

# *Is the Next Great Prophetic Event **THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS?***

For years, network news media have questioned various religious leaders who had confidently predicted the "rapture" on a given date. Recently, one such would-be prophet was required to change his earlier book title about the "Rapture of 1988" to the "Rapture of 1989," going into all manner of apologetic detail on why he had misfigured his chronology by one year. I haven't heard from him in 1990, '91, '92 and so on.

Millions believe in the rapture. Yet, the word is nowhere in the Bible. Is Christ going to come in "two phases": first, *for* His saints (in the "secret rapture"), then *with* His saints, years later? Here is what your Bible plainly says about what many call "that blessed hope," the doctrine of the *rapture* of the saints.

*by Garner Ted Armstrong*

"**I**n case of the rapture, this vehicle will be unoccupied," smugly proclaimed the bumper sticker on the automobile waiting at the stoplight just ahead of me.

I'm sure the driver of the car was proudly, if not a little self-righteously, displaying her belief that, should Christ suddenly "rapture her away," she would instantly soar through the roof of the car, whisk away into the clouds (unless it happened to be a clear day) to heaven, leaving her still-running car there at the intersection to create a massive traffic jam.

Is this true? Is Christ coming to secretly "snatch up" His saints *before* the Great Tribulation of Bible prophecy?

Millions believe in the "rapture." Several of the large, mainstream Protestant denominations emphasize the "rapture" as the "blessed hope" of the end-time generation of Christians; a spiritual, last-minute *escape* from the terrible time of tribulation to come on the earth.

Millions believe there will be *no Christians left on this earth* during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.

Is this what the Bible teaches?

Christ told John to write, concerning the church in Philadelphia, in about A.D. 92, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation ["trial," margin], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10). To many, this is confirmation of the "rapture of the saints." To some, this scripture indicates that God will whisk away His people to a desert wilderness, perhaps to Petra, in the Jordanian desert east of the Dead Sea, where they will sit out the "Great Tribulation," or the time of "trial," to come upon the earth.

Are God's people going to be taken to heaven, or up into the clouds, or to Petra, so as to escape the Tribulation? In this booklet, we shall see the answers clearly from the pages of *your Bible*.

**The "Rapture of the Saints":  
Where is it Mentioned in the Bible?**

Actually, the word "rapture" does not appear in the Bible. This is strange, in one sense, for one would assume Christian theologians would prefer, if they are going to espouse a particularly important doctrine, one which provides fodder for hundreds of sermons, to have a doctrine which is at least found in *one* scripture, if not many.

Instead, rapturists appeal to the Greek language for the basis of their belief. They say Christ is coming back to this earth in *two phases*. First, by coming *near* the earth, to catch up His saints in the "secret rapture," and second, by coming *back* to the earth, perhaps after three and one-half years, or after the lapse of some other period of time, *with* His saints.

His first approach to earth to "rapture" away the saints, they say, is His *parousia*. This Greek word is found in many scriptures concerning the Second Coming of Christ. The word is found in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, number 3952 in the Greek, and is rendered: "a being near; *advent*; often, *return-spec.* of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked: aspect, coming, presence."

There are three different Greek words which are used relative to Christ's return to this earth. They are: (1) *parousia*, as already defined; (2) *epiphaneia*, or, the "Epiphany," the *Advent* (arrival) of Christ, meaning "a manifestation, appearing, brightness," and, (3) *apokalupsis*, meaning "disclosure, appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation."

Often, when professing Christian theologians speak of the rapture, they call it the "secret" rapture. Let us now look into the Word of God, and see how Jesus Christ described His return to this earth, for, if *anyone* should know whether it will be a *secret* arrival or not, Christ Himself should, shouldn't He?

The very *focal* point of biblical prophecy is the famed "Olivet Prophecy" found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The most complete and detailed of these accounts is found in Matthew 24. Christ had described to His disciples the impending destruction of the beautiful temple with its huge columns, high walls, and magnificent, surrounding structures. The disciples, shocked by Christ's description of the utter destruction of Jerusalem, asked, "...Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming [*parousia*], and of the end of the world?

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

"All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

"And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:3-13).

When the disciples used the word "coming," they were no doubt speaking in Aramaic. However, in the original *Greek* manuscripts, this word is the very same word used by "rapturists" to connote the so-called "secret" rapture.

The disciples had asked what would be the *signs* of Christ's "coming," or His *parousia*.

Read through each one of these verses carefully. Can you see any hint or suggestion in any part of this passage that the events Jesus Christ described are *secret*?

Is there anything "secret" about the utter destruction of Jerusalem, the tearing down of the temple, all of its attendant buildings, the very walls of the city itself?

Is there anything "secret" about massive *wars* and rumors of wars, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom; about famines, disease epidemics, and massive earthquakes?

Did Jesus say *one word* about merely being "present," near the earth, but not returning to stand upon it? Did He say *one word* about secretly catching up His church before the Tribulation?

No, He did not. Instead, He strongly testified that His saints would be *on this earth*, not only deeply affected by, but perhaps giving their last witness, perhaps being *martyred* for His sake before His return!

### **The Order of Prophetic Events**

Notice that Jesus Christ spoke in a definite *sequence*.

Many biblical commentaries, among them the well-known *Companion Bible* by Dr. Bullinger, note how the chronological sequence of Matthew 24 fits perfectly with the unfolding of the first six seals of the scroll of the "Apocalypse," or the book of Revelation, found in Revelation 6 and 7.

Notice how Christ said that all of these great events comprised the *beginning* of "sorrow." The margin renders the word as "travail," or *tribulation*.

Are any *saints*, any members of God's true church, *still on earth* at this time of mind-boggling, global warfare, drought, famine, disease and earthquakes when literally tens of *millions* of men and women are dying?

