declared, And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning, afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city (Isa. 1:26). The presence of these men on the earth, in the Kingdom of God, will have a profound effect on every man in Israel. Speaking to his twelve apostles, Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). Obviously, this implies the fulfillment of the prophet Elijah who, "truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). At the same time Ezekiel makes plain: And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it (Ezek. 34:23-24). The literal fulfillment of these conditions describes what the nation can expect to happen during the time of divine government. Only God is capable of producing this miracle. Failure on the part of the rapturists to comprehend the scope of this great work of God makes it impossible for them to appreciate the significance of the events leading up to the so-called rapture.

As we turn our attention to the terms of the Davidic covenant, we read in 2 Samuel, And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee an house (2 Sam. 7:11). This term "house" must refer to David's physical descendants, for the Lord goes on, And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7:12-13). This term "forever" (Heb.-*olam*) is not primarily concerned with unending time, but of the work of God in respect to the eon; that is a time when God will flow out to the nation of Israel. The Scripture goes on, I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thine kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever (2 Sam. 7:14-16). The word "throne" in this passage is the symbol of David's authority and

right to rule.

A number of highly significant facts emerge from this important passage. One of these makes plain that following the death of the man, David, God promised, "I will set up thy seed after thee which shall proceed out of thy bowels." This promise of God is confirmed in the book of Chronicles which states, "I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons" (1 Chron. 17:11). There can be no doubt but what this passage has specific reference to David's son, Solomon. We read confirmation of this promise in 1 Kings 8:20 where Solomon declared: And the Lord hath performed His word that He spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. There can be no doubt that in the day of Solomon's prominence, this promise was literally fulfilled. Further evidence of this awesome promise is made plain in 1 Chronicles 22:9-10: Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever. However, as Dr. C.I. Scofield makes plain in his notes in The Scofield Reference Bible, this was "fulfilled first in Solomon, and finally fulfilled, later, in Christ." This indisputable fact is revealed in Luke 1:31-33. Note the words of the angel Gabriel: And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Another significant fact stands out in 2 Samuel 7:12, where it states, "I will set up thy seed after thee." This statement reaches far beyond the man named Solomon, and I believe it reaches forward to Jesus Christ, who is the Messiah. This is the One in and through whom every spiritual and physical blessing, as it relates to the nation of Israel, will be fulfilled. Paul in writing to the Galatians said, Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ (Gal. 3:16). Christ therefore becomes the seed identified with the collective seed of Abraham. 2 Samuel 7:14 adds, "I will be His father, and He shall be My Son." It is not possible to escape the facts revealed in the Gospel of John that have distinct reference to the unique relationship between the Father and the Son. Take note of John 17:1-2: ... Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh (humanity), that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. Verse 8 adds this, For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.

Recognize that God the Father is the source of every spiritual blessing flowing out to Israel and the nations. Also, observe closely the words of Jesus in John 17:21 -24, That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one even as We are One: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and the world may know that Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. This truth exalts the majestic role which will be fulfilled by the Father and the Son in the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. David clearly understood that this covenant would be fulfilled in the future with Messiah ruling from the heavens.

The problem faced by the rapturists is their insistence that the Davidic covenant will not be fulfilled until after the parousia of Jesus Christ, during the millennium. I hold that Christ will reign over David's throne on earth and over David's people, Israel, forever or, more precisely, with respect to the eon. This simply means that every aspect of the Davidic covenant must find its definitive fulfillment during the flow of the manifest Kingdom of God. These days are synonymous with Eonian Times and the Day of Christ, during which God will flow out to every nation on earth, including Israel. This fact has proven to be a major obstacle to the rapturists who find it difficult to relate to the fact that this covenant is forever, not specifically in the sense of time, but as the gradual fulfillment of an unconditional covenant flowing out of God. Once God's present dispensation of grace stands completed, the great river of prophecy will again begin to flow. The psalmist David declared, There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High (Psa. 46:4). God's present Dispensation of Grace is an essential work of God to establish the fact that grace is the dominant aspect of His character. Once this great river of prophecy begins to flow, every detail of the Abrahamic, the Palestinian, and the New covenant will come to fruition.

