

(Note: The following e-mail study-commentary by C J McKnight on the **RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH** covers the time it was begun on January 1, 2007 to May 5, 2007.)

Dear friend in Christ.

Kind Christian greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I sincerely hope and pray that this letter finds you and yours in the best of health and rejoicing in the great goodness of the Lord.

It has been the joy and delight of my heart to have the privilege of send Bible Studies to you. I pray that they have been a source of blessing and inspiration to you. The Lord willing, I will continue to write studies and send them out until the day He calls me home. At 87 that day could come at any time.

Perhaps some of what has been sent is new to you. Maybe even controversial. That is the reason for my letter today. I know that my next subject will be controversial to some. I ask only that you hear me out, all the way, to the end of the subject, then respond in what ever manner you desire. As we proceed with the subject, if you have questions, please feel free to ask them. However, be warned, I am the worlds worst correspondent, but will try to get an answer off to you, in time.

If you have friends who would like to receive the studies, please send me their e-mail address and I will be happy to mail them the studies.

C. J. Mc Knight

May the Lord grant you a happy and a spiritually prosperous New Year.

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. 1

As we begin this study I ask for your indulgence. We may get into areas of scripture and teaching which are not the run of the mill thoughts. Stay with me and spend time in the study of the Word pertaining to the Second

Coming of the Lord. Please approach this time of searching for truth, with an open heart and spirit. Be a Berean, search the scriptures for yourself and see whether or not these things are so. Acts 17:10-11

The disciples of the Lord Jesus understood before His death, burial and resurrection that these events would take place in His life. They also had been made well aware that there would be a Second Coming. They, therefore sought to know the details of that return. They came to Him, as He sat on the mount of Olives, seeking for details of that future event. They inquired concerning that occurrence using a key word, coming. In the Greek the word is parousia, meaning advent, coming, return or presence. Mt. 24:3 We would like to look at the scriptures where this word is used in relationship to the Second Coming of Christ.

In describing that day Jesus likened it to the days of Noah. Noah spent one hundred twenty years building the ark. It is not difficult to imagine the ridicule he received during that span of time. It was something that had never happened before. It had not even rained on the earth. Who would believe a prophet such as Noah. Eating, drinking and marriage were three elements of life which dominated the lives of those who lived in that day. Oddly enough, we see that all three are predominate in life today. Mt. 24:37-38

Jesus made another very important statement in His conversation with them on the mount of Olives. He likened His coming (parusia or rapture) to the flashing of the lightning, shining out of the east unto the west. Mt. 24:27 This indicates two things to us. Number one, His coming will be from the east and will shine around the world unto the west. The direction is not simply a statement which may or may not happen that way. We can rest assured that the direction is correct and that he will come from the east. The word east in itself is important for it is the direction of the dawning of a new day. The dayspring, the breaking forth of a new day. The word speaks of a rising light.

RAPTURE. 2

The importance of the east is seen when we note that the Tabernacle in the Wilderness faced the east. Moses, Aaron and his sons were to camp

before the door, toward the east, or sun rising. Num. 3:38 Also camped toward the rising of the sun was to be found all those who were mustered under the banner of the tribe of Judah, as a buffer and protection. Num. 2:3 Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. Heb. 7:14 Solomon's Temple also face the east. Ezekiel's Temple faced the east. Eze. 10:19 The eastern gate was to be reserved for the prince. Eze. 44:1-3 The wise men came from the east. Mt. 2:1 Jesus as the Sun of righteousness, the rising of the sun, the dawning will be revealed gloriously. He will therefore come precisely as He said, from the east. Mal. 4:2 The Lord has a purpose in all that He does. He establishes patterns through out the scriptures which culminate in splendid fashion. Emphasizing His divine purpose.

Our scripture tells us that at the time of His rapture He comes as lightning. Mt. 24:27 Lightning is very visible. In order to continue our thought on the lightning it is necessary that we interject certain other aspects of His coming. Namely, when He descends from heaven it is with a shout, the voice of the archangel and with the trump of the Lord. 1 Thess. 4:16 We now have two outstanding events which take place at His coming. Lightning and loud sound. Occurrences which take place at the time of the first resurrection. The rapture will be both seen and heard. Lightning and thunder. When the Father spoke to His Son, the people who heard it said it thundered. They heard the sound but did not understand the words spoken by the voice. John 11:29

Elihu, one of Job's very special friends makes some interesting comments concerning lightning and the voice of the Lord. He spoke of an experience where he was greatly disturbed. Fear gripped him until it effected his heart. Job 37:1 Sound familiar? How about Luke 21:26, where Jesus said that at His coming (rapture) men's hearts would fail them for fear at the catastrophic events which will take place. Those living in that day will "SEE" the Son of man coming (rapture) in the cloud and with great glory. Luke 21:27 The beginning of the signs of the end of the age, indicate that the time of the redemption of the saints from all over the face of the earth is drawing nigh. Luke 21:28 From these statements and others in the scriptures made by the Lord Jesus we can only draw the conclusion that He will be both seen and heard when he comes back to this earth, at the time of the rapture.

RAPTURE. 3

Continuing with Elihu's statements concerning the visibility of lightning and the roar of thunder. He likened the manifestation of the light and glory of the Lord to lightning and the booming of thunder to His voice. Job 37:2-5 Is the Lord in the thunder and lightning which strikes the earth several hundreds of times daily a special voice of the Lord? Of course not. But, remember when the Father spoke to the Son, those who did not have ears to hear said it thundered. John 12:29 So, the voice of the Lord can be audible to one as a voice and to others just as the noise of thunder. Lightning and thunder are natural occurrences which the Lord created to be a part of the atmosphere of the earth.

However, they give us an insight into some of the extreme glory which is to be found in the Lord. On the mount of transfiguration the physical being of the Lord Jesus was altered and we are given a glimpse of what the eternal, glorified body will be like. Matthew described Jesus appearing as shining as bright as the sun. His raiment as white as light, shining, brilliant, scintillating. Mt. 17:2 While the glory which is resident within Him caused even His clothing to become glistening and as white as snow. The angel of the Lord, who is Christ, rolled back the stone of the grave and sat on it. Mt. 28:3 Matthew described His appearance as shining as bright as the sun. Which caused great consternation on the part of the guards who were guarding the tomb. Mt. 28:4

Clouds, lightning and thunder, fire are not strange conditions to the Lord nor is He without their manifestation at His presence. Mount Sinai had the appearance of being on fire, while at the same time covered by darkness and thick clouds. The presence of the Lord was there and He spoke with Moses out of the fire. Deut. 4:11-12 He led the children of Israel through the wilderness by a pillar of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It was the glory of His presence abiding with them and guiding them each step of their journey. Ex. 13:21-22 When the Egyptian army tried to follow Israel through the sea, the Lord watched them through the pillar. Then removed the wheels of their chariots thus sinking them in the muddy bottom. Ex. 14:24-25 The statement of the writer of the book of Hebrews was right when he wrote that, "our god is a consuming fire." Heb. 12:29. Fire is not

God but the Lord is most definitely a manifestation of fire that is far greater than any fire ever kindled in this world.

RAPTURE. 4

Combining Mt. 24:27, with Luke 17:24, we find that His coming at the time of the rapture, or the deliverance of the church, is not only with a great display of lightning but that He himself will come as lightning. Both with the speed of lightning, or of light and flashing like lightning. The enormous display of His power at that time cannot be imagined. It will be the greatest lightning storm that the world has ever seen. Remember that His disciples had already seen His face shining like lightning. Mt. 28:3 Daniel also saw Him while he was still in Babylon. His face at that time was also like lightning. Dan. 10:6 It is vital that we continue to remind ourselves that this is the manner of the rapture according to what we have read in Mt. 24:27 It is difficult to find much secrecy in such a glowing event.

Ezekiel had a revelation of heaven second to none. He saw the great glory of the Lord and could only explain it by things which he ordinarily beheld. He saw a whirlwind (Heb. ruwach), the same word is translatable spirit. He saw the power generated by the movement of the Spirit of the Lord. No wonder there was the sound of a mighty rushing wind on the day of Pentecost when the one hundred twenty were filled with the Spirit. Acts 2:2 The character of the Spirit is still the same today. Elijah was caught up into heaven by the whirlwind. He did not ride the chariot. 2 Ki. 2:1,11 Ezekiel also saw a great cloud. Clouds many time generate lightning before they dissipate. The fire is intriguing for it too was very active, flaming out like tongues of fire and then falling back into its source. Much as one would see when viewing a sun prominence which flares out and then falls back into itself. There were also seen here flashes of lightning. Eze. 1:13 NIV.