Christ said, "men shall they deliver *you* up to be afflicted, and shall *kill you*: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." To whom was Christ speaking? His disciples! *When* would these things happen? At the *time of the end*, just before the Second Coming of Christ! So, instead of saying He would "catch up" His saints before the Tribulation, He predicted *some* of them would be *martyred* DURING the Tribulation!

Remember, when these words were originally spoken, Christ was addressing His own beloved disciples. By prophetic extension, those solemn words imply Christ's disciples at the end of this age: His true church, the body of Jesus Christ, the *saints*.

Is there any remote hint or suggestion in these passages that, as the Great Tribulation is ensuing, the saints are somehow secretly "snatched away" from the earth; that they are hiding in caves, or that they are up in heaven?

No, Christ said they would be *murdered*—MARTYRED for the "sake of the name of Jesus Christ." That means His true saints would be *doing a work* which would become so *hated* by the false religious leaders, and even by civil authority, that they would *kill* the true servants of Jesus Christ because they hated their message!

He went on to describe a time when many of the converted would betray one another and begin to hate one another; how false prophets would *deceive* many of God's people, and how because of iniquity all about them, many of those who lacked faith and who were *weak* in God's Word would become *cold*.

He then said it was those who would "endure unto the end," who would be saved!

This means the end of all of these events, or the end of their own lives, whichever comes first.

Now, notice carefully another major section of this vitally-important prophecy:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

"Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

"Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

"Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

"And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:14-22).

Notice that when Jesus said the gospel of the Kingdom would be preached in all the world He described it as a "*witness*" unto all nations. The gospel is the *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God. It can be characterized as an "happy announcement," or "glad tidings."

The gospel is not only a message *about* the *person* of Jesus Christ! While Christ is the focal point of the gospel; while His life, His testimony, His miracles, His death, burial and resurrection are absolutely *central* to the gospel, so is the *message* He *brought* from God the Father, the *message* called the "good news of the Kingdom of God" which he delivered to His disciples, and commissioned them to preach to all the world!

This gospel message is largely ignored by the world today. Instead, the worldly churches emphasize the *person* of Jesus Christ, but ignore the *message* which He brought!

Jesus then begins to describe something called the "abomination of desolation." He says those living in the time of the imposition of this abomination in the "holy place" in Jerusalem should "*flee into the mountains!*" He then tells those who are watching and praying about world events that they are not to put their minds on material

things; not even so much as to return into their own homes to retrieve valuable items; not even to return from their workplace to their home; but to immediately flee!

This is certainly not the description of a "secret" rapture to heaven!

Notice Christ's words again: "But pray ye that your *flight* be *not in the winter*, neither on the Sabbath day: for then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:20,21).

This is describing human beings fleeing *on foot*! Christ is telling how terrible it would be for women in the advanced stages of pregnancy; urging people to pray that they would not be fleeing in the winter when snow and ice would cover the land; that they would not be fleeing on the Sabbath day when they were ordered not to journey longer than a fairly short distance!

Again, do you see any nuance, any remote *hint*, in any of these passages describing the Great Tribulation that the saints are *gone*—that the saints have already been "secretly raptured" from the earth, and are not *here*?

Christ said that except those days were supernaturally *cut short* humanity itself would not survive!

He then said it was for the sake of the "elect" that those days would be shortened. Who are these elect?

Notice that the elect are those who *cannot be deceived* by false Christs and false prophets (verse 24).

The "very elect," are those who are Christ's own disciples; baptized, converted members of God's church, in whom is the Holy Spirit of God.

### **False Hopes Predicted**

Notice what kind of message would characterize the false Christs and false prophets of the end time: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: Behold He is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the *coming [parousia]* of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:26,27).

So the message of *the false* Christs and *false* prophets would be that there would be something "secretive" about Christ's Second Coming! These false Christs and false prophets would try to tell *God's own people* that Christ had come "in secret"! These false Christs and false prophets would approach God's people with the doctrine that Christ was already *here* somewhere, but that He must be sought out by poking around in some desert wilderness, or that He is hiding out in a cave! What did Christ say the Christian is to do with these doctrines about Christ's "secret" coming? He said, "BELIEVE IT NOT!"

But *why*?

Think about it. Do you suppose people who believe Christ is *already here*, or who expect to be secretly *raptured*, *will lose faith* if they suddenly find themselves in the midst of trials, troubles, tribulation? Will some of them simply give up and begin to surrender their will and mind to the Beast power, the False Prophet, and the great false church?

Will some feel *betrayed* by God, because they trusted in a *false hope*?

Now, notice how Christ describes His Second Coming as "lightning out of the east, shining even unto the west."

Have you ever seen a bolt of lightning that does this? Probably not. Most lightning is either cloud to cloud, or cloud to ground. Lightning can come from any direction, and can race across the skies in jagged bolts, going up or down, sideways, and in dozens of different directions.

The only "lightning of the sky" that you and I know of which always "comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west" is the daily rising and setting of the *sun!*

The Bible describes Christ's Second Coming as an event so stupendous, so earth-shaking, so absolutely mind-boggling in its gargantuan portions that it is as if the sun itself were approaching the earth! God's Word says, "But unto you that fear my name shall the *Sun* of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall" (Malachi 4:2).

Christ's coming is described as coming with the strength of the *sun*. Continually, His coming is described as an event culminating the "day" of the Lord! Over and over again scriptures refer to the great events surrounding Christ's Second Coming in this manner "In that day....."

There is nothing "secret" about the daily rotational pattern of the earth, sunrise and sunset. The Second Coming of Christ is described as the sun shining in its strength, arising in the east, and finally going down in the west! There is nothing "secretive" in any of these verses.