One of the highlights of that prophecy, as revealed in Daniel 11:36 and in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, points to the appearance of the man of sin, or the beast, an incarnation of Satan, who seats himself in the future temple of God, in Jerusalem, demanding that all men worship him. This event marks the beginning of the time of Jacob's trouble, or the Great Tribulation which we have already discussed. What is highly significant is the fact that while Israel and the nations will experience a time of universal testing, Israel is miraculously preserved by God. This creates much frustration for 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). It is also at that time when to the woman

(Israel) were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent (Rev. 12:14). Note that this time of tribulation is three and one-half years and not seven years as the rapturists insist.

This event brings into focus Paul's words found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where we are told: 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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Two distinct companies of men are spoken of in this passage. The first are those who are "the dead in Christ." These are the martyrs of Israel and the nations who willingly lay down their lives in protest to the demands of the beast, and have refused "to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads" (Rev. 13:16). There is not a man living today nor anyone lying in the grave that can match this description. These are men who have been produced by the Kingdom judgments of God, called "the children (sons) of the Kingdom" (Matt. 13:38). The second company of men addressed in Thessalonians are "we which are alive." Once again this has absolutely no reference to any man living today, whether or not he or she may be a believer in Jesus Christ. This fact standing alone destroys the myth of the so-called imminent rapture of the Church. We are not living today in what the rapturists falsely call "the Church age." This is a figment of their imagination. It discounts the fact that all of mankind are now living in the awesome day of the Dispensation of Grace. This day will not end in the "rapture of the saints," but in the manifest Kingdom of God.

In dealing with the issue of the rapture, it is important to note that the term is nowhere to be found in the Bible. The actual word translated "caught up together" is the Greek word arpazo, which means "to forcibly seize upon" or "to take to oneself with force." Acts 8:38-39 speaks of both Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, whom Philip baptized (identified as a believer): ... and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away (arpazoo) Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and went his way rejoicing. Here was an actual physical departure of Philip by the agency of the Holy Spirit. This word occurs again in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 to describe a supernatural experience of Paul. He states, "such an one caught up (arpazo) to the third heaven." Here Paul was witnessing to the glories of paradise he had shared. An important occurrence of this word is also found in John 10:28-29, where Christ said, And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck (arpazo) them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck (arpazo-to seize, capture, or lay hold upon them) them out of My Father's hand.

Additionally, this shows the absolute guarantee of the security of the believer in Christ.

This message is inherent to Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, where we read, For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout (an authoritative command), with the voice of the archangel (Michael, Jude 1:9) and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ (martyrs) shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (arpazo) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever (always) be with the Lord. There can be absolutely no doubt as to whom Paul referred. I am convinced this refers to the future generations of millions of God-fearing men in Israel, including the Apostle Paul. An unknown number of these men can be classified as "martyrs," who will be willing to lay down their lives in defense of the testimony of Christ, rather than yield to the insidious demands of the man of sin. Even if they are called upon to die, they can rest assured that their death will be very brief, at most three and one-half years.

This spectacular global event 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 earth for 1,000 years. This majestic scenario occurs after the tribulation when at the time then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall 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.

It stands to reason that since this event will occur in the Day of the Lord and at the parousia of Christ, it cannot be imminent as most of these presumed Bible scholars proclaim. What they fail to grasp is that God's next move is to assume sovereignty over this earth, with all men upon it (the living) and all men in it (the dead). I believe this position is Scriptural, logical and true. I urge all men who think otherwise to subscribe to Paul's admonition to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

## **THE SEQUEL—THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN AND THE DAY OF GOD**

The culmination of the manifest Kingdom of God will lead mankind into the glorious 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ here on earth which is known as the Millennium. For the previous five centuries men will have enjoyed the unprecedented blessing of divine government. All of the awesome promises that relate to the cessation of hostilities, the enlightenment of mankind, and God's triumph over sin and death will open wide the door to the reign of Christ. The literal fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, the Palestinian covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the New covenants will usher mankind into that majestic era of unparalleled peace and tranquility. Every purpose of God, as it relates to the inception of the 1,000-year reign of Christ, will have been fully achieved. Every Old Testament prophecy will reach a final and definitive fulfillment in the earth at the time of the parousia of Jesus Christ.

The exalted nation of Israel will emerge from the great tribulation as the most eminent nation upon the face of the earth. Israel's rise to prominence will astound every other nation. At that time, the great promise of God, spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy 7:6, will be fulfilled to the letter: For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth. The Apostle Peter adds these words, But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people (for His possession); that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Israel will yet be set in a place of prominence that will excel that of any nation in the earth. She will enjoy that place of service and honor in the earth during the manifest Kingdom of God. As the manifest Kingdom begins to converge on the great Millennium, Israel will enjoy the realization of her role in the earth that will be hers during the 1,000-year reign of Christ. This goal of her preeminence is clearly spelled out in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12). The survival of the nations in the Day of the Lord will be contingent on their recognition of the importance of the nation of Israel in the plan and purpose of God.