Another glorious and visible manifestation of the Glory of the Lord is in His throne. Proceeding from the throne there will be thunder and lightning's and voices. How many we are not told. The earth today is struck by lightning 100 times per second. That is eight million six hundred thousand times per day. Singapore has more than any other place on earth. Concentrate that activity in one place and just think of the tremendous display of light. Rev. 4:5 When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, he is the last to sound, the

voice from the heavenly temple will declare that it is done. This institutes the greatest display of lightning ever, which is the time of the return of Christ. It take place at the time of the sounding of the last trumpet. Rev. 16:18

RAPTURE. 5

We have in the old testament another historic event which is used as a sign of the last days and the soon coming (rapture, parousia) of Christ. The condition of sin in those days is comparable to the actions and attitudes of today's world. Be assured it will only increase in intensity. Lot made his choice to go down to Sodom. It looked good, it looked like the garden of the LORD, it was well watered, flourishing and green. Gen. 13:10-11 How badly fooled he was. He pitched his tent toward Sodom. Gen. 13:12

Jesus drew a parallel between that day and the day of His coming which sounds very much like today. Eating, feasting was a great thing with them as it is in today's world. Dining out has become the in thing. Restaurants are abounding. Ethnic foods of most countries of the world are readily available. The fast food chains have invaded the world, even in the poor third world countries. Now, the big thing is diet, to lose weight, to maintain health and so on. Luke 17:28 Coffee houses, bars, liquor flows freely. Our common, what is considered the normal pattern of life, has become a strong sign of His return.

Merchandising has take new twists with the introduction of the computer and the internet. New, old and used things of all descriptions, some times odd things, are bought and sold today. Malls and strip malls abound. Floods of sales catalogues invade our homes through the mail box. We are bombarded by adds on TV, radio and the internet. Now they are using these ridiculous motion adds which are most distracting.

They planted. We are beginning to appreciate the beauty of the flora which the Lord created. The planting of trees, the renewal of forests and flowers has taken on a new meaning.

They built. The new house is a factor in driving the economy. As new developments decline, or increase, so does the economy. The old is being

torn down and new are replacing them. What had been a single residence in many instances has become a multi-storied condo or apartment house. These are last day signs of great proportions. Their influences are not limited to one country of the world but like all the signs of His coming, are world wide. Every country is feeling their effect.

RAPTURE. 6

The Son of man to be revealed. A mystery which is opened or made known is no longer a mystery, or something which is secret and hidden. Jesus spoke of a day when He would be revealed. That day was not His first coming but relates to His second coming. He does not come secretly but as He said, "It will be just like this on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Luke 17:29-30 NIV The visible coming of the Lord Jesus is emphasized repeatedly in the scriptures. It is not a secret coming but a blaze of glory and rejoicing for the saved. For the unsaved it will be sheer terror. They will escape to the dens and the caves and pray that they collapse on them, that they might hide from the face of the Lamb. Rev. 6:15-16

The same day, mind you, that very same day that Lot left Sodom, the judgment of the Lord fell upon them in the form of fire and brimstone. That sinful population was completely destroyed by fire and that immediately after Lot and family cleared the city. The destruction was total. Luke 17:29-30 The same will be exercised when the Lord Jesus returns at the time of the rapture. The only possible way that anyone can live past that coming is to be taken with the Lord when He comes.

His coming, is His revelation. The Greek word revelation, apocalypses, means; appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, to be revealed, revelation, (Strong.) From this it is obvious that Jesus will be very visible and will be seen at His coming. It is difficult to find anything hidden or secret about His revelation. He will be revealed from heaven with all of His mighty angels. 2 Thess. 1:7

The city of Sodom was visited by the exceeding great fire of the judgment of the Lord. The Lord Jesus returns in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This takes place at the time of His revelation, when He is made known to all men as the Lord and Savior of mankind. The second coming is not a casual event as so many present it to be. It is the greatest catastrophe to strike the earth in its whole time of existence.. 2 Thess. 1:8

Rapture. 7

You will hear and see world wide cataclysmic events, these are signs of the season pertaining to the coming of the Lord Jesus. They must prevail before He returns. These are situations which involve the whole world in one form or another. We are so close to a "one world" government that today's happenings, in any nation of the world, have a profound effect on the whole world. How can we tell that you are coming and that the end of the age, or the world is upon us. Mat. 24:3 Luke 21:9

An age of spiritual deception is a positive sign of the approaching end. The situations which Jesus enumerated all begin small and as they approach the end, they will increase in intensity. Like a small stream starting high in the mountains which by the time it reaches the ocean it has become a mighty roaring river. For instance, the age of deception will reach its climax with the world wide deception of the anti-christ. (My speller wants to capitalize christ in anti-christ, I refuse and resist the devil. Lol.) The very first condition which Jesus spoke of is the fact that MANY imposters will come in His name. Luke 21:8 I wonder why the theft of personal identity has become so popular. It is the spirit of the age and is not of the Lord. It is not only to be found in the world but has swept into the church world like a mighty flood. This is the time when the secular world and the religious world bear very little difference. "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Jer. 4:22 This is what the prophet prophesied concerning the people of God, speaking with the authority and voice of the Lord. It is indeed an amazing thing to see the schemes that people think up in these days. What is more disconcerting is the people who fall for all these ideas that are so obviously crooked and false, nothing but attempts to deceive, rob and mislead innocents. It is time to be as harmless as a dove but as wise as a serpent. Mat. 10:16

Unfortunately, the antichrist will come from within the body of believers, the church. More so than any time in the history of the church the people of the

Lord need the Spirit of discernment. David was filled with consternation over the rebellion of Absalom his son, and Ahithophel, his counselor. 2 Sam. 15:31 1 Chron. 27:33 David spoke of the strong emotions of his heart and the closeness of their relationship. Ps. 55:12-14 Jesus knew in choosing the twelve Disciples that one of them would betray Him. He knew exactly who it should be. This one of the areas of prophetic utterance that would verify that Jesus was indeed the Christ. David had stated that the enemy would eat bread with Jesus and be revealed at that time. Ps. 41:9 Jesus remained in complete control of the situation. One of you will betray me. Mt. 26:21 He is eating now with me. Mt. 26:23 Then Judas said is it I. Jesus responded "thou hast said." Mt 26:25 Even so, Judas had the gall to continue with them and eat of the Passover supper. After which Jesus commanded him to do what he was going to do. John 13:27 There are other types, find them and note that the problem comes from a rebel who is among those who have been called.

RAPTURE. 8

The fact that there will be many, not a few, who come as deceivers in the end of the age is disconcerting to say the least. It is imperative that we have the Word of the Lord and the Spirit of the Lord dwelling within us that we be not deceived. Deceptions are not always easily determined. They are designed to appear as the real thing. Jesus said that they would come saying I am Christ. Christ, means the anointing, the anointed one. A pseudo spirit passing itself off as the true Christ, with many following them. The set up is perfect for just this sort of thing. We have a large floating group in the religious world who follow the going thing. The exciting, that which is entertaining. They move and shift from church to church, if they go at all when there is nothing special that appeals to them. They are set up for deception. Mat. 24:6

There shall be, "false Christ's, and false prophets." These men will manifest GREAT signs and wonders. Such mighty works of such a convincing nature that if it were possible, even the very elect would be deceived. Mat. 24:24 The church faces many false prophets and prophecies. Remember if a prophecy is made and it does not come to pass, it is false. False teachers teaching what Peter called damnable heresies. Many follow them and because of their falsehood, the truth will be ridiculed. They look upon those

whom they captivate as items of merchandise or sources of income. Their judgment is certain. 2 Peter 2:1-3 Their punishment is sure but first they will create havoc. May the Lord grant to His true church a spirit of discernment which will be equal to the onslaught of evil against His people. Measure everything by the Word. Make certain that your heart is filled with that precious Word. That which is false will not speak the truth. The Spirit and the Word will keep us in the love of Christ and in His truth.

The very epitome of deception will be during the tribulation period when the false prophet causes an image to be made of the antichrist. He will cause that image to live, breathe and speak. Those who refuse to worship the image will be killed. Rev. 13:14-15 It will be an extremely convincing miracle causing multitudes to believe in the false prophet and in the antichrist. Without the discernment of the Spirit, people are most gullible and quite ready to believe in anything which appears to be supernatural.