Now, notice an enigmatic scripture: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:28). Further light is shed upon this puzzling scripture in Luke's account, where the disciples asked Jesus, following His description of individuals who are at work, or asleep in their beds, and "one is taken and the other left," by asking him, "Where, Lord?" (Luke 17:37). The original Greek can imply any carrion-eating bird, such as a vulture, an eagle, or a hawk. What does this mean?

Any rancher will know immediately what it means. Suppose you have lost a cow, or a sheep. You go out and count your herd or your flock, and one is missing. So you saddle your horse, and you begin searching all over your range for the missing animal. In the distance, you see a wheeling flock of birds in the sky. Do you immediately turn *away* from that place, and go search somewhere else? Of course not! You automatically know that those vultures are gathered together over either a dead or dying animal! You know that where the "body is, there will the vultures [eagles] be gathered together."

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Where, Lord?" they were asking Him *where* all of these events would take place. They were wondering whether it would be in or around the confines of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives; whether it would be in northern Israel around Galilee, or whether it would be out in the "Negev," or the desert wilderness.

Jesus told them wherever the *body is*, *THERE* will the "eagles be gathered together."

In other words, Jesus is telling the disciples not to worry about the stupendous events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ taking place somewhere *away* from the disciples! He is saying, very clearly, that Jesus Christ is coming *where His saints ARE!* He is coming *for* them in the same day He will stand on the Mount of Olives *with* them!

He is reassuring His disciples that no false prophet is going to come to *them*, the very body of Jesus Christ; the individuals who are performing His *work*; those who have the *truth* of God, and in whom is God's Holy Spirit, and "inform" them that Christ has come somewhere *else!*

Instead, He is reassuring them that He is coming TO them, and FOR them; that He will descend WITH them on that same day to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

### **The Heavenly Signs—When?**

Now, notice the step-by-step series of events Jesus described: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

"And 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.

"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:29-33).

Notice Jesus said immediately *after* the Tribulation the heavenly signs will occur! Let's notice another important scripture about these heavenly signs and this sequence of events:

"And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

"And the stars [meteorites] of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

"And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

"And said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

"For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?'" (Revelation 6:12-17).

Notice the first five seals of Revelation 6 dovetail perfectly with the chronological sequence of events unveiled by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24.

The first "horseman of the Apocalypse," riding the white horse, is depicting false Christs and false prophets. The *red* horse is depicting the wars and rumors of wars of which Christ spoke. The *black* horse is depicting famine and starvation. The *pale* horse is depicting disease epidemics and death, as well as ongoing warfare.

The *fifth* seal obviously describes those who have suffered martyrdom for the Word of God down through the ages. They are seen as symbolically crying out to God from the ground, in the same way God said that the shed blood of Abel cried out to Him from the ground after Cain slew him. They are told that they should "rest yet a

little season," until *their fellow servants* [saints!] also and their *brethren* [saints!] that should be killed *as they were* should be fulfilled!" (Revelation 6:10,11).

When does this martyrdom of saints take place? It takes place *after* the unveiling of the first four seals. It comprises the opening of the *fifth* seal, and is the final part of the GREAT TRIBULATION, just before the heavenly signs!

It is obvious that many Spirit-filled, converted, *saints*, members of the body of Christ, are to be persecuted, even *martyred*, for the sake of Christ's name during the Tribulation!

Yet, God promises He will never permit a person to be "tempted above that which he is able to bear," but with every temptation (trial), will make a way that he might be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). Some people would not be *able* to endure to the end of their lives, while others would. God knows His saints. He has always chosen men and women of *great faith* to be His chosen spokesmen before persecutors.

Now look at our text just quoted. Notice that the heavenly signs comprise the *sixth* seal of the seven seals of the scroll of Revelation. Notice that the heavenly signs come *AFTER* the Great Tribulation! Now, turn to and read Joel 2:31: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *BEFORE* the great and terrible day of the Lord come." In order to impress this deeply into your mind, read all three of those scriptures again! Joel 2:31, Matthew 24:29, and Revelation 6:12,13 absolutely *prove* that the events leading up to Christ's Second Coming are as follows:

(1) *THE GREAT TRIBULATION*, (2) the heavenly signs, (3) the Day of the Lord.

Are the saints still on the earth *during* the Great Tribulation?

Those who espouse the false doctrine of the "secret" rapture say *no!* They claim the saints are secretly whisked away from this earth, or "snatched away" *BEFORE* the events Jesus described as the Great Tribulation.

Yet your Bible says that a major *part* of the Tribulation to come is the *martyrdom of saints!*

Notice! "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And 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.

"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* [saints!] is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.'

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:7-11).

These are God's own converted, chosen, saintly people! They are *members of His church!*

This great persecution which follows Satan being cast back down out of heaven into the earth *IS* the Great Tribulation!

Notice that the saints overcome Satan and his persecutions "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the *death*" (Revelation 12:11).

This is not describing a secret "snatching away" of God's people to some remote wilderness, or up into heaven, but describing God's people right in the *midst* of the great events talking place on the earth; describing God's people as actively witnessing and warning the nations of this world, and *therefore* bringing hatred and persecution upon themselves.

Notice the last verse of this chapter: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman [God's true church!], and went to make *war* with the *remnant* [the last end-time remnants of God's true church on this earth] of her seed, which *keep the commandments of God*, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

This can only be describing God's true church. This is describing those who are obedient to God's commands, and who have the "testimony of Jesus Christ."

The testimony of Jesus Christ is the *gospel*, the advance good news about His soon-coming *government* which will overthrow the Beast power and all other worldly governments. These who are persecuted *during the Tribulation* are God's true saints, members of *His true church* who are doing the WORK OF GOD! They are *active* in international affairs, not secretly hiding, uninvolved, sitting on the sidelines of the greatest events in all history.

