

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH ... WHAT IS IT?

By Bill Britton

One of the most persistent doctrinal questions from sincere, truth seeking people today is: What about the “rapture”? What happens when Jesus returns to earth? How soon is it going to happen? Who will be in it? Many saints, enlightened by the Spirit, have come to an awakening realization that the old traditional theories of religion do not harmonize with the pure simple teaching of the Word of God.

We know that Jesus will return soon. Of this there is no doubt. The Bible makes this very plain. But how soon? And what happens at that time? Who will see Him? These are questions that deserve an answer. First let us start from the negative side, and expose the old false teachings so many hold to.

We will examine the teaching and then show when and where this teaching originated. Then we will look at the bible and see what it actually says, letting the Holy Spirit throw divine light on the Word and show how it harmonizes with what God is doing in the earth today.

“THE ESCAPE THEORY”

The word “rapture” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. Yet this word has been associated with the coming of Jesus, and spoken of as the “hope of the Church”. Although this word is not found in the Bible, it is found in the dictionary. Some dictionaries give more definitions and shades of meaning than others, but the dictionary I now have before me says simply “RAPTURE. . . strong feeling that absorbs the mind; very great joy.”

However, to most fundamentalist and Pentecostal people, the word rapture brings to their mind a picture of white robed saints leaving the earth and soaring through the air to a meeting on some clouds somewhere in outer space. This image has been preached evangelistically until many people have come to accept it as gospel fact, without bothering to check and see if that is what the bible actually says.

According to the evangelists, the Trumpet may sound before this meeting is over, or before you wake up in the morning. When that happens, the cemeteries burst open and the dead rise, and those still living go zooming off into space to meet the Lord. The reason for this is, they say, because the Anti-Christ will then appear and the Great Tribulation will begin. And God is far too good to let His people go through such tribulation. The implication is that they are far too weak to survive in the face of such demonic power. They will then attend the Marriage supper of the Lamb up in Heaven, get their “rewards” for their labors here, and have a wonderful seven years of joy and singing. While their unsaved loved ones, their children who may not have been born

again, and the untaught millions of heathen are suffering untold agonies on earth. “Good enough for them”, seems to be the general attitude. “They should have gotten prepared, like me”. This may not be your attitude, and this may not even be the way you see the “rapture”. Even with denominations, there are wide differences of opinions on this subject, ranging from violent “escape-rapture” adherents, to those who are shaky or just don’t know. I have had many Pentecostal preachers to write and say, “Brother Britton, I know my denomination preaches this theory, but I have never gotten a witness to it, and just can’t find it in the Scripture.”

“PRE-TRIB, MID-TRIB, OR POST-TRIB?”

Because we dare to look into the Bible on this glorious subject of His coming, and dare to teach differently than the fundamentalist denominations, some spread the word that we do not believe in the coming of the Lord, or the catching up of the saints. This is not so. We believe in a very real “coming of the Lord”, while the “rapture” people actually believe in the “departure of the saints”. While we teach the “appearing of Jesus”, they teach the “disappearing of the Church”. I will explain more on that later. For those who believe in a geographical removal of the saints from the earth at His coming, there are three basic concepts.

The first is the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. This means that God’s people will be removed from the earth just before tribulation begins. Thus they will not be here for any of the seven years of plagues, vials, etc. Bumper stickers state: “In case of Rapture, this car will self-destruct”. Tracts for airliners say: “In case the Trumpet sounds, be prepared for this plane to crash, your pilot may be a Christian”. These things are designed to generate fear, and in some cases they do. One of the scriptures they use is Revelation 4:1-2 where John heard a voice “as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.” They say John left the Isle of Patmos during this time that he was “in the Spirit”. In fact, in Revelation 1:10 John states that “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega”. Here he was in the Spirit first, then heard the trumpet. I have heard no one argue that he was a type of the “rapture” here, in Revelation 1.

Another verse they use is in Revelation 3:10, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” This, they say, proves we are removed from the earth during that time of tribulation. But it actually says no such thing. In fact, verse 9 says the opposite. It tells us that God will bring the enemy down before our feet. We have to be here for that to happen.

“WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN?”