RAPTURE. 9

In Matthew twenty-four there are some important words, which we must consider, to rightly evaluate the words of the Lord Jesus. He lists many serious consequences which will take place at the end of the age, most of which may be applied to the day in which we are living. Some take this chapter and say that all the signs of His coming are already fulfilled. They say there are no more signs and that His coming could be any moment, while at the same time they are making great plans for the future. Almost as if though, there was nothing but a continuation of life as it is now.

What did Jesus label this time period to be? He said it was the “beginning of sorrows.” Mt. 24:8 He did not say that when these signs prevail, that He would return, but that they are the first, the commencement of a time of sorrow for the earth. There is another time measurement which He voiced in the chapter. He said, “the end is not yet.” Mt. 24:6 He emphasized the fact that all these things must come to pass. When all these signs prevail and overwhelm the earth, still the end will not as yet have come. Luke also wrote about these horrendous events which are in the process of unfolding today. He also accentuated the truth that these are not the final acts. They are meant to be the introduction to the world shaking occurrences that will follow. Luke had Jesus saying, “but the end is by and by.” Or, yet to come.

Perhaps the NIV translation will help. "but the end will not come right away."
Luke 21:9

The end will not take place until all enemies, all who rule, all authority and all power are brought into subjection to the Lord Jesus. At which time He will deliver the kingdom into the hands of His Father. Jesus will continue to reign until every enemy has been put down and the very last enemy to be conquered will be death. 1 Cor. 15:24-26 The utter destruction of death, or the death of death, called the second death will not take place at the second coming, for death will still reign all during the tribulation period. Rev. 20:14-15 Multitudes will die, some because they are already Christians. Others because the witness of the two witnesses will convince them that Jesus is the Messiah. All will have refused to take the number, name or mark of the antichrist. Their song is twofold, that of Moses and the Lamb, the Lord Jesus. Rev. 15:2-3

RAPTURE. 10

Let us establish a time for His coming. Can we do that? To a measure. However, there are limitations to the estimate or the prophecy which tries to establish the day or the hour. Jesus made it very plain that no man would know the day nor the hour. Mt. 25:13 Anyone who would try to establish the day or date of His coming is a false prophet. Use this scripture if someone tries to persuade you that Jesus is coming on a certain day and at a particular hour of that day. In all actuality, He will come instantaneously to the whole of the earth. Therefore He will come in each hour of the twenty-four hours of the day. Each time zone will receive a simultaneous visit. Every eye shall see Him at His spectacular coming. All the nations of the earth will wail because of what they experience at that moment of time. Rev. 1:7

A key word found frequently in the teaching of the Lord Jesus pertaining to His coming, is watch. Meaning, to stay awake, be alert, be vigilant. The observant, those filled with anticipation, who are watching for the object of their watchfulness will be abundantly rewarded. Luke 12:37 Watching and praying is more vital now than ever before. It will prepare us for the last day events which take place prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Christ will not come until His Word is fulfilled. His statement is that this gospel shall be preached in all the world, THEN the end shall come. Has this been accomplished? It must and will be before His triumphant return. Why even suggest that He could come tonight when we well know that the gospel has not gone to the whole world. With the current means of communication it becomes very apparent that we are nearing that time when this will be accomplished and He will return, even as He has promised. Mat. 24:14

Jesus commissioned His Disciple and thus His church to take the gospel to the whole world. Mark 16:15 He has not appointed angels, nor will He ever, to preach the gospel. He uses the redeemed to minister the everlasting good news. Angel, simply means a messenger whether it be a created angel or a pastor. Only those who have experienced salvation through the blood of Christ can bear witness to His saving grace. Angels are desirous of knowing the why's and wherefores of salvation. 1 Pet. 1:12

RAPTURE. 11

The last message, from the church, that will be communicated to the unsaved of this world will come by a special messenger, the Bride of Christ. Rev. 14:6 She is endued with the power of eagles wings that she might be transported to her special place where she receives very special care during the entire tribulation period. Rev. 12:14 The messenger, angel of Rev. 14:6 is the woman of Rev. 12:14 Like Elijah of old, the Spirit of the Lord will carry her into her place. As she is borne by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit she will, for the last time, proclaim the Word of the Lord and in that fashion will have completed the responsibility placed on the church to take this gospel to the whole world. It will also help accomplish the promise of the Lord Jesus that every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people will have heard before the Lord Jesus returns. In this case not only is the focus on the heathen nations of the world but Israel as well.

The tribulation period is not left without a constant witness and testimony of the Christ of God. There are two men, known by the Lord as, my two witnesses." Rev. 11:3 They are clothed in sackcloth as a sign of mourning. Their ministry will continue for a thousand two hundred and sixty days. The exact length of the tribulation period. These two are the only witness during

the tribulation and that in particular to Israel. They are the Law and the Prophets and must bear witness that Jesus is the Messiah. Rom. 3:21 The Law and the Prophets were instruments in the hand of the Lord to bring the people to Christ. They may be identified by their works during the tribulation. They repeat the works of judgment conducted by Moses and Elijah. Rev. 11:5-6

They are ultimately slain by the devil and their bodies left in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one half days. Rev. 11: 7-9 A day for a year. The world will rejoice over their death and send gifts one to the other but that will be short lived. For, at the conclusion of that brief period of time, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of resurrection will enter into them and they will be called up, and caught up into the cloud. Rev. 11:12 They are the last martyrs to die. They will be resurrected along with the rest of the dead who have died in Christ and will be caught up into the cloud of the resurrected and the translated. 1 Thess. 4:17

RAPTURE. 12

When the Lord Jesus descends from heaven it will be with a cloud. The cloud is important to an understanding of His coming. The cloud is the meeting place of the Lord Jesus with those who are resurrected and those who are caught up alive, to meet Him in the cloud at the time of the rapture. 1 Thess. 4:16-17 He will return in the same manner as His ascension. He was taken up and received out of their sight. It is important that we recognize the fact that they watched Him as He ascended into the cloud. Their gaze was transfixed heavenward as they beheld Him disappearing. There must have been mixed feelings as they watched this miraculous occurrence. There could have been a feeling of loneliness, also. The two men dressed in white, Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses, who stood by assured them that "this same Jesus, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11

Clouds become a very visible part of His second coming, or the rapture. In ascending, He was received up, into a cloud. Then the witnesses stated that He would return in the same manner. John, received the revelation of the Lord Jesus coming with clouds, and at the same time told of the broad spectrum of people who would see Him when He comes with clouds. Every

eye, none excluded, from Adam down to the last person alive on the earth. All will see Him when He comes. Even those who personally crucified Him. In other words the occupants of hell. All three realms, occupied by mankind will view His glorious return, heaven, earth and hell. Rev. 1:7 His coming is absolutely viewed by them all, or does “every” not mean every.

Let us consider what Jesus said about our subject. All the tribes of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of man descending in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Mt. 24:30 This is the time of the gathering together of the redeemed, some by resurrection, the rest by translation. This is when the trumpet sounds. That seals the event taking place here, as the time of the resurrection and second coming. For it is the time of the gathering together of His elect. His redeemed from every nook and cranny of the earth. The scripture emphasizes the truth of His coming and the actions which will transpire at that time. Mt. 24:31 “Important,” the trumpet will coincide with the gathering together. The trumpet announces His coming.