Her rise to prominence in that day belongs to the sequel of the time of divine government. Nations having been restructured by God, during the Kingdom of God, will live side by side with Israel to give honor and glory to the exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. The prophet Zechariah declared, And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one (Zech. 14:9). All of the conglomerations of religion that now persist in the earth will vanish into obscurity. The lethal grip that these false religions now hold over men will have been broken by the power of the



Spirit of God. The Apostle Paul declared, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

This transition from darkness into light will be the result of centuries of the infusion of light into the earth. No man living upon the earth in that day will fail to have been fully enlightened regarding who Christ is and what He is in the sight of God. The realization of this important purpose of God will produce a people living on the earth who have finally yielded to the supremacy of Jesus Christ. As of this moment in time, the name of Jesus Christ continues to be despised by men who travel under the banner of "religious freedom." During the Kingdom of God, and as the result of the work of the Holy Spirit, every man, woman, and child will come to know that Jesus Christ and God, the Father, are one in essence, in deity, and in glory. Moses speaking on behalf of the people of Israel asked, Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. 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. 14:19-21).

Although all mankind will be the recipients of these majestic blessings, they do not terminate with the parousia of Jesus Christ. Because of the fact that His glory cannot be measured, mankind, living in the sequel of the days of the Kingdom of God, will be privileged to enjoy an ever-expanding knowledge of the glory of the Lord. In the words of the prophet Habakkuk, we read, For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). Isaiah declared, Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:7). This phrase "from henceforth and forever" is a translation of the Hebrew idiom meaning "in perpetuity." The implementation of this work of God has both an eonian perspective (ever-flowing out of God), and applies equally well to the reign of the great Son of David. The 1,000-year reign of Christ will be characterized with absolute justice and peace. Nations will grow in spiritual stature before the Lord. The idea that some negative conditions will continue to persist which violate these divine decrees is inconceivable.

It should also be recognized that at the time of the so-called "rapture," meaning the parousia of Jesus Christ, this sinister being who once said, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: . . . I will be like the Most High (Isa. 14:13-14), will be found bound for a thousand years, . . . that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season (Rev. 20:2-3). After

"the thousand years are expired," Satan shall be loosed out of his prison for a brief time after which the devil that deceived them (the nations) was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are (were cast) . . . (Rev. 20:10). Here he shall be destroyed. No man, no angelic being, or Satan himself, entering into the lake of fire will ever see life again; it is the final destruction, and there is no recovery from "the second death" for men as well. Satan's destruction will liberate every man from his despicable work of deception and malignity. The result of his final demise means that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26).

Following this moment of triumph when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). This goal of God, to be everything to everyone, will be reached as a definitive fulfillment at the conclusion of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Every consequence of sin having entered into the world (Rom. 5:12) will be dealt with by God in His determination to create an environment in which righteousness will exist. Every barrier to men's peaceful existence in the earth and their capacity to enjoy life flowing out of God to the fullest will be the direct result of the victory Christ will enjoy over every principality or power since all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church (He is the sum of the substance of the out-called ones): who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence (Col. 1:16-18). His exalted position cannot be described in human terms. We embrace this profound truth based on our relationship to Jesus Christ by faith.

As the result of this incredible victory Christ will achieve, billions of men who have successfully lived out their lives on earth during the manifest Kingdom of God will continue their venture into an ever-increasing knowledge of the Lord. The 1,000-year reign of Christ will provide this glorious opportunity. God, who is infinite in knowledge and in truth, will lead humanity forward in time to experience even more of the glories that personify the Lord Jesus Christ. The future destiny of the nations is revealed in the book of Zechariah: And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, to keep the feast of the tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, even upon them shall be no rain (Zech. 14:16-17). These divine directions will not be repealed during the Millennium.

Isaiah explains most clearly: For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the

Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die (symbol of unending shame), neither shall their fire be quenched (symbol of their destruction); and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh (Isa. 66:22-24).

The consummation of these conditions will pave the way for that time when the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:3-4). These are the conditions that describe the eternal state, and those which will characterize the Day of God, beyond the Millennium. Alas, the psalmist has said, Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary: praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness.... Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord (Psa. 150:1-2, 6).