Next we come to the Mid-trib. They believe that the Bible teaches that the Church will

have to go through the first three and one half years of the tribulation while Antichrist is warring against the saints, but will be raptured and spared the last three and a half years while God is pouring out the worst judgments upon the earth. They believe this because of the many scriptures that show God bringing His people through great fire and into glorious victory. Yet there are other scriptures which indicate a place of great joy and glory for the Overcomer during this time, so they surmise that God will take them off the earth during the first half. This is a “middle of the road” position, designed as a compromise between two seemingly different concepts in scripture.

Finally there are the “Post-Tribulation” people. They believe that the Church goes through the entire seven years of tribulation (some believe in only three and one half years total), and that only after the tribulation are the saints “caught up”, as according to Thessalonians. They see a Church being empowered by the Spirit to survive the worst onslaughts of Satan. They believe God is able to keep His saints in the midst of the fire, as with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. This is an admirable attitude, and much closer to truth than the “Pre-trib” view that was born Out of fear and selfishness.

Some think that if the “post-trib” teaching is right, that this would mean seven years of horrible suffering and untold agony for God’s people, and almost total destruction of the Church. But this is not so. A beautiful scripture in Isaiah 26:20-21 shows us that the Lord does not intend for His people to suffer the horrors of the Tribulation. Someone asks if the Church will be here on earth for the Tribulation, and the answer is NO! We will be here DURING the Tribulation, but we will not be here FOR it. While the Day of the Lord is a day of judgment for the wicked, that same Day of the Lord will be a day of glory and power for His anointed people! I intend to be here for the GLORY!

Isaiah says: “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity:” Now, the pre-tribulation rapture people say that this scripture proves that God will remove His people from this earth during the tribulation. It proves no such thing, and in fact, it says exactly the opposite. We will be here while the wrath of God is being poured out, but it shall not be poured out upon us, for we shall be hid in Christ. We shall be in an Ark of safety, as Noah was. “As it was in the days of Noah”.

ENOCH AND NOAH

Some like to point at Enoch, who was translated that he should not see death, and say that he is a type of those who are raptured before Tribulation. But Enoch did not live during the time that judgment was being poured out on the earth in the form of a flood. Enoch was translated 669 years before the Flood, and never met Noah. In other words, his translation was not for the purpose of helping him escape the flood. Jesus did not say: “As it was in days of Enoch” . . . He said, “As it was in the days of NOAH”. And Noah went through the flood, protected by the Ark he had prepared and entered into. And when the flood was over, and the wicked had been “taken”, he stepped out of the Ark, and

inherited the earth. He and his family were the only ones to own the earth now, for everyone else who might have had a deed to a piece of property was gone, along with their heirs. So there was no one left to dispute Noah's claim. He inherited the earth. Read Psalms, chapter 37 and see the principle laid down in scripture. Paul never preached that message of fear. He never told the people they would escape the battle. In fact, in Ephesians 6, he urges them to put on the entire spiritual armor of God in order to be ready to face whatever came in the Tribulation. I don't know how anyone could miss that, but they just seem to ignore it. Let me quote from Ephesians 6:13 to see how plain it really is: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand IN THE EVIL DAY, and having done all, TO STAND." Not fly away, but stand! That's the gospel Paul preached. That's the true teaching concerning the Day of the Lord, the Great Tribulation, "that evil day". We have another message you should read entitled "Day and Night". If you have not read this booklet yet, send for it. Now escape rapture for the Church, but an ark of safety, being girded with the glorious armor of the Spirit. . . truth, faith, the Word of God, etc.

The "escape" that the bible teaches is found in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "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." God and His faithful people have always been victorious, and our "hiding place" is in Christ. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3.3). It is the fearful, the faithless, or the wicked, who seek a geographical hiding place. Some want to leave the earth and go somewhere else while some cry for the natural rocks and mountains to hide them. (Revelation 6:15). Today, some are seeking a hiding place in some natural place, a farm, a desert, a foreign country, a wilderness area, etc. but it will not work. It is only another form of "self-rapture". You cannot escape from the devil or Antichrist that way. Your protection and safety is only in Christ, and in absolute obedience to the Spirit of God. Whether it be on a farm or in the city, in a wilderness area or in a metropolitan center, the hiding place is the same . . . in Christ! Hallelujah! Don't criticize those who leave the city, or move out of California, or go to a farm somewhere. Perhaps the Spirit has instructed them to do so, and their safety is in their obedience. Don't criticize those who stay in the city, or refuse to flee from the coastal areas. They may simply be obeying the spirit also. And this where their safety lies. Everyone must be led of the Spirit, and not persuaded by someone else that the true doctrine is to "run and hide".