RAPTURE. 13

The rapture must be associated with the clouds of the Lord. The subject found here is the coming (rapture, parousia). 1 Thess. 4:15 At which time those who yet remain alive of the earth will be caught up into the clouds. 1 Thess. 4:17 The cloud of the Lord is vastly different than the clouds which surround this earth and are driven by the winds as they fly over us. Both of which are types of the Lord. The cloud, the place of His presence. The wind, His breath, His Spirit. The rainbow in the cloud is the assurance of His covenant that He will never destroy the earth again by flood. Gen. 9:14-15 The cloud was their protection, their light and source of direction when they left Egypt. Ex. 13:21-22

On the Mount of Transfiguration the Lord visited, in a bright, shining, scintillating cloud. The cloud of His glory. Mt. 17:5 The cloud of His coming will be those whom He brings with Him. The great cloud of witnesses. Heb. 12:1 The heavenly armies would appear from a distance as a exceedingly bright cloud. They are clothed in light. Rev. 19:14 He is the one occupying the clouds of harvest. First the righteous. Rev. 14:14-16 Then the harvest of judgment. Rev. 14:19-20 He is the mighty angel clothed with a cloud, with

the sign of the covenant, the rainbow, the Godhead crowning Him. He is the shining forth of the very effulgence of the light of the glory of the Lord. All judgment has been given to Him who has feet of brass, pillars of fire. Rev. 10:1

Is there a difference in prophetic fulfillment between coming (parousia) and coming (erchomai, appear, come, accompany)? Jesus used erchomai in reference to the moment when He comes in clouds with power and the tribes of the earth mourn because of what they see. Mt. 24:30 He also associated it with the occurrences of that time which can relate only to the time of catching up or rapture. There is here, (Mt. 24:31) the great sound of a trumpet which links it with the trump of God. 1 Thess. 4:16 Also with the last trumpet. 1 Cor. 15:52 Jesus said it would be the time of the gathering together of the redeemed of the Lord. Mt. 24:31 Paul used the same terminology by making reference to our gathering together unto Him at the time of the rapture (parousia.) 2 Thess. 2:1 The parousia and the erchomai relate to one and the same event. If not, then we have two second comings and that will not happen.

RAPTURE. 14

The coming of the Lord Jesus as a thief is not for all to experience. The Lord Jesus gave a special exhortation to the church at Sardis. It was a wake up call that He issued to them. They had allowed some details of their spiritual life to lapse and were in danger of much greater losses. He called upon them to wake up, to repent, or to them He would come as a thief. Their spiritual condition was to determine whether or not Jesus was to them unexpectedly, as a thief. Rev. 3:2-3

Perfect knowledge is to know and understand that Jesus will come as a thief in the night. We are living in the spiritual night and darkness of the age. We have not yet reached the darkest hour, it is yet to come. 1 Thess. 5:2 The apex of darkness will be when peace and safety are declared. During the tribulation period the dragon and the first beast will institute a program of complete control over the earth. He will be in absolute power, for who is able to make war with him. Rev. 13:4 However, sudden destruction is their destiny. 1 Thess. 5:3

If we anticipate that day coming upon us as one who comes as a thief in the night, then, we are in darkness. Blunt words but they are the words of the Apostle. The brethren, the knowledgeable, will not have that day come to them unawares or unexpectedly. They are not people of the darkness. 1 Thess. 5:4 We are to be children of light, walking in the day light of the Lord. Enlightened, reading the sign and the wonders. Watchful, comprehending the teachings of the Word of the Lord. Truth seekers, loving and embracing the truth. Watch, be alert, stay awake for He will come as a thief to those who walk in darkness. But the children of light will consider the many events which precede that moment when His coming is a shock and a cause of great consternation. The Word plainly teaches that He is coming as a thief in the night, but to whom? To those who are in darkness, not to children of light. Rev. 16:15

The message of His coming has become stale. They declare that it will not take place. Things today are just like they were yesterday. Our forefathers expected Him to come, but He has not. When we properly understand what He has said in His word about His return we will understand that there are yet other situations which must develop before the time for His arrival has come. He will be right of time. 2 Peter 3:4

RAPTURE. 15

It is possible for the people of the Lord to escape the great tribulation period. The Lord promised the Philadelphian church that He would keep them from the hour of temptation, because they adhered to the Word. Rev. 3:10 Paul also stated that the Lord would make a way of escape. 1 Cor. 10:13 Because no one wants the church to go through that terrible time, the rapture is misplaced at the beginning of the tribulation. It will happen at the close of the tribulation period, even as Jesus said. There are a number of events which precede that moment of time. They must take place first.

The Bride of Christ is found in Rev. 12:1 All who are a part of that lovely woman will be delivered from the tribulation period. Christians not meeting the standard of the Bride will go into the tribulation. People who marry most generally have certain requirements which they seek in a life partner. The Lord Jesus has made known His will in His Word. The church of His love will be sanctified, and washed in the water of the Word. A people filled with

the glory, thoroughly cleansed from every imperfection. A Bride possessing the holiness of the Almighty. She will bear His likeness. Eph. 5:26-27

It is utterly impossible for the woman of Revelation twelve to be the virgin Mary. The whole of the Revelation is projected out into the future from the moment of John receiving it. It is a book of Revelation not history. The Bride (Rev. 12) appears as a heavenly object. Therefore she is a spiritual being, made like unto Her Lord and husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. She is the embodiment of every spiritual promise made to the church in the New Testament. She is an amazing woman, a wondrous, glorious woman filled to the fullness with the nature of the Lord. Eph. 1:22-23 The Father was married to Israel through the virgin birth of Christ. So Christ Jesus will be married to His church in the last days. Her wedding gown exceeds any that will ever have been. It is the sun like glory of the Father. The light, which is the nature of the Lord is so majestic in its shining that He is compared to a Sun. He is not a sun but His glory exceeds and excels above all other sources of light, therefore He is compared to a Sun. The greatest light, the greatest sun that has ever shined, manifesting its brilliant light and glory. Ps. 84:11

RAPTURE. 16

The parable of the good seed and the bad seed mixed with it is an illustration of the time of harvest in the end of the age. Parables, given by the Lord Jesus were illustrations of similitude's used in order to present a Divine truth. The story of the good and the bad seed definitely pictures the last days. The good seed is the Word of the Lord, its harvest, the redeemed. The bad seed, false doctrines, even doctrines of devils. It is a seed of destruction scattered by the enemy, while men were sleeping. Pathetically, when the church sleeps, or fails to watch, the enemy slips in and does his thing. Sowing all manner of discord, unbelief, doubt, fear, mistrust and anything else he can muster up in order to create division and confusion. Mt. 13:25-26

The difference between the two seeds soon become apparent but the workers were told to leave the two together until harvest time. There is a time when the division will be enacted. The Lord will weed out of His church all things which are offensive. The tares, the bad seed will be gathered

together, bundled together and then burned. Strange how, even now the bad seed seems to gravitate to one another. The true seed, the crop of value is to be gathered together and stored. Mt. 13:28-30 This is a last day parable. Mt. 13:40 The gathering of the good seed will be preceded by the separation of the bad. The offender and sinner will be gathered out of the kingdom and will be cast into a furnace of fire where there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Mt. 13:42

Here is something to think about. Seeing as there is to be this type of division and judgment made where there is total separation, one seed from the other. How can there be sinners in the Kingdom of Christ during the thousand years of rest and peace?

At His coming the sheep are separated from the goats. The sheep on the right hand the goats on the left. The sheep are invited to enter the eternal kingdom which has been prepared from the foundation of the world. The goats are excluded from the kingdom because of the hardness of their heart. The standard of measurement being a heart of mercy and compassion. Mt. 25:11-45 There is a very distinct difference made between sheep and goats. Mt. 25:46

RAPTURE. 17

The manner of His coming is spectacular, to say the least. He is to be revealed (Greek. Apokalupsis, disclosed, appearing or coming). Once again the very obvious truth that there is nothing secret about the second coming of Christ. What will take place will be very open and made known and seen by all. 2 Thess. 1:7 Perhaps Rev. 1:7 will have more meaning for us here. It too, as we have seen, emphasizes the fact that the Lord Jesus at His Second Coming will be seen by all who have ever lived on the earth, This takes place when He comes in clouds. He comes in clouds, into which the resurrected and the translated are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thess, 4:16 Jesus made it very evident that His coming in the clouds would be a very visible event. He assured the high priest that he too would see the return of the Lord Jesus, That also is included in the statement, every eye. Mark 14:62

Let us establish the time of this revelation. It will accompany that moment when He will come to be glorified in His saints. 2 Thess. 1:10 Our key, time wise, is the time when He shall come for His saints. At which time Lord Jesus will come with flaming fire. Please do not lose sight of the fact that this occurs when He comes for His saints, According to Peter, this is the day when He will come as a thief in the night. A thief who comes with the element of surprise. Totally unexpected. Outside of the shock of that moment, there are no actions which are hidden. He mentions three things which take place at this period of time, 2 Peter 3:10

1. The heavens. The atmosphere, the oxygen, the ozone explodes and ceases to exist, The whole will dissipate with a loud blast and crash. A noise greater than any atom or hydrogen bomb. Isaiah heard the Lord speak of that day. The heavens to vanish like smoke, The earth to become old. The occupants of the earth shall die due to the catastrophe depicted here. Isa. 51:6 This particular prophecy uttered by Isaiah sounds like the explanation of His coming as given by the Lord Jesus. His voice is heard. His lightning displayed. His anger made known. For He is coming as a flame of devouring fire. With cloud burst, thunder storm and hail. Isa. 30:30 Zephaniah also made reference to the day of that unspeakable visitation of fire. Note the people are totally destroyed. Zep. 1:18

RAPTURE. 18

2. The elements shall melt with fervent heat The complete destruction of the rudimentary things which are the beginning of any substance which is in existence. From the false ideas of religion to the secular false teaching of men. The annihilation of things which have a false foundation. 2 Peter. 3:10 The word elements is translated rudiments in Col. 2:8 and is associated with philosophy and vain deceit and the traditions of men. In Heb. 5:12 it is principles or milk and not strong meat. Thus , showing that the subject is every untruth which has been propagated by men.