Notice Revelation 13:7: "And it was given unto him [the Beast power] to make war with the *saints*, and to *overcome them.....*" Once again, this shows that Christ's true disciples, the *saints*, the *true church*, are on this earth, and that some of them are to be *martyred* by the Beast power and the False Prophet!

### **Saints in the Book of Revelation**

Some argue that the *church* is mentioned only in the first three chapters of Revelation, and *after* that, the "saints" are mentioned. Those who *wrest* the Scriptures to imply a "secret rapture" argue that "saints" are not necessarily a PART OF GOD'S TRUE CHURCH! Is this so? Are not these *saints* members of God's true church?

In Revelation, the fifth chapter, John sees the vision of the scrolls sealed with seven seals and "wept much" because no man was found worthy to open the scrolls or to read it. Then, in vision, he sees the Lamb, which is Jesus Christ, and describes it this way: "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts [living creatures] and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of *saints*."

"And they [the saints] sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed us to God by thy blood* out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

"And has made *us* [the saints] unto our God kings and priests: and we shall *reign* on the earth" (Revelation 5:1-10).

This vision, wherein John sees the righteous qualifications of Jesus Christ as the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," also depicts the prayers and supplications of God's *saints*. Here, the saints are described as those who were "redeemed to God" by the precious blood of Jesus Christ out of every country on the face of the earth! They are those who are to be kings and priests with Christ, and to rule all nations of this earth *with* him, for one thousand years!

Anyone who tries to argue these people are not members of God's true church, Christ's spiritual body, is simply ignorant of God's Word, or a deliberate deceiver.

Jesus promised His own beloved disciples *co-rulership* with Him, and predicted they would "sit on the thrones of the twelve tribes of Israel" ruling with Him in the Kingdom of God.

It is *obvious* this reference to "saints" means the consecrated, converted, Spirit-led members of *God's true church!*

Now, notice: "Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the *prayers of all saints* upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

"And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the *saints*, ascended up before God out of the angels hand" (Revelation 8:3,4).

This is the second reference to "saints" in the book of Revelation, and once again is obviously spiritual metaphor, or a *vision* of heaven, where the prayers of God's converted, Spirit-led people, are seen as ascending up before God and bringing about the intervention of Almighty God in human affairs by sending the trumpet plagues upon sinning mankind! By no stretch of the imagination can these "saints" in these two verses be anyone other than Spirit-led members of God's own true church!

The next place where "saints" are mentioned in the book of Revelation is in chapter 11, just after the description of the famous two witnesses.

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

"And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

"Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou has taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and *to the saints*, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:15-18).

Could anyone, in the wildest stretch of his imagination, assert that these *saints* who are to be rewarded at the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, inheriting His *Kingdom* with Him, and beginning to RULE the earth, are anyone other than the members of God's true church?

Now, notice the "saints" mentioned in the thirteenth chapter: "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns...and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months [three and one-half years].

"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

"And it was given unto him to *make war with the saints*, and to *overcome* them: And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:1-7).

Here, the *Beast power* together with the False Prophet, now having gained *global supremacy*, are given the power to "make war with the saints"!

Could such a shocking thing occur? The "pretribulationists," or the "rapturists," assert that God is going to "snatch away" all of His true church BEFORE the horrifying consequences of the Tribulation, including *martyrdom*, could occur! But what did Jesus Christ say? He told His disciples: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues [churches];

"And ye shall be brought [under *arrest!*] before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

"But when they *deliver you up* [under *arrest*, as prisoners!], take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

"For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

"And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

"But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

"Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

"What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:16-28).

Time and again, Jesus Christ predicted that His true saints, the members of His true church, would be *hated*, *persecuted*, perhaps some of them even tortured and murdered!

When He said, "It is enough for the disciple that he be *as* his master," He is referring to His *own* torture and murder—the crucifixion! When He tells them not to fear those who are able to "kill the body," He is predicting that *some* of God's true servants, the members of God's true church, the *saints* will be chosen for martyrdom in the last days!

Is martyrdom a symbol of *shame*? Of course not! God has chosen only the very *strongest* of His true servants down through the centuries as His martyrs!

The Bible speaks of the "martyrdom of saints." These are not some group of individuals OTHER THAN God's true church, but oftentimes the very *leaders*, apostles, prophets, leading ministers, of the body of Jesus Christ, which is His true church! The greatest martyr of all was *Jesus Christ Himself!*

The apostle Paul was martyred. Perhaps, as history implies, he was thrown to the wild beasts in the arena in Rome. Tradition says Peter was crucified upside down. The book of Acts tells us that James, the brother of John, and one of the two sons of Zebedee, was martyred. We read in Acts the seventh chapter of the martyrdom of Stephen. Many, many others were martyred for their convictions, their beliefs, for the very *fact* that they were God's "*saints*"!

Notice further what Jesus told His true disciples, who were to become the apostles, and a part of the very foundation of His true church: "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life *for my sake* shall find it" (Matthew 10:39).

What did Christ prophesy for His true church? *How* did He characterize His true church in the *time of the end*, the time during the Great Tribulation, the heavenly signs, and the Day of the Lord, at the last few years and months before His return?

He told His disciples: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

"But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak [excuse] for their sin.

"He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John 15:20-23).

Only moments later, He said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

"They shall put you out of the synagogues [churches]: Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever *killeth* you will think that he doeth God service.

"And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16:1-3).

In His Olivet prophecy, Jesus said to His disciples: "And ye shall be *betrayed* both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

"But there shall not an hair of your head perish" (Luke 21:16-18).