NOT WHEN, BUT WHAT?

Confused by now? No doubt. For as yet we have only explained the various theories that are being preached about His coming, and given a negative and confusing picture. But hold on. The picture is getting brighter, and clearer. The big hassle about the return of the Lord has mostly been as to the time of it happens . . . Pre, Mid or Post. But the Spirit is speaking expressly these days, not so much as to the time of it, but rather as to what takes place when it happens.

Everyone has assumed that whenever it happens, we will go zooming off the earth into

outer space to meet the Lord somewhere in another geographical location. Pictures have been drawn by artists, and distributed by the multiplied thousands, of Jesus standing on a stratocumulus cloud a few thousand feet in the air, while Christians are being lifted out of a village below. Some are a few feet off the ground, others halfway to the cloud, etc. A most unscriptural picture, yet many form their beliefs from this sort of thing, and take it as acceptable gospel truth. Let me give you the history of how this theory got started.

EDWARD IRVING AND MARGARET MACDONALD

Perhaps you have heard of the Irvingite movement, known as the Catholic Apostolic Church. The Encyclopedia Britannica, volume 12, 1966 issue, pages 648-649, describe Edward Irving and the controversy over his teachings in Scotland and England in the early 1800's. He was excommunicated by the London presbytery, and in 1833 was condemned and deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland because of his teaching concerning "the sinfulness of Christ's humanity". He also began to teach a "rapture of the Church", after a young Scottish lass by the name of Margaret MacDonald went into a trance and described a vision in which she said she saw the saints leaving the earth at the return of the Lord, before the tribulation. Her trance and vision took place in the spring of 1830, while living in Port-Glasgow, Scotland. Her "revelation" was recorded in a book written by R.N. Norton and printed in London in 1861. I have a copy of this portion of the book, though it is now out of print and almost impossible to obtain. Prior to this time, the Church, clear back to the Apostles, had always preached that the Church would go victoriously through the tribulation. There is no record of the "escape rapture" theory being preached before 1830. On April 30, 1831, a Mrs. L.B. Cardale, who later joined Irving's church, had uttered a personal revelation in a home prayer meeting, echoing Margaret Mac Donald's revelation of a pre-tribulation rapture.

It was from this supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and modern phraseology respecting it arose; it came not from Scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God. Ed Irving accepted this teaching, and it was taught at prophetic meetings at Powerseouri House in Ireland, attended much by Plymouth Brethren organizer John Dathy. Irving's views influenced Darby, C.H. Mackintosh, and C.I. Scofield (whose Bible notes popularized the new theory). So it was a young Scottish girl who originated this idea, and is so recorded on page 15 of Norton's book on the Catholic Apostolic Church, Darby, Scofield, along with Clarence Larking and his charts began to teach his new theory, and in the early 1900's it reached a peak in popularity.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecostal power at the turn of the century, the Lord emphasized the fact of the nearness of the coming of Christ. But the Pentecostals got no new light at that time on the specific events of ills appearing. They carried over what the non-Pentecostals had been teaching regarding Miss MacDonald's "revelation". While in a Pentecostal Bible school in 1947, we used Larkin's book of charts for a textbook. Along with charts promoting the escape rapture theory I discovered that our "text-book" also had statements in it denouncing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues in our day as being demon inspired. I was shocked to learn that we

were being taught about the coming of the Lord by men who claimed our Pentecostal experience was of the devil! My reaction was to ask, “Why doesn’t God raise up Spirit filled men who can give us real revelation on prophetic events by the inspiration and enlightenment of the Holy Ghost? Well praise God, He did!”

HE IS REALLY COMING!