3. The works of men, involving the whole of the earth shall be burned up. Complete, total destruction of every building and construction of man, of any kind. It is interesting to compare this with the ninety seventh Psalm.

Follow the analogy, He is enveloped in the clouds. v.1 A fire proceeds Him destroying His enemies. v.2 His lightning's lighten the world causing the earth to tremble. v.3 The hills melted at His glorious presence. The utter decimation of all that man has accomplished is well assured at His coming. Regardless of where one places the second coming, this totally eliminates current world conditions and structures from being carried over into the millennium reign of Christ. It likewise excludes sinners from the thousand year reign of Christ on this earth.

It is noteworthy that we take into consideration that Peter called this day, the day of the Lord. He therefore identified it with the time when Jesus will come (to the unprepared) as a thief in the night. Some attempt to divide these days and make them to be different days but if we take time to really read what is before us we will see the truth of the Word, Isaiah introduced the day of the LORD as a day of destruction from the Almighty. Isa. 13:4 He also described it as a day when men's hearts would fail them for fear. Isa. 13:7, Luke 21:26 Their faces as flames. Isa. 13:8, because they face the one who come in flaming fire and they are destroyed by that fire. Fear, great fear will grip them As they realize that they face the Lord. It is a day that is awesome because of the great display of the wrath of the Lord, for He will fully destroy the land and empty it of sinners. Isa. 13:9

RAPTURE. 19

Can anyone truthfully and scripturally say that ALL the signs of the Coming of Christ have been fulfilled and that He could come at any moment? Jesus said that His return was scheduled for the period of time, after the tribulation. Mt. 24:29 Mark also recorded this time element given by the Lord Jesus. Mark 13:24 We are left without a shadow of a doubt that this is to be in relationship to the second coming of Christ. Jesus continued on in His discourse with them by pin pointing these events, with the time when all shall see His coming, in the clouds. Mark. 13:26 To give greater verification to the fact that this is the one and only Second Coming of Christ, it is listed as the time when the elect are gathered together. Mt. 24:31 That is the time of the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the righteous. Mark 13:27

There are still signs which have not yet been manifest. They will be the most awesome. Jesus referred to them as being, "fearful sights and great signs," which will be made manifest in the heavens. Luke 21:11 The scripture is speaking of supernatural events which are far beyond the scope of anything that would originate from the efforts of men. The fall from space of meteorite or space junk lighting up the sky results in great consternation among people. Just wait until the Lord puts on His display. For the unsaved it will be the most fearful time in the history of men.

Mind you these are celestial signs, created by the Lord. As fearsome as they will be, they are really warnings to take refuge in the Lord. The mercy of the Lord will be manifest in a great way in the end of the age. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 Among the fearsome and terrible acts of God even the heavens will be shaken. That constitutes a shaking of the universe. Luke 21:26 These are all major events which will effect the whole of the inhabitants of the earth. There will be signs in the heavens, in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars which are given specifically as a herald of even more terrible judgments to come. On earth, men will be perplexed, left without a solution in solving the political problems of the world. Storms on the seas of the world, and on the land masses of all the earth, creating problems of unrest among the inhabitants of the earth. Into a situation such as this the antichrist will appear with seemingly all the solutions and a manner of life which will supposedly produce a time and life of utopia on earth.

RAPTURE. 20

Not only is the glorious glory of the LORD (Jehovah) God compared to a Sun, but so is the Son, the Lord Jesus. He is called the Sun of righteousness. Mal. 4:2 We would naturally anticipate that anything or anyone in union with Him would appear in His glory and His likeness. I would that we all would catch the vision of the Apostle Paul when He wrote to the Corinthian church about this glory which is ours to receive. He used the term, with open face, to me that is an open heart, ready to receive the teaching and will of the Lord with all eagerness of heart and mind. It too

would be an attitude which we would definitely find in any individual who is a member of the body of Christ.

The mirror of the Lord. The Word of the Lord. What we read has a profound effect on our lives. This is particularly true of the Word of the Lord. It will influence us for good works and benefit us in ways that are eternal. It changes, it transforms its readers. It shapes the spiritual man making his whole being into a person who is made like unto the Lord Jesus. The same image, the exact likeness. A process which involves continual spiritual growth. Ultimately, the finished product is a husband and wife of identical essence and will. 2 Cor. 3:18 A work which is accomplished by the life and breath of the Spirit operating within each and every member of the body of Christ.

As the countenance of the Lord Jesus is shown shining as the sun in full strength. (Rev. 1:16) So, His bride will shine with the same measure of glory. That is why she is seen clothed with the sun. Rev. 12:1 Seeing as she is the New Jerusalem, it is fitting that she be introduced to us in glorious, brilliant, unblemished, beautiful garments. That New Jerusalem will be glowing with the eternal, ever existing light of the Lord. Rev. 21:23 Rev. 22:5 It behooves her, as the Bride of Christ that she be clothed and filled with the light of the Lamb. Take into consideration that Jesus said, "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Mt. 13:43 The Greek word for shining forth is eklampo, To be resplendent, to shine forth. Lampo, meaning to beam, i.e. radiate brilliancy, to give light, to shine. (Strong. Dict) What a beauty she will be. Jesus knows what He wants for a Bride and has determined the majesty of her wedding garment. The hearing ear will hear! He will have a glorious church as His beloved. Eph. 5:27

RAPTURE. 21

The woman of Revelation twelve is standing on the moon. That would indicate that it is her foundation. The strong foundation of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 3:11 He is the only one that could ever be the foundation upon which He would build His church. It was not Peter, the pebble, who was to be the basis of His church, but the Lord Jesus. Mt. 16:18

When I consider, it is time to contemplate on what we see in the heavens above and what they mean in relationship to the plan and purpose of the Lord. The heavens are the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars, He created and placed them perfectly. Each luminary in its own consistent orbit. Ps. 8:3 They were established to give signs, for seasons and for days and for years. Gen. 1:14 Their progress through the universe controls the seasons of the year. They will be the bearers of signs of the near coming of the Lord Jesus, a second time. What amazing mercy the Lord will display as He warns the world by signs in these luminous bodies that the end is near. Luke 21:11

The moon is a symbol of the Lord Jesus. It is a dead body, portraying the death of Jesus. Acts 13:29 It declares the death burial and resurrection of Christ every month. Transiting from total darkness to fullness of light, in basically a 28 day period of time. It has no light of its own. It is a reflected light from the sun. The Lord Jesus came to show forth the Father. John 1:18 It determined the feast days in Israel. They lived by a calendar which embraced the lunar month. The three most important feasts were determined by the status of the moon. By its gravitational pull the moon controls the tides of the ocean as well as effecting the surface of the earth. In one way or another it is daily involved in the life of mankind. It is pock marked and greatly scarred by the meteorites which have slammed into it. Isa. 52:1 Its name in Hebrew, means white or purity. It shines in the darkness of night. John 8:12 Then as a last day sign, BEFORE, the coming of the Lord Jesus, it will be turned into blood. Joel 2:31, Acts 2:20 What greater foundation could there be than the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

RAPTURE. 22

Another of the heralding, visible signs for the last days predicted by the Lord Jesus will take place in the stars. Luke 21:25 Mark 13:25 Take special note that this is a prelude to the coming of the Son of man, and the gathering of His elect. Mark 13:26-27 Matthew said it would be IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation. Mt. 24:29 At which time the stars will fall from heaven and the whole of the heavens will quake. THEN, His sign will be seen in the sky as they see Him coming in the CLOUDS.