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTARY**

During the course of the preparation of this study, the author reviewed in detail many different books and essays dealing with the rapture issue. Without a single exception, not one of these writers understands, prior to the fulfillment of the events recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, that there will be a significant period of divine government on the earth. What the rapturists have done is to proclaim that God's next move on mankind is the imminent rapture of the church. In so doing, they have failed to recognize that the fulfillment of God's majestic covenants made with the nation of Israel must precede the parousia of Jesus Christ. The great expectation of the blessed hope, pertaining to the unveiling of the glories of Jesus Christ, has been ignored at the expense of the presumed rapture theory.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that any real expectation of the sudden removal of the believers to heaven is clearly an illusion. Men have been deceived into thinking that Christ will reign at any moment. I believe that Satan is ultimately responsible for this mass deception and many churches are its willing dupes. As the days of God's present dispensation draw toward a close, I believe that men's hearts will grow weary of this bankrupt doctrine. Solomon, the man unto whom God gave exceedingly great wisdom and understanding, declared, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12). I believe this rapture doctrine has a very bleak future. My fervent prayer is that God in His infinite grace may enlighten the eyes of all men to perceive the truth, which is that the hope of mankind lies in the

promise of the Kingdom of God and divine intervention.

THE END - # MSS10

## APPENDIX A, "MARGARET'S REVELATION"

"Margaret's Revelation," as mentioned earlier, was first published in Robert Norton's *Memoirs of James & George Macdonald, of Port Glasgow* (1840), pp. 171-176. Norton published it again in the *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church* (1861), pp. 15-18. The revelation shown here is as it appears in Norton's 1840 book, as follows:

1 "It was first the awful state of the land that was pressed upon  
2 me. I saw the blindness and infatuation of the people to be very  
3 great. I felt the cry of Liberty just to be the hiss of the serpent, to  
4 drown them in perdition. It was just 'no God.' I repeated the  
5 words, Now there is distress of nations, with perplexity, the seas  
6 and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear—now  
7 look out for the sign of the Son of man. Here I was made to stop  
8 and cry out, O it is not known what the sign of the Son of man  
9 is; the people of God think they are waiting, but thy know not  
10 what it is. I felt this needed to be revealed, and that there was great  
11 darkness and error about it; but suddenly what it was burst upon me  
12 with a glorious light. I saw it was just the Lord himself descending  
13 from Heaven with a shout, just the glorified man, even Jesus; but  
14 that all must, as Stephen was, be filled with the Holy Ghost, that  
15 they might look up, and see the brightness of the Father's glory. I  
16 saw the error to be, that men think that it will be something seen be  
17 the natural eye; but 'tis spiritual discernment that is needed, the eye  
18 of God in his people. Many passages were revealed, in a light in  
19 which I had not before seen them. I repeated, 'Now is the kingdom  
20 of Heaven like unto ten virgins, who went forth to meet the  
21 Bridegroom, five wise and five foolish; they that were foolish took  
22 their lamps, but took no oil with them; but they that were wise  
23 took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' 'But be ye not unwise,  
24 but understanding what the will of the Lord is; and be not drunk  
25 with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' This was  
26 the oil the wise virgins took in their vessels—this is the light to be

27 kept burning—the light of God—that we may discern that which  
28 cometh not with observation to the natural eye. Only those who have  
29 the light of God within them will see the sign of his appearance. No  
30 need to follow them who say, see here, or see there, for his day shall  
31 be as the lightning to those in whom the living Christ is. 'Tis Christ  
32 in us that will lift us up—he is the light—'tis only those that are  
33 alive in him that will be caught up to meet him in the air. I saw  
34 that we must be in the Spirit, that we might see spiritual things.  
35 John was in the Spirit, when he saw a throne set in Heaven.—But I  
36 saw that the glory of the ministration of the Spirit had not been  
37 known. I repeated frequently, but the spiritual temple must and  
38 shall be reared, and the fullness of Christ be poured into his body,  
39 and then shall we be caught up to meet him. Oh none will be  
40 counted worthy of this calling but his body, which is the church, and  
41 which must be a candlestick all of gold. I often said, Oh the  
42 glorious inbreaking of God which is now about to burst on this  
43 earth; Oh the glorious temple which is now about to be reared, the  
44 bride adorned for her husband; and Oh what a holy, holy bride she  
45 must be, to be prepared for such a glorious bridegroom. I said, Now  
46 shall the people of God have to do with realities—now shall the  
47 glorious mystery of God in our nature be known—now shall it be  
48 known what it is for man to be glorified. I felt that the revelation of  
49 Jesus Christ had yet to be opened up—it is not knowledge about  
50 God that it contains, but it is an entering into God—I saw that  
51 there was a glorious breaking in of God to be. I felt as Elijah,  
52 surrounded with chariots of fire. I saw as it were, the spiritual  
53 temple reared, and the Head Stone brought forth with shoutings of  
54 grace, grace unto it. It was a glorious light above the brightness of  
55 the sun, that shone round about me. I felt that those who were filled  
56 with the Spirit could see spiritual things, and feel walking in the  
57 midst of them, while those who had not the Spirit could see