Read that scripture carefully. Here, Jesus obviously states that *some* of His true servants, His true church, the *saints*, will be chosen to be martyrs for the name of Jesus Christ and for the sake of His work and His coming Kingdom. Others will not. He also said "There shall not an hair of your head perish." You will read of a literal application of this principle in Jesus' words to Peter and John after His resurrection. He implied Peter would be martyred; implied John would live to old age, and die a natural death. Two great apostles, each chosen for a different manner of witness, a different human destiny. See John 21:15-25.

If you continue reading through the twenty-first chapter of Luke, which is the Olivet prophecy, and Luke's parallel account of Matthew 24, you will see Jesus describing "Jerusalem compassed with armies," and being "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." He then shows how the heavenly signs will occur (Luke 21:25) and how humanity will then "see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27).

His coming occurs *after* the Tribulation, after the heavenly signs, at the *end* of the seven last plagues which conclude the Day of the Lord. It is *then*, and not one split second earlier, He catches up His saints to meet Him at His descent upon the Mount of Olives (1 Corinthians 15:22-24, 50-52).

Now, after expounding all of these earth-shaking events—wars and rumors of wars, droughts, famines, disease epidemics, massive loss of life—He says to His true disciples, His *church*, His *saints* who are still on the earth, "And when these things BEGIN TO COME TO PASS, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh!" (Luke 21:28).

*Where* are the saints *after* all these fantastic events? They are on the earth, having seen the Great Tribulation, and all the events associated with it unfolding. They are involved in the *work of God*, giving witness and warning to God's people and to all nations of the world, warning them of the punishments of sin, of God's soon-coming Kingdom, His intervention in the affairs of mankind! God's people are warned: "For as a snare shall it [the Great Tribulation!] come on them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

"Watch ye therefore ["*you*" meaning the church, the saints!] and pray always, that ye might be accounted worthy to *escape* all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:35,36).

*Why* should Jesus Christ caution His servants to pray they might be accounted worthy to *escape* all these *things* [the Great Tribulation] that are to come to pass, if He intended "snatching them up" from the earth anyway?

*Why* did He urge them to *pray their flight was not during winter, or on the Sabbath day*, if He was going to "snatch them up" anyway? *Why* did He say it would be especially difficult for a pregnant woman if He was going to "snatch her up" anyway?

Notice some other places in the book of Revelation where the word "saints" is used:

"Here is the patience of the saints: Here are they that *keep the commandments of God*, and the *faith of Jesus*.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth* [*during* the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord!]: yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:12,13).

Once again, we see not only that the *saints* comprise God's true church—those who are consecrated, converted, and led by the Holy Spirit of God—but that it also describes these saints as being *martyrs* for the name of Jesus Christ!

What is the "patience of the saints"? It is that they *keep God's commandments*, and have the *faith* of Jesus Christ! Can anyone *dare* imply that people who are keeping God's commandments, and who have the very faith of Jesus Christ living within them, are somehow *not* members of God's true church?

Read Revelation 15:3, where Christ is called the "King of saints." Then, notice Revelation 16:6, which says, "For they [the Beast and the False Prophet and their armies] have shed the blood of *saints* and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." Finally, notice the following scriptures:

"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration" (Revelation 17:6).

"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Revelation 18:24).

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8).

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9).

The great fallen church who is the woman "drunken with the blood of the saints" is the Babylonian mystery religion, with the false Christ—the anti-Christ or the False Prophet of biblical prophecy at its head. Obviously, these "saints" who have been martyred by this church are the true members of God's true church, and they are called "the martyrs of Jesus." No mention here, or *anywhere else*, in the book of Revelation of any "saints" who are anything *other* than members of God's true church!

Revelation 18:4 shows a picture of the "blood of saints" and all of those who are slain upon the earth being discovered in the dank, filthy records of the great false church. Revelation 19:8 merely describes that "fine linen" is the symbol of righteousness of the saints, and Revelation 20:9 depicts the holy city, New Jerusalem, at the *end* of the Millennium, being surrounded by "Gog and Magog," and refers to the holy city as "the camp of the saints."

Here, we have seen *every place* in the entire book of Revelation where the word "saints" is used.

In each case, it is referring to God's true church—converted people in whom is God's Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit are we [including Gentiles] all baptized into *one body* [the church!], whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). You do not "join" God's true church. God automatically *puts you into* His church when you receive His Spirit, for the church IS that scattered, small, persecuted group in whom is God's Holy Spirit!

By no stretch of the wildest, most fantastic imagination, can ANY of these scriptures be misconstrued to mean that these "saints" are anyone other than members of God's true church!

A pivotal argument advanced by the "pretribulationists," or those who believe in a secret rapture of the church *before* the Tribulation, is that Bible references to any "saints" being on earth during the Tribulation are not referring to the *church*, but a *different category* of "saints" who are *not part of the church!*

They know God's Word plainly mentions saints many times after the beginning of the Tribulation. Therefore, instead of simply abandoning their *false doctrine* of the "rapture," they try to TWIST God's Word, claiming the "saints" do not mean the *church!* How utterly ridiculous. And how *dishonest* with God's Word!

Can you be a "saint" and *not* be a part of God's true church?

The Greek word for "saint" is *hagios*, which means "*sacred*, pure, morally blameless or religious, consecrated, holy."

Let's notice a few scriptures where the term "saints" is applied, and see if it means righteous, converted, Godly people, people who are morally pure, sanctified, consecrated, but who are *not part of God's true church*.

Paul opens the book of Romans by writing to those who are "...called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be *saints*" (Romans 1:7). Are these people members of God's true Church? Obviously so. God loves them; they are called by Christ, and called to be saints, and they are part of God's church in Rome!

Seven more times in this book, Paul refers to saints. Read Romans 8:27; 12:13; 15:25,26,31; 16:2,15. Here, Paul speaks of "distributing to the necessity of the saints," or "making intercession for the saints," or the "poor saints who are in Jerusalem." In each case, it is obvious he is speaking of God's called-out, baptized, converted people in whom is God's Holy Spirit.