Mt. 24:30 ONLY THEN will there be the sound of the last trumpet and the elect will be gathered together. Mt. 24:31 The day of the resurrection, the redemption of the dead in Christ does not take place until these events transpire. The same lineup of activities is given in the gospel of Luke 21:25-28

In the prophetic utterances pertaining to the end of the age we start out with signs taking place among the stars of the sky. Luke 21:25 That then increases to a crescendo until there will be that tremendous shaking of the heavens. Which will cause the stars to be removed from their trajectory. Mt. 24:29 Their ultimate destiny is utter fire and destruction WHEN He comes as a thief in the night. 2 Peter 3:10 Peter, in verse twelve, positively links this event with the coming (Parousia, coming or rapture). He also gives us a word picture of the attitude of the world toward the coming (parousia) of the Lord Jesus. Mankind will scoff and ridicule any mention of that event. At the same time persist in walking according to the unbridled lust of their flesh. 2 Pet. 3:3 They make fun of the thought of His coming (parousia). 2 Pet. 3:4 Perhaps this is not all vocal but in actions as well. Not only outside of the church but within also. Peter is very emphatic that these situations are indelibly tied together with the moment of the rapture. We are living on an earth that is termed by men, as solid earth. While in the plan and purpose of the Lord it is reserved for judgment by fire. 2 Pet. 3:7 His exhortation to the church was to live a life of holiness and Godliness. 2 Pet. 3:10 Being found in the Lord Jesus, filled with His peace. Peace is so vital as we approach the end of the age. Likewise that we be without spot and be blameless before the Lord. 2 Pet. 3:14 These are the last days and the future is bright, when we are in the Lord Jesus, and are willing to follow His will for His people. He will deliver a people who are living close to Him.

RAPTURE. 23

An important sign of the coming of the Christ is to be seen in the sun. Notice that Peter, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, in his Pentecostal address proclaimed this sign taking place, before the return of the Lord. This being stated we must look in the Word for such an event. We find a very definite and impressive sign. Under the sounding of the fourth trumpet, there is a mighty, fearful and effective sign wrought in the light giving bodies. This sign ends up being of a five fold nature. The first will be for

one third of the sun to be darkened. How long this phenomenon will last is not specified. We may be certain of at least one day and one night being involved. The effect of such a catastrophe would be for the earth to immediately become cooler and darker. This is not an eclipse of the sun nor of the moon. It is a direct act of God. Along with this the third part of the moon and of the stars would also be darkened. With the sources of light diminished, the natural consequences would be for a third of the day and of the night to be darkened. Here we have a sign that must precede the second coming of Christ. Without it happening, the Lord Jesus will not come. Rev. 8:12 While this is a judgment, it must also be viewed as an act of the mercy of the Lord. It is a dire warning of the events yet to transpire. His mercies endure forever.

Joel spoke of another event which must occur prior to the second coming of the Lord Jesus. The moon must be turned into blood. Joel 2:30 John likewise spoke of this lunar event and placed it at the time of the opening of the sixth seal. Rev. 6:12 The Spirit inspired Peter repeated it as a sign of the coming of Christ. Acts 2:20 What is the sign of the son of man? As the Logos, the Word He was of Spirit nature, without flesh and blood. When He was born into this world he became a man, possessing a body, blood and spirit. In instigating the feast of Passover the Lord required that the blood of a lamb be sprinkled on the door posts and lintel of their houses. It was a token, a sign, a flag or a beacon, an indication that they were the Lord's. Ex. 12:13 The New Testament Passover Lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 5:7 The death angel on seeing the blood passed over the houses the sheltered. The sign of the Son of Man is a blood soaked moon. There is a great possibility that it is even dripping blood. Gruesome, so was Calvary. This bloody moon is a prelude to His second coming and must happen before He comes.

RAPTURE. 24

The personal, physical coming of the Lord Jesus will be instantaneous, like the lightning. However, there are a number of happenings which are scheduled for that period of time. We note that it is the seventh angel who will sound the seventh trumpet, the last of the series. Of necessity, there must be a brief period of time involved here. Consider the plurality of the

word “days,” for in the days of the voice of the seventh angel when He shall begin to sound. Rev.10:7

It is called the last trump. 1 Cor. 15:52 The trumpet of resurrection, the calling forth from the grave of all those who have died in faith. The subject here is not focused on how Christ returns but on what takes place when He does return. The change, is the only subject of 1 Cor. 15:51-52. Altered, resurrected or transformed from creatures of flesh and blood to those possessing a spiritual body like unto that of the Lord Jesus. This CHANGE is what will happen instantaneously, in the twinkling of an eye. These scripture have nothing whatsoever to do with the manner or the speed of the return of Christ. Forgive an old man for this aside but the wrongful interpretation of these scriptures has been an irritant.

One of those events is the ultimate catastrophe which is scheduled for the time of the conclusion of the tribulation. Here, immediately after that great tribulation, there will be a period of total darkness. The Lord will withdraw all light and mankind will be in utter darkness. Mt. 24:29 We may gain an idea of what this will be like by going back to the days when Moses was negotiating for the freedom of Israel from Egypt. The Lord commanded Moses to stretch out his rod over Egypt. From his action there settled on the whole land of Egypt a terrible and horrible darkness. It is called a thick darkness which may be felt, so dark that they could only grope about. What great fear they must have felt. For a period of three days they did not move out of the place where they were when the darkness came upon them. They did not see one another for the whole of the three days. Ex. 10:22-23 The children of Israel had light. We are not children of the night but of the day and walk in the light of the Word of the Lord. Zephaniah gives us a glimpse of the conditions that will prevail in that day. He speaks of it as a day of wrath, distress, anguish, trouble and ruin, among other perplexing problems. He does not leave out darkness, gloom and a day of trumpet sound and battle, Zeph. 1:14-17

RAPTURE. 25

There are a number of unhappy events associated with the most glorious event, the coming, the rapture, the parousia. The time element is certified by the fact that our subject and scripture reference is in relationship to “our

gathering together unto Him.” That is the moment of the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. There is no question as to the subject in Paul’s letter. 2 Thess. 2:1 It is the time of His coming and our being brought together, assembled. First the resurrection of the dead and then the transformation of the living. The emphasis here is upon the two words, coming and gathering, which are used by Paul, thus unequivocally establishing the proper time. Paul is about to teach the church signs which must pave the way for the rapture.

Paul was well informed by the revelation of the Spirit of the Lord concerning the circumstances which would lead to the rapture or the second coming of Christ. Therefore, he was able to write to them with assurance that the day of Christ was not at hand. He knew very well that the coming of Christ in his lifetime was not possible. He was encouraging them not to be anxious or upset into thinking that the day was at hand. They were urged not to give heed to any spirit, word or letter that the day was nigh, even at hand. Even if it purportedly was to have originated from him. 2 Thess. 2:2

Do not be deceived, in any manner or by any means. Deception is a serious matter in any avenue of life. When it involves the teaching of the Word it is dead serious for its results could be eternal separation from the eternal presence of the Lord. We find some extremely serious statements made by Paul and we must make the right decision concerning them. Paul said; “that day shall not come.” We are told that these words were added to give a proper understanding to his statement, which was to follow. Never mind, the word except (unless) tells us that there is an important statement to be made and that it is in strong relationship to the day of Christ. First things first. One of the important signs which herald the rapture is to be found in the apostasy of the church. Especially that of the apostate apostle. Rest assured the rapture will follow the exact plan which is laid out for it in the Word of the Lord. Until and unless there is full evidence of the apostasy and the ultimate fall with the manifestation of the antichrist, Christ will not return. 2 Thess. 2:3

RAPTURE. 26

What is the sign for which we are looking. It is not only apostasy in the church but it is the revelation of the apostate. There must first of all be a

spirit of denying the truth of the Word manifesting itself in the church. We are entering the beginning of sorrows called by Paul, The last days and perilous days. 2 Tim. 3:1 He then listed a long list of attitudes and actions which depict the last day world. Further stating that they would have a form of godliness, but deny the power of the Lord. 2 Tim. 3:5 Scholars, studious, but never able to understand the truth of the Word. Religious but powerless, lacking the anointing of the Lord. 2 Tim. 3:7 The day will come when they are revealed for what they are, apostates. 2 Tim. 3:9