So much for the history of the false. Now let us look at the Bible, and see what it really says about what this “catching up” is all about. While many Pentecostal people, churches, and denominations were “dying on the vine”, God was still moving by His Spirit. Hungry, concerned saints began to hear from God in a fresh and glorious way. Half a century after the restoration of the Holy Ghost Baptism and gifts of the Spirit had begun, a fresh outpouring of the Spirit swept across America and around the world. Among the vital truths established through that Move of the Spirit was the fact that the body of Christ was one body, and that divisive denominational systems were not of God. “Come out of her, my people” was the call that went forth. It became clear to many that no man-made ecclesiastical system would accept or contain the great thing that God was preparing to do in the earth. In fact, what God was about to do would be a means of destroying the power of a Babylon and the whole Harlot system. So the Move of God became the worst enemy the denominations had. Let me make a difference between the denominational systems that divide God’s people and the precious people, preachers, and even officials bound up in these systems. God loves those dear people, and so do I. But He hates the Babylonian systems that divide the saints into warring camps and prevent them from progressing into new spiritual truths. . . and SO DO I!

Another wonderful truth that God began to give revelation on was the coming of Christ. First of all, He gave glorious revelation on the mystery of the appearing of “Christ in you, the hope of Glory”. Light began to break on our hearts, from the Scriptures, regarding the sons of God, the Overcomer, the Manchild company, the Army of the Lord, the Melchisedec priesthood, etc. Then the Spirit began to show us that the old rapture theory of escape did not fit in with the very nature of God nor the principles by which He always operated. Back to the Bible we went, to examine again the scriptures we had based this teaching on. Besides the ones I mentioned in the book of Revelation there was 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, Matthew chapter 24, Luke chapter 17, Isaiah 26:20, and others. Other scriptures such as Matthew 25 and the ten virgins, had been twisted all out of shape trying to make them look like they were saying that we had been taken off the earth at the rapture.

“ONE TAKEN. . . AND THE OTHER LEFT”

To give you an idea of the way the scriptures were mutilated by those straining to prove this theory, let us look at the example in Matthew chapter 24 where it tells us that at His coming, “one shall be taken, and the other left”. Songs were written, and sermons were preached, to urge us to be ready to be “taken” when Jesus comes. When actually, the Bible is saying the exact opposite. It was the wicked that were “taken” in Noah’s day, and

the righteous were left to inherit the earth. So shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man.

Matthew 24:37-41 says: “But as the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.” Now who was taken in Noah’s day? The wicked! That’s what the bible says. And if there is still any doubt in your mind as to whether the saints will be “taken when Jesus comes”, let us turn to Luke 17:27. While Matthew says that the “flood came and took them all away”, Luke give the same account of this teaching of Jesus, except that in Luke we read: “and the flood came and destroyed them all”. So to be “taken” means to be destroyed by the judgments that are coming upon the earth. Do you still want to be taken?

THE PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL SPEAK

In April 1961, while living in the village of Carney, Oklahoma, I published a message on this subject entitled “One Shall Be Taken”. Although we had just a little over a thousand on our mailing list at that time, this message caused such an uproar and storm of protest from some quarters, that I thought I would have to hit the storm cellar. Carney, Oklahoma was in “tornado alley”, and after I published this message, I thought I had been hit by one. However, it opened the eyes of many sincere people, and made them realize that they had been duped and deceived by those who had twisted the scripture to try to make it mean something it did not say.

It seems that with many, the “rapture” theory had become a “sacred cow”, and to question this teaching or expose it as false was like attacking the blood of Jesus or the virgin birth or motherhood. Good men almost became violent about it. Rumors would be started that you must be dabbling in spiritualism, free-love, or even devil worship, if you didn’t believe in the good old rapture. Dare to “rupture the rapture”? Be careful. It was dangerous to your reputation. But thank God, some cared more for truth than they did for their reputation! And the truth marched on!