Dozens of times, throughout Paul's letters, he uses such expressions to connote the members of God's church. Is anyone *ever* called a "saint" who is *not* a member of God's church?

Possibly, for, in Matthew 27:52, you read of the "bodies of the saints" who were resurrected at the time of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. These righteous people were morally blameless, living according to God's laws, but yet had not been baptized, or had hands laid on them for the receiving of God's Spirit.

So the question really becomes, "Are there those who are called '*saints*' who are on the earth at the time of the Great Tribulation who are *not members of God's church*?"

### **What is the Church?**

Jesus said, "I will build my church!" (Matthew 16:18). The Greek word is *ekklesia*, which you will recognize as the root of our English word "ecclesiastical." It merely means "assembly," or "called-out ones." It comes from a root word which means to call out, separate, set apart, or assemble.

Jesus *did* build His true church on that "Rock" which was *Christ* Himself! He did so on the first Day of Pentecost following His resurrection, around June 16, A.D. 31. On that momentous Pentecost, true to His promises to His disciples, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to beget each of His disciples as children of God, causing His Holy Spirit to become *physically manifested* as leaping tongues of flames, appearing to settle on the heads of each of the apostles as a fiery crown.

In the great miracle of Pentecost, more than a dozen different ethnic groups with different languages and cultures were *astonished* to hear each of the apostles preaching about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection; telling of their own personal experiences with Christ, how they saw Him *alive* many times following His resurrection!

Not only was there the powerful miracle of the physical manifestation of God's Holy Spirit in the form of flickering tongues of fire like decorative *crowns* on the head of each of the apostles, there was the miracle of *hearing* as well as the miracle of *speech*!

Each of the apostles, one after the other, spoke in his own language. Yet, those who spoke completely *different* languages were astonished when they heard the words coming out of the apostles mouths in *their own tongue*!

This was the miracle of "tongues," or "*languages*," (*glossa* in the Greek). It was a miracle, *not* for the ecstatic enjoyment, physical exuberance or emotional release of the apostles, but as a tool of *evangelism*!

There has never been anything in the history of the world exactly like this event before or since!

Pentecost in A.D. 31 was absolutely *unique*. It is the *birthday* of the New Testament church.

Toward the end of the second chapter of the book of Acts, we read how three thousand were baptized, given God's Holy Spirit, and "put into" God's true church in that one day! We also read how God "*added* to the church *daily* such as should be saved!"

This is an important point.

Many times, people speak of "joining" the church. But you cannot "join" God's true church! Only Almighty God can *put you into* His true church! He does this by the miracle of granting repentance, watching to see if you will broken-heartedly repent of your sins, ask to be *baptized*, and then receive the laying on of hands for the begetting with the Holy Spirit. If your repentance is genuine, your baptism sincere, Almighty God will then give you His Spirit, which *automatically* PUTS YOU INTO His true church, or the spiritual "body of Christ."

Paul wrote, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into *one body*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:13,14). A little later he said, "Now you are the body of Christ [this is a spiritual metaphor], and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

All too often, the word "church" is completely misused and misunderstood today.

To many, it merely means a *building* on a street corner, featuring a steeple and a cross, perhaps stained-glass windows, which is called "a church." To others, it is the headquarters or the national *denomination* of this or that "church," like the Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Church Of Christ, First Christian Church, Lutheran Church, or dozens of others.

But the original Greek word merely meant the "assembly" of the called-out disciples of Jesus Christ in whom God had placed His Spirit!

The church can never be a *political* organization. Instead, it is a *spiritual organism*, the mystical "body of Jesus Christ," which transcends national, political, racial, cultural, linguistic and sociological bounds! God has members of His true church who represent practically all the races and sub-tribes of this earth; members of His true church in whom is God's Holy Spirit in dozens of nations, representing all the color strains of the human family, and speaking dozens of different languages!

No doubt, *many* of these members of God's true church have *never heard of one another*, do not remotely belong to the same "political organization" and never will! Yet, God "knows His own," and Christ knows His own "sheep," and says His sheep "know His voice." Many who espouse the doctrine of the "secret rapture," tend to view the church as *their own* political organization. When they speak of "the church" you might as well add the name of the *denomination*, or the name of the *organization*. For, many of them seem to believe that unless your name is in *their files*; unless you are a "member in good standing" of THEIR ORGANIZATION, you cannot be a member of "the true church."

But this is pure *nonsense* in the light of the Holy Word of God! Christ said, "You have not chosen me, but *I have chosen you*" (John 15:16). Today, many people "choose a church of their choice." They "transfer their letter," or "join" this or that church.

But you cannot "join" the true Church of God, which is the body of Jesus Christ! Only God can *put you into* His true church! When this happens, you are then connected *directly to Christ!*

Paul wrote to the Gentiles in Galatia, "If ye be Christ's [if you are converted, baptized, and receive God's Holy Spirit] then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Regardless as to where you are on this earth, when you become Christ's, you are then *joined to Him!* He told His disciples, "I am the

Vine and you are the branches!" He did not say to Peter that Peter was the *vine* to which all the other "branches" had to be joined! Rather, He described His church as "branches," emphasizing the *plural!*

We see the early true church of the New Testament in a completely different light from the monolithic, hierarchical political organizations of man-made churches of today!

The apostle Paul was completely independent from Peter, conducting the ministry of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness and a warning to then *Gentiles*.

### **Is Christ Coming in Secret?**

Strangely, the very word rapturists use to claim Christ's coming is in *secret*, to "snatch up" His saints, is the Greek word translated from the Aramaic equivalent which His disciples used when they asked, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy COMING [Greek: *parousia*], and of the end of the world [consummation of the age]" (Matthew 24:3).