Here is the clincher. The revelation of the man of sin. Jesus could not possibly come until the man of sin, the antichrist appears on the scene. Christ will have His moment of revelation at His coming. Lk. 17:30 So, the antichrist will have his revelation. 2 Thess. 2:3 This revelation will not be just a casual thing but spectacular and convincing. He is also introduced as “the son of perdition.” 2 Thess. 2:3 As the man of sin he is unrighteousness personified. The ultimate sinner. He will imitate the Christ of God. He is a man. Remember his number is 666. Rev. 13:18

His actions betray him. However, multitudes will be deceived by him. He has a spirit of adversity, especially when it comes to the truth of the Word and the workings of the Spirit. In particular, he will be in great opposition to the Lord. He is a man of great pride. Proclaiming himself to be the ultimate God. Superior to any deity which is worshiped by any of the peoples of the earth. He will present himself to be the true God. The God of the Bible. He will occupy the temple of God. As a matter of fact he originates from the temple. He has been a part of the last day church. The New Testament church is designated as the temple of God. 1 Cor. 3:16 The antichrist, following the types relating to him in the scriptures will be a leader, an Apostle of the last day church. The most hurtful persecution and opposition will arise from within. The heart ache caused by these deserters is to be read in Ps. 55:12-14 These words could well have been spoken by the Lord Jesus and by those who will experience the apostate one dividing the church in the end of the age.

RAPTURE. 27

The antichrist will be “revealed in his time.” It is established by the scriptures that he will be able to impersonate the “revelation” of Christ. 2

Thess. 2:6 His coming out or manifestation will be of such an impressive degree that it will convince the apostate and the unsaved that he is indeed the Christ. Consider the similarity, Christ will be revealed at his coming. The antichrist comes with a revelation. It is time for the sheep to know HIS voice. There is a definite time, established by the Lord for the fulfillment of all things in His Word. Jesus was born according to the time which had been established by His Father. Gal. 4:4 The Lord is not motivated by sudden impulse. Time is in His hands and He is working all things according to His time schedule. The sudden appearance and the success of the antichrist in ruling the world. The second coming of Christ will both take place in the last "dispensation of the fullness of times." Eph. 1:10 First the revelation of the antichrist and then the revelation of the true Christ. 2 Thess. 1:7

The COMING (PAROUSIA) of the antichrist. Yes, the antichrist has a parousia or a great and eventful coming. Even as the Lord Jesus has a coming or parousia. How clever. What tremendous deception. Who comes first? The antichrist, of course must rule and reign until the coming (parousia) of Christ. The antichrist will come after the working of Satan. Manifesting, the fullness of satanic power. Every devilish lie and deception that has ever been perpetrated on men by the devil will be duplicated by the antichrist in order to persuade the people of the world that he is Christ. Every power of persuasion used by the world and Satan will be basic knowledge to him. He will produce mighty signs and wonders, miracles of a very convincing magnitude. 2 Thess. 2:9

The early church did not follow signs, they produced them by preaching the gospel, the Lord working with them, with signs following. It is needful that we are aware of the fact that Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. He is not called a deceiver and the Father of lies without a reason. 2 Cor. 11:14 Rest assured that he will be a man's man.

Attractive to both men and women. Handsome, articulate and very charismatic. Too often things satanic are thought of as being ugly and repulsive. They are very attractive and captivating. The danger is never realized until one is caught in the trap of the ugliness of sin and iniquity.

RAPTURE. 28

Even in the days of the early church the mystery of iniquity was hard at work. 2 Thess. 2:7 How much more so in our day. Look for a constant increase of wickedness, ungodliness and satanic work and influence. Today there is a limit placed on the works of darkness but that will be removed at the beginning of the tribulation period. That will usher in a time of complete unrestraint. The Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, will go with the Bride into the wilderness and will abide there with her.

With all restraint removed the antichrist, the epitome of a wickedness, will have his moment of revelation. He will appear in splendor and satanic power. The entire world will be under his domination for three and one half years. At the conclusion of that length of time the Parousia, the second coming of Christ will take place. 2 Thess. 2:8 His destiny is defeat and destruction. The Coming (parousia) of the Lord Jesus and the destruction of the antichrist are synonymous, at one and the same time. In order for this to take place the second coming can only come at the conclusion of the tribulation. The antichrist will be destroyed by the spirit of the mouth of Christ, the Holy Spirit proclaiming the Word of the Lord. The sword of the Lord is the anointed Word seen coming from the mouth of the Lord Jesus.

The brightness of His coming. The epiphania of His parousia. The shining forth, the display of that glorious lightning from heaven. The unhindered brilliancy of the light of the world. John 8:12 The Sun of righteousness. Mal. 4:2 The bright and morning star. Rev. 22:16 The light of the Lord will dispel the darkness of the tribulation period and manifest His glorious light. It is very apparent that the Lord Jesus will not come until the antichrist has run his course and done his damage to the earth. The first to appear on the scene is a mock revelation and the coming of the false one, the antichrist. Because Jesus destroys him at the time of His appearing and coming, the antichrist must come first. The ability to receive the revelation of the Spirit in this matter is an imperative. The second coming, as taught by many today is setting the church up for great deception. The antichrist is next to appear on the scene and will come, with great deception and in the exact casual manner as we hear so many, so eloquently proclaim today. 2 Thess 2:8

RAPTURE. 29

Is there really a difference in meaning and time element between the coming, rapture (Gr. parousia) and the moment of His revelation, appearing, or disclosure (Gr. apokalupsis)? Not according to the scriptures. At the time of His revelation or appearing he is accompanied by a company of mighty angels. 2 Thess. 1:7 Paul is teaching that the events spoken of here, in this portion of the Word, are to take place at the same time when He will be glorified in His saints. That involves the resurrection of the dead and the catching up of those who are alive and remain, namely the Bride in the garden of the wilderness. Isa. 51:3 For the duration of the tribulation period the Bride will have been sheltered by the Lord. Rev. 12:14 It must also be repeated here that Jesus placed this event whether coming, revelation or appearing as being at the close of the tribulation period. This is the time when the trumpet will sound and His angels will gather the redeemed. Mt. 24:29 Mark 13:24 It is here, at the conclusion of the tribulation that the "gathering" will take place. Mat. 24:31 Mark 13:27 The gathering will be at the time of His coming (parousia). 2 Thess. 2:1 Paul plainly places the revelation of antichrist and his coming, before Christ comes in rapture.

In order for the antichrist to be destroyed at the coming of the Lord Jesus he must appear on the scene first and have accomplished all of his dirty work. Very positively he is destroyed at the second coming of Jesus. When Jesus comes He is coming in flaming fire and will execute vengeance on all who are unbelievers and refuse to follow the will of the Lord. Outside of the Bride, that will be the total population of the earth. Their punishment is eternal banishment and destruction from all the power and glory of the Lord. 2 Thess. 1:8-9 It is at this moment of time that the antichrist is destroyed by the brightness (epiphania), the appearing, brightness, shining forth of His coming. In other words, this takes place, when He comes like lightning, or flaming fire. 2 Thess. 2:8 It is of interest to note that the translators of the KJV translated apokalupto using them interchangeable. In 1 Cor. 1:7 it is, coming. In 1 Peter 1:7 it is translated, appearing. While as we have noted in 2 Thess. 1:7 it is, revelation. It would appear that they saw no reason to make the words to fit different occasions. They are all three, one and the same instance. That is, the blessed second coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

RAPTURE. 30

Do all Christians escape the tribulation period? This is of great concern to every believer. Some unfortunately, believe that there will be a great spiritual change at His coming and that they will be changed, accepted and delivered. The subject and context of 1 Cor. 15:52-54 is the changing of the physical body, whether dead or alive into a spiritual body, a resurrected body. It does not refer to the amount of time involved in the second coming of the Lord Jesus. The spiritual condition of mankind will not be altered by the return of the Lord Jesus. As a matter of fact, in relationship to His coming (Rev. 22:12), the spiritual status of all will, in effect, be frozen or eternally set. The unjust and filthy remain so. The righteous and the holy continue in that blessed spiritual element before the Lord. Rev. 22:11 All spiritual changes must be made long before the second coming of Christ.