After being attacked by Pentecostal preachers for saying that in Matthew 24 it was the wicked who were “taken” and the righteous who were left, I was delighted to find this same truth brought forth in the official organ of the Assemblies of God. I am quoting from the January 1, 1967, issue of the PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL, “Official voice of the Assemblies of God” (page 4), Springfield, Missouri. On page 9 of this magazine, in an article about the 24th chapter of Matthew, we read: “Contrary to what is often taught.. the Rapture is not in evidence here. Those “taken” are the wicked, who are taken in judgment - just as the wicked of Noah’s time (mentioned in the preceding verse) were taken in judgment. Those “left” are the righteous who remain to enjoy the blessings of the Millennium which will follow Christ’s return to earth.” The same thing I had said six

years before. How do you like that? Thank God for men everywhere who are willing to tell it like it is. Even if the majority disagree with them.

WHO ARE THE ELECT?

In the early part of this 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus is telling of the signs of His second coming and the end of this age. In verse 21, He speaks of the Great Tribulation, and in verse 22 He says that the “elect” will be here at that time. And in verse 24 He says that the false prophets and false christs would try to deceive “the very elect”. Then in verses 29-31, He gives a sequence of events: After the tribulation of those days, the sun and moon shall be darkened and the powers of heaven shaken, then the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, then his angels shall gather the elect together.

Now this should be plain enough, and stop all arguments. But they have devised a scheme to get around these scriptures. They simply say that “the elect” are not Christians, they are the Jews who are left here after the rapture. All you have to do is get a concordance, and read every scripture that mentions the “elect” of God, and see who they are. Start with Romans 8:33, Colossians 3:12, 1 Peter 1:2, and Mark 13:20.

“WHAT DO YOU DO WITH 1 THESSALONIANS?”

Good question. The answer is, I believe it and preach it. But I believe what it says, not the fables men have built around it. Turn with me now to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 . . . Read the entire context, and see the subject he is dealing with. He starts out by saying “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep” (in death). So the subject matter in this portion of scriptures is what happens to those who have died, those who did not survive until the coming of the Lord, until the manifestation of the sons of God that he preached and wrote about. Will they miss out on the glory of that day of the Lord? Oh, no. Paul tells them that those who have died in Jesus are going to return to this earth when Jesus returns. This same Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 that when a man of God dies, his body goes to one place and his spirit (his conscious life) goes to another. “To be absent from the body is to be in the presence of the Lord”. We are not sleeping or unconscious in His presence. That part of us that has eternal life is still living and conscious when we go into His presence. Our dead bodies, that part of us that ceases to have life, sleeps in the grave. Whether it is put into a tomb, or is cremated, or eaten by lions, makes no difference. When the spirit leaves the body, the body immediately “descends” into that state of death (lower parts of the Earth), while the spirit “ascends” into His presence. At the second coming of Christ, the order is reversed. The physical body “rises” or ascends from the state of death, no matter whether it has become bones, dust, ashes, or food for the birds. Out of the state of death that physical body rises into a glorified state, like unto His “body of glory” (Philippians 3:21). Meanwhile, not leaving the presence of God, but descending with Jesus back into this visible earth realm, the conscious spirit once again is joined to the body, which it left at death. Only in a much higher realm. (And “higher” does not mean somewhere up in the sky where airplanes fly

and rain clouds drift about).

So Paul is comforting their hearts about the fate of their loved ones who are going on to be with the Lord. He is not saying to them don't worry, we shall see them someday up in heaven". He is saying that they are coming back with Jesus for the great day of the Lord and the events connected with that. Read on in chapter 5 and see that this is so. I can hear someone say: "Oh, I want to go to heaven someday and see Mother". Well, don't worry, dear one. If she is one of God's elect, one of those who "sleep in Jesus" (verse 14), she is coming back here. Just stick around, and be prepared. Someone says, "Oh, I want to go to heaven and get my rewards". In Revelation 22:12, Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be". Is there a heaven? Of course there's a heaven! Will we go there? Of course we will go to heaven! But what we are talking about today is the return of Jesus to this earth, and what happens at that time. 1 Thessalonians 4 says nothing about us being "caught away" to heaven. What it does say is that we who are alive and remain until His coming shall be "caught up". And it does not say anything about us coming back down after we are caught up. Once I get caught into that realm of glory where Jesus is, don't ever talk to me about descending back down into this life of mortality, sickness, pain, and death.