The very first warning from Christ was that false prophets would attempt to *deceive* His true servants. Later, He *defined* the kind of lying deceptions they would use, saying their message would be that Christ would be in "secret" places (Matthew 24:24-26).

Is it any wonder that *millions* in the mainstream fundamentalist denominations believe in the false hope of the "secret" rapture? Many believe Christ is *already* here, perhaps "hiding" somewhere, to reveal Himself later! One mainstream fundamentalist TV preacher says the Kingdom of God is already *here, NOW*, that all we must do is somehow "enter" it. But this is so much "spiritualizing" double-talk!

Are saints *ruling* this world with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26)? Did Christians in South Central Los Angeles *stop the riots* by the power of God? Are the saints ridding this world of crime and drugs, of divorce, child molestation, and pornography? Are saints enforcing God's laws on millions of people? Nonsense!

True to Christ's predictions, the *majority* are *deceived* by false teachers. *Millions* confidently expect they will be secretly "snatched up" from this earth to *escape* any involvement in the time of Tribulation!

Therefore, they believe God will *not* allow Satan to bring about *persecution*, perhaps even torture and *martyrdom*, to any members of *their church!* But Christ said His servants are NOT better than He was, and that if they had persecuted and hated Him, they will persecute and hate His servants. He said the time would come when those who *killed* His saints would "think they were doing God a service."

Who, then, does the persecuting? The state; the civil authority? Not necessarily. It was the *religious* fanatics who had Christ put to death! It will be the self-righteous, self-important, egotistical, proud, *religious* people who will *persecute Gods true saints!* Will it be the very ones who hope in a "secret rapture" who turn on those who do not, when they find their pie-in-the-sky dreams shattered?

Some grow terribly *angry* when their cherished doctrine of the "secret rapture" are challenged from Scripture.

But Christ did not describe the tumultuous, earth-shaking events to precede His return as "secret." Instead, He continually spoke of *wars*, of drought and famine, of disease epidemics, of terrible religious persecution, of a time so horrible that *millions* of human beings would perish, a time of such trouble that it would pale into insignificance any previous wars (Matthew 24:21), a time so violent, so destructive, that if God did not step in to *cut it short*, humanity itself would NOT SURVIVE.

There is not one whisper, breath, hint, or shading of meaning in the entire twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew that Christ is coming to secretly "snatch up" His saints!

Instead, the Greek word *parousia*, meaning "coming," is used for the second time in this chapter in verse 27 which says, "For as the lightning [already discussed: probably, the SUN, not merely the lightning of a thunder storm] cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:27).

The sun is powerfully VISIBLE. This word means something of powerful, visible *brilliance*, not something "secret."

In Luke's account of this Olivet prophecy, he wrote, "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth *distress of nations* with perplexity..." (Luke 21:25). Of course! Massive power failures; interference with global communication systems; ships and aircraft radios and navigational equipment gone awry; massive traffic pileups when noon suddenly turns to midnight; millions in the streets, looking up, wailing; people *terrified* by the things they see! Is this SECRET? Only a *fool* could assert such.

To continue: "...the sea and the waves roaring"—a description of massive coastal destruction from the mind-boggling storm which would be triggered by such violent celestial activity! Like the colossal tidal waves from earthquakes, the "tsunamis" that smash inland for miles, carrying huge ships onto dry land, smashing buildings, inundating whole cities—Christ described a *massive earthquake* that will be a part of the last plague, which immediately precedes His coming!

"Men's hearts *failing them for fear* [people dropping dead of *heart* attacks because of their fear!], and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

"And *then* shall they *see the Son of man coming* in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass," Christ told His disciples, "then LOOK UP, and *lift up YOUR heads* [His true servants, the *saints!*] for your *redemption* draweth nigh" (Luke 21:25-30).

Is there anything *secret* about any of this? Nations collapsing, warfare raging, millions dying in nuclear explosions, disease and starvation raging, millions dying in nuclear explosions, disease and starvation, waves roaring, the sun black as sackcloth of ashes, the moon red like blood, people dropping dead of heart failure, and then the heavens *splitting open*, and a brilliant light shining like the power of a thousand suns, with Christ descending to this earth as the conquering KING OF KINGS!

Secret? Ridiculous! Absurd!

Paul wrote of Christ's coming, "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the *last trump*: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

Christ said the *dead* shall be raised at His coming!

When? At His return; at His coming!

The resurrection *does not occur* until the moment of Christ's VISIBLE, TUMULTUOUS, POWERFUL, EARTH-SHAKING RETURN!

### **The Resurrection and the "Catching Up" of the Saints**

Now, notice: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them which sleep [are dead] in Jesus will God bring with Him.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede [precede] them which are asleep [are dead].

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

"THEN [and not one second before!] we which are alive [Paul wrote to the *church*, the *saints*] 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" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18).

Notice that the living saints are not to precede the *dead* in Christ by so much as a second!

WHEN, then, is the resurrection?

Notice! "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them that slept.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the Firstfruits, *afterward* they that are Christ's *at His coming [parousia]*" (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Now, notice another graphic, earth-shaking description of Christ's Second Coming:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and true, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.

"And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.

"And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

"And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

"And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

"That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

"And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:11-21).

Anyone who believes for one instant there is anything "secretive" about this stupendous series of events is incapable of understanding plain English.

Notice further information about Christ's Second Coming:

"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

"For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.

"And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

"And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

"But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

"And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

"And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name" (Zechariah 14:1-9).

This great earthquake is also mentioned in Revelation 16:17-19, in connection with Christ's coming to smash the power of the ten kings comprising the Beast power (Revelation 17:12-14).