58 nothing—so that two shall be in one bed, the one taken and the  
59 other left, because the one has the light of God within while the  
60 other cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven. I saw the people of God  
61 in an awfully dangerous situation, surrounded by nets and  
62 entanglements, about to be tried, and many about to be deceived  
63 and fall. Now will THE WICKED be revealed, with all power and  
64 signs and lying wonders, so that if it were possible the very elect will  
65 be deceived.—This is the fiery trial which is to try us.—It will be  
66 for the purging and purifying of the real members of the body of  
67 Jesus; but Oh it will be a fiery trial. Every soul will be shaken to the  
68 very center. The enemy will try to shake in every thing we have  
69 believed—but the trial of real faith will be found to honor and  
70 praise and glory. Nothing but what is of God will stand. The  
71 stony-ground hearers will be made manifest—the love of many will  
72 wax cold. I frequently said that night, and often since, now shall  
73 the awful sight of a false Christ be seen of this earth, and nothing  
74 but the living Christ in us can detect this awful attempt of the  
75 enemy to deceive—for it is with all deceivableness of unrighteous-  
76 ness he will work—he will have a counterpart or every part of God's  
77 truth, and an imitation for every work of the Spirit. The Spirit must  
78 and will be poured out on the church, that she may be purified  
79 and filled with God—and just in proportion as the Spirit of God  
80 works, so will he—when our Lord anoints men with power, so will  
81 he. This is particularly the nature of the trial, through which those  
82 are to pass who will be counted worthy to stand before the Son of  
83 man. There will be outward trial too, but 'tis principally temptation.  
84 It is brought on by the outpouring of the Spirit, and will just  
85 increase in proportion as the Spirit is poured out. The trial of the  
86 Church is from Antichrist. It is by being filled with the Spirit that  
87 we shall be kept. I frequently said, Oh be filled with the  
88 Spirit—have the light of God in you, that you may detect Satan—be

89 full of eyes within—be clay in the hands of the potter—submit to be  
90 filled, filled with God. This will build the temple. It is not by might  
91 nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. This will fit us to  
92 enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. I saw it to be the will of  
93 God that all should be filled. But what hindered the real life of God  
94 from being received by his people, was their turning from Jesus, who  
95 is the way to the Father. They were not entering in by the door.  
96 For he is faithful who hath said, by me if any man enter in he  
97 shall find pasture. They were passing the cross, through which  
98 every drop of the Spirit of God flows to us. All power that comes  
99 not through the blood of Christ is not of God. When I say, they  
100 are looking from the cross, I feel that there is much in it—they  
101 turn from the blood of the Lamb, by which we overcome, and in  
102 which our robes are washed and made white. There are low  
103 views of God's holiness, and a ceasing to condemn sin in the  
104 flesh, and a looking from him who humbled himself, and made  
105 himself of no reputation. Oh! it is needed, much needed at  
106 present, a leading back to the cross. I saw that night, and often  
107 since, that there will be an outpouring of the Spirit on the body,  
108 such as has not been, a baptism of fire, that all the dross may be put  
109 away. Oh there must and will be such an indwelling of the living  
110 God as has not been—the servants of God sealed in their  
111 foreheads—great conformity to Jesus—his holy, holy image seen  
112 in his people—just the bride made comely by his comeliness put  
113 upon her. This is what we are at present made to pray much for,  
114 that speedily we may all be made ready to meet our Lord in the  
115 air—and it will be. Jesus wants his bride. His desire is toward us.  
116 He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Amen and Amen.  
117 Even so come Lord Jesus."



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( 1 Peter 4:11).

END MSS10