"CAUGHT UP"

The songwriters have said that Jesus "is coming back to catch His waiting bride away". The Bible never said that. It never implies that the return of Jesus is to rescue His bride off this planet Earth, take her to another geographical location where there are no battles, or hide her from the face of the Antichrist. When the Bible speaks of being "caught up", it is not speaking in terms of miles or light-years away.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) how that he was caught up into paradise". Where did he go? Physically, his body went nowhere. But he had an experience. God took him into that realm of life that is known as paradise, the third heaven. That first heaven corresponds to the first gate or entrance into the Tabernacle that brings us to the brazen altar (symbolic of Calvary). In Ephesians 1:3 we read that God has blessed us with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him". That's a heavenly place, friends. But you don't have to get into an airplane or spaceship to get there. In Him, holy and without blame. Calvary brings us into a heavenly place. This is the first heaven. The second heaven corresponds to the second realm of the Tabernacle, the sanctuary, wherein dwells the candlestick and the golden altar of incense. When the Bible says (Ephesians 2:6) that He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus", it is not speaking of a physical ascent into the sky, it is talking about a spiritual ascent. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit brings us into

a supernatural heaven in Christ. This is the second experience, the second heaven God has brought us to.

THE THIRD HEAVEN

Paul had already ascended into the first two heavens with salvation and the Baptism in the Spirit. Now he is saying that God took him for a little while into that realm of life, that third heaven, which is our inheritance in Christ. Moffat's translation says "In the body or out of the body? I do not know. I simply know that in the body or out of the body (God knows which) this man was caught up into paradise and heard sacred secrets which no human lips can repeat". In this experience, it was not important to him to know whether or not his body went into that realm or place. Fourteen years later he is still suffering the afflictions of a mortal body. But he has been into that third heaven. He knows it is there. And if he has to lay his body down in death, he knows that it eventually has to come into that realm of glory also, by the resurrection power of Christ. Caught up.

WHICH WAY IS UP?

Of course your answer would be given to that question by pointing over your head, into the sky above you. But the man in Australia, or China, or Palestine, would say otherwise. If we all went "up" physically in relation to where we are, the people of earth would all be flying off in different directions. If you point up today at noon, then twelve hours later at midnight, the part of the universe you pointed to at noon would now be down, not up. Actually, this physical universe is so created so there is no such a place as "up" in the universe. We can go farther out from the earth, and send space ships to the moon, and Mars. But the earth is constantly turning, and so is the entire universe. That's what causes day and night, summer and winter.

We point at the clouds above us and say that is up. But to folks a few miles away, those clouds are not up, they are down over the horizon. Stratocumulus clouds range from ground level to 6,500 feet high, a little over a mile. Altocumulus clouds go from 6500 feet up to 23,000 feet high (over 4 miles). The cirrus and cirrocumulus clouds, the highest order of clouds, range from 16,000 to 45,000 feet high, less than 9 miles high. That's not in outer space, like the evangelist preach. While flying across the nation to California, I looked out of the plane window at the clouds below. We were high above all the clouds, but with a vast sea of clouds below. I thought to myself that if those were the clouds Jesus appeared in or with, then I would have to be "caught down" instead of being "caught up". But that is contrary to Bible principle.

WHAT CLOUDS?

The Bible never says that Jesus returns "to" the clouds, or "on" the clouds. It is very careful to tell us that He comes "in" the clouds, or "with" the clouds. Clouds of glory. Daniel 7:13 says "with" the clouds of heaven. Does Heaven have clouds? Oh yes. Revelation 1:7 also says that He comes "with" clouds. Matthew 24:30, 26:64, Mark

13:46, 14:62, and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 all say “in” the clouds. Hebrews 12:1 tells us that the heroes of faith are a cloud. Those Old Testament saints that have gone on to be with the Lord are a great cloud of witnesses. 2 Peter 2:17 and Jude verse 12 both tell us that false ministries are clouds without water. They appear to be a witness, but they have no life to give. Ecclesiastes 11:3 says that “if the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth”. A true ministry has life to give, and is willing to empty himself in order to be a blessing to a dry and thirsty people. Pour his life out for others. That’s what Jesus did. The Old Testament speaks about a cloud of incense over the Mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, and says that is where God will appear. “I will appear in the cloud upon the Mercy seat” (Leviticus 16:2).