Clearly, the prophecy includes the battle of Armageddon (Daniel 11:40-45; Revelation 16:14-16), and the Second Coming of Christ to *destroy* these arms gathered against Jerusalem!

The time element is inescapable. "His feet shall stand IN THAT DAY UPON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES" is as plain as the nose on your face!

Christ is *not* coming in "two phases," first, "for" His saints *prior* to the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, and then, "with" His saints afterwards!

Clearly, the living saints will *not precede* those who have died down through the ages; those martyred in the first century, including Peter, James, and Paul! Instead, they are to be either resurrected, or *changed*, in a moment, in the "twinkling of an eye" AT THE LAST TRUMP!

The last trump is the *last* of the seven trumpet plagues, at the moment of the great earthquake, and the Second Coming of Christ!

### **What Difference Does it All Make?**

*Why* should someone who believes in the "rapture" get ANGRY when shown, from the Bible, that the so-called "secret rapture" is a *myth*?

If Christ is going to redeem the saved; if Christ is coming to catch up His people, including the dead in Christ, and descend with them to the mount of Olives in the same day, then His true followers will be SAVED, will they not?

They will be *born of God* by a resurrection, or an instantaneous *change*, will they not? (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

They will then come down from the clouds, perhaps anywhere from 10 to 40,000 feet above the earth, *in this earth's atmosphere*, and will be *with* Christ as He begins to *rule* this earth with a rod of iron.

What is so *wrong* with these wondrous promises of your Bible that "pretribulationists" and "secret rapturists" seem to *violently* object?

It is simply this: Somehow, they cannot bring themselves to believe the "saved" could suffer *any harm*! For some reason, an insidious false assumption has crept into the minds of millions of people, an assumption which says God would not think of allowing His saints to come to *any physical harm*! No, any such terrible event is reserved *only for the wicked*, so they think! What they do not realize is that such a false assumption makes them out to be *better than Christ*!

Did not Christ say, "If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also"? Did He not say, "In this world ye shall tribulation"? Did He not say, "The time will come when they that killeth you will think they do God a service"?

Another equation in this false assumption is that *martyrdom* is reserved for the spiritually *weak*!

Those who cling to the false notion of "church eras" point out how God will allegedly throw those in the so-called "Laodicean attitude" of lukewarmness *into the Great Tribulation*, while spiriting away into a desert wilderness the "good" people in the "Philadelphian era."

According to this scenario, those closest to God; those on fire with zeal; those with the most faith, the most works, the most spiritual character, will be PROTECTED from the Tribulation, miraculously "taken to a place of safety."

But those who are less faithful, not so close to God; those without zeal; those who are *lukewarm*, who have *weak* spiritual character, will be chosen as God's *martyrs*!

As they suffer, they will realize how terribly weak, and lukewarm they have been, as the theory goes, and, under torture and eventual death, they will *repent*!

But WHO did God choose as His martyrs?

Look at the list: Jesus Christ, Peter, James, Paul, Stephen, Antipas, dozens of others in the first century. Read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, how God's greatest prophets were oftentimes martyred for their faith.

John saw a vision of the witness of two prophets, two human beings who will *personally* testify against the Beast and the False Prophet! Their Prophecy is to take place *during the Tribulation!*

"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

"These are the two olive trees [mentioned in symbol in Zechariah 4:3], and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

"And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

"These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit [the abyss—a spiritual metaphor] shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

"And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts to one another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.

"And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

"And they heard a great voice out from heaven saying unto them, 'Come up hither,' And they ascended to heaven [this earth's atmosphere, where vapors form clouds—not the "third heaven" of God's throne] in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

"And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted: and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Revelation 11:2-13).

These two men are *in Jerusalem* all during the Tribulation and the Day Of the Lord. Their three and one-half year's testimony coincides exactly with the "time of Jacob's trouble," of three and one-half years; with the "times of the Gentiles" of three and one-half years; with the "treading down of Jerusalem" of three and one-half years!

God gives them power far above that of Moses or Elijah. The plagues they call down upon sinning mankind, upon the Beast and False Prophet, are *global* in nature, not national, or local, as in the former cases.

These two prophets, the "two witnesses" of the future, are *human beings*, converted, Spirit-led SAINTS! They are *Christ's servants*, conducting the last-minute, FINAL phase of God's work on this earth of PERSONALLY witnessing to the Beast and False Prophet in the name of Christ!

What happens to them?

They are *martyred!*

When the Beast is finally able to "make war" against them, overcome them, and kill them, the Bible does not tell us specifically *how* they die. You can be sure it will not be pleasant! Yet, after lying dead in the street for three and one-half days, they are obviously *resurrected*, and will be given *eternal life!* Are these two great prophets "*Laodicean*"?

Are they "left behind" when the saints are "raptured," or the so-called "Philadelphia era" goes to a "place of safety"?

Do they suffer a horrible death because they are spiritually *inferior*?

No, God does not choose the spiritually WEAK, the lukewarm, to be His martyrs!

Instead, He chooses those who are so *close to God* that they literally count all things in this life "as dung" (Philippians 3:8) in comparison with the Kingdom of God, and eternal life!

"Rapturists," like "survivalists" and "escapists," have their minds on the preservation of *this physical life!*

Jesus Christ tells them that those who seek to *save* their lives in this world, who have their minds on *physical* things, are likely to *lose out* on salvation!

No, God is NOT going to "rapture" away His saints secretly. The lady with the bumper sticker will *not* suddenly disappear through her roof, after all!

Let us not trust in false hopes, but in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and God the Father, Who loves us, and Who promises *eternal life with Him* in His Kingdom to all those who "endure unto the *end*," whether that means the end of our own physical lives or the end of the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord!

-End-

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