Tribulation martyrs. Under the impact of the fifth seal we find a group of martyrs who were slain for their faith in the Word of the Lord and for the testimony which they gave pertaining to their belief in the Lord Jesus. Their soul life was under the altar, the altar of incense which was located before the vail and back to back to the mercy seat. But, separated by the veil. When the vail was rendered ineffective at the death of the Lord Jesus, the altar and the mercy seat stood together. Mt 27:51 Thus, in the Revelation, the altar is before the throne of God. Rev. 8:3 It is here that we find the prayers of the saints offered as incense before the Lord. Rev. 8:4 Your prayers are valuable. They are as sweet smelling incense before the Lord. Ps. 141:2

These martyrs are crying out for vengeance because their blood had been shed. The soul life, the life of the flesh is in the blood. Lev. 17:11 The blood shed by another person killed in manslaughter or murder will always demand vengeance. For instance, the blood of righteous Abel. Gen. 4:10, Mt. 23:35 The Lord demanded blood for blood. Gen. 9:6 Thus we have these waiting for the avenging of their blood. They are told to be patient until the number of the martyrs has been completed. They must wait a "little season" or until the end of the tribulation period until all who will die in this manner have been killed. Rev. 6:11 Here, we are introduced to the fact that there will be many martyrs who give their lives for the Lord Jesus during the tribulation.

RAPTURE. 31

A vast multitude, innumerable, seen standing before the throne of the Lamb. Indicating that they are a people who have trusted in the blood of the Lamb for their redemption. Every possible nation, language and people will be represented in this great gathering before the Lord Jesus. Rev. 7:9 They are clothed in the righteousness and purity of the Almighty. In robes of pure white, (leukos, light, white.) They are lightened with the very light of the Lord. It is their covering. These are the people who came out of great tribulation, according to the elder, who questioned John as to their origin. Clever fellow, he knew the answer but was testing John. Rev. 7:13-14 They are eternally positioned immediately before the throne of the Lord. Their tribulation suffering was great, but for only a moment. Their reward is tremendous. They will have the very close presence of the occupant of the throne and the Lamb among them forever. Who can measure the thrill and joy of the glory of the Lord sweeping constantly over them like mighty billows of the sea. Rev. 7:15-17 Their past sufferings will never come to mind. The former things are all gone.

Let us look at another evidence that there are martyrs during the tribulation. The woman, the majestic Bride of Christ has been delivered from the dragon and is in sweet repose in the place the Lord prepared especially for her. Rev. 12:6, 14 The dragon has been completely frustrated in his attempt to destroy her. In great anger he will turn and attack the "remnant of her seed." The foolish virgins who did not properly prepare themselves for the wedding. Mt. 25 They are left behind and not only face persecution but it is all out and out war. This is a happening that will take place during the three and one half year tribulation. They are identified as being those who keep the commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev. 12:17 Though martyred, they are victorious, for, to die is gain for the child of the Lord. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb (their redemption) and the word of their testimony. Life, in Christ, will now be their total goal. Whatever they had previously lacked in their spiritual consecration unto the Lord they now fulfill. They loved not their natural life and the things of this world until they were willing to give themselves fully to the Lord and a martyrs death. Rev. 12:11 These too are tribulation martyrs.

RAPTURE. 32

Prior to the second coming of Christ, the antichrist will appear on the world scene. He is depicted as a beast (wild, dangerous, venomous. Strong.) This is most certainly an apt description of him. The dragon will grant his power, authority and throne to this most bestial man. That he is a man of war as noted by the question asked concerning him. "Who is able to make war with him." Rev. 13:4c He reigns for the forty two months of the tribulation. Rev. 13:5 Here again we find believers who are of sufficient number for the antichrist to wage war against them. Rev. 13:7 He will triumph over these and all others who would dare to resist him. Mind you, he only reigns during the tribulation. The fact that he will be destroyed at the second coming of the Lord Jesus is the patience and faith of these martyrs. Rev. 13:10b It is well that we review the truth that this beast is destroyed by the appearing (epiphania, advent, brightness, manifestation) of Christ's coming (parousia, rapture.) 2 Thess. 2:8 The rapture will bring about the destruction of the antichrist. Jesus will not return until the antichrist appears and has his kingdom on this earth.

We find a group to whom attention is called because they were victorious over the beast by refusing to accept his number, name or mark. They stand on the sea of glass which is before the throne of the Lord. Rev. 15:2 Their victory, was in their resistance which resulted in their martyrdom. They are identified by the song which they sing. A song of Moses, the law and of the Lamb. Rev. 15:3 They are the converts of the two witnesses who testify in Jerusalem during the tribulation. Many in Israel will accept Jesus as their Messiah due to the testimony of Moses and Elijah, the Law and the prophets. Rev. 11:3 They are identifiable by the judgments which they bring upon the kingdom of the antichrist. A duplication of their judgment abilities of the past. It is stated that the Lord will send Elijah the prophet before the great and notable day of the Lord. Mal. 4:5-6 John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah or Elias but was not a reincarnation of that prophet. Luke 1:17 Both Moses and Elijah appeared with the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. Here they conversed with Him concerning His coming crucifixion and all that would take place in the immediate future in Jerusalem. Luke 9:30-31 These on the sea of glass are most fortunate to be last moments converts under the ministry of these two witnesses.

RAPTURE. 33

There is another great force evident during the tribulation period. She is the harlot church. The false religion who will be destroyed by the very ones who sustained her. However, before that takes place we see her as being responsible for tribulation martyrs also. This gives evidence to the presence of believers, in this case called saints, during the tribulation. These martyrs are particularly named martyrs of Jesus, that is they die for their faith in Him. Her atrocities are so numerous that she is shown as being drunk with the blood of the saints. The more she will martyr, the more vicious her attacks will become. Rev. 17:6 She is a blood thirsty, religious, political, economy controlling combination of the worst and most vicious of the end time heartless religions of the world. It must be emphasized that the harlot church is not just one religious order but a conglomeration of religions.

The prophet Isaiah declared the coming of this woman. The fact that this is a grouping of seven women is an indication of the end of the age. The number seven is predominant in the book of Revelation. It speaks to us of final things, whether good or bad. It is the number which is speaking of final things. The consummation, the fullness, the completion. Isa. 4:1 They seek to be led and come under the protection of one man, most certainly the antichrist. The desire to be named after him, readily willing to take his name, number or mark. They will eat their own bread, continue their own doctrine and teaching. Wear their own clothes, religious garb of every sort. They will continue their own form of service. But must have his name for the removal of reproach. Remember she is called the mother of harlots. Rev. 17:5 She too must precede the second coming of Christ. We find a divine principle in the scriptures showing that it is first the natural, the flesh, the wicked, that which is of this world and then that which is spiritual. 1 Cor. 15:46-47 This amalgamation of religions will result in a church that will satisfy, for a season, the desires of the people of that age for a one world religion. Her exterior beauty will be most attractive to the people of the world. Inside she is the epitome of every vile and wicked work which has ever been produced by the ungodly. There is no wickedness nor unclean works of men but what she is involved. Yet, she will be a thing of great beauty and very attractive to all. Sin attracts, but it exacts a tremendous toll from those who fall into its clutches. Rev. 17:1-6

RAPTURE. 34

The last two martyrs to die prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus will be the two witnesses. At the most significant events of the life of Jesus we find that there were two who were present. They are not named except at the transfiguration of Christ. Here, when these two are named, they are acknowledged to be Moses and Elijah. Mt. 17:3 A witness must be one who was present and visually observed the event. These two men fit that category. Their verbal witness will be in the form of the prophetic utterance. They testify for the full one thousand two hundred and sixty days. They will foretell the various happenings and judgments which take place during the tribulation. No marvel that they are hated with such passion. The Word of the prophet Malachi is fulfilled in this visitation of Elijah. It also gives us another clue verifying that the second coming is after the tribulation. First things first. Elijah before that day. Mal. 4:5

At the end of the tribulation they are at last killed. It is interesting to note that this will only occur, after they have finished their testimony. Prior to that time they were impervious to death. Rev. 11:7 What jubilation on the part of the world. These who had tormented them for three and one half years are now dispensed with. Their bodies will lie in the public square of Jerusalem for three and one half days. The venom and hatred of the world will be poured out against them. They will be the lead story of the news in those days. Rev. 11:8

The spirit of fear will grip the peoples of the world as they see these two prophets rise from the dead. It will be a time of extreme dread and terror for the world. What takes place with these two prophets is a key leading up to the second coming. They foreshadow it. They are also a warning and a sign of its approach, for they are a part of it. They will also hear the voice of the