“A CLOUD RECEIVED HIM”

Acts 1:11 is a scripture some like to quote, and they say “See, it says that as He went away, he shall come in like manner. And He left from that cloud and went up into heaven didn’t He?” No, He didn’t. Read it again. Acts 1:9-11 says, “And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, 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.” In like manner. Some say He will come out of the sky and stop on a cloud where we will meet Him. But notice that in Acts 1:9 He did not start from a cloud and ascend to outer space. He started from their visible presence, and disappeared from view in a cloud, ascending by that means into heaven. Reverse the order, and we see Him appearing from out of a cloud and descending back into our visible presence where we can see Him and be with him. Glory to God! “As He went in like manner”.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENS?

“To meet the Lord in the air”. Not meet Him up in the sky, or in outer space. But in the air. Air. The stuff we breathe. It is all around us. It’s what there isn’t any of in outer space. When airplanes fly up above the clouds, they have to take their air with them in order to breathe. Wuest translation says we meet Him “in the lower atmosphere”. But it will be in a much higher spiritual order. Caught up. . . Hallelujah! I like that. “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” But aren’t we with Him now? In one sense, we are. But 2 Corinthians 5:6 makes it plain that “whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” But when we are caught up”, our bodies are also involved in this ascent, so that we can be forever in the presence of the Lord in a way we cannot know now, and still have our body. A glorious body then.

So the sum of what we have said is this: The old pre-tribulation escape rapture theory that originated with Margaret MacDonald in 1830, and now held by many Fundamentalists and Pentecostals, has been proven to be false and contrary to scripture. God has promised to deal with those preachers who lull the people to sleep with this doctrine. In Ezekiel

13:4-5 He says "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord". God's complaint against the prophets was that they did not prepare the people for what was coming in the Day of the Lord. And in verse 10 he says "Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar." Irving built the wall, while Darby, Larkin, and Scofield daubed at it. But God says it shall fall. The storm is coming. The prophets have said "Peace", and there was no peace. Back to Thessalonians now in chapter 5, verse 3: "For when they shall say peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and shall not escape. What really happens is that Jesus is coming back with a sound of a trumpet. Now wherever the Bible speaks of a trumpet, it is symbolic of a message going forth. Look it up. Many scriptures confirm this. Trumpets sounded for each feast day. There was a trumpet . or message, that introduced the feast of Passover, a type of Calvary and salvation. Another message or trumpet sounded for Pentecost. Some heard it and are enjoying that feast. And there is a message or trumpet of restoration that brings Jesus back to earth (Acts 3:21). And when he comes back, those saints that come back with Him shall receive their bodies again that were laid down in death. Those bodies shall ascend or rise out of that state of death, into a glorious state of likeness to His body of glory. Then those who are still dwelling in these mortal bodies shall be "caught up" into that same place. This mortal shall put on immortality. Death shall be swallowed up in victory. Then the sons of God, that manchild company, shall be "caught up" into that same place. This mortal shall put on immortality. Death shall be swallowed up in victory. Then the sons of God, that manchild company, shall be "caught up unto God, and to His throne" (Revelation 12:5). The manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8) takes place. The Jubile trumpet of Leviticus 25 begins to sound. The Meichisedec priesthood order passes through the veil into the Holy of Holies to be with their great high Priest, Jesus our Lord. Those whom he has made to be kings and priests begin to reign on this earth (Revelation 5). The Armies of heaven who follow Jesus on white horses, destroy Babylon, burn her with fire, and bind Satan with unbreakable chain. All enemies begin to be put under the feet of the Body of Christ, until every enemy has been destroyed, even death! Whether or not you have faith to believe for these great things, does not bother me in the least. For the performance of those things God has spoken does not depend upon your faith, and is not hindered by your unbelief. He has spoken, and He shall perform it. The age of death, sin, sickness, crime, hate, war, pain, darkness, and rebellion is rapidly coming to an end. The door is opening to a new age. The Kingdom is getting ready to come to Earth! Hallelujah! JESUS IS COMING SOON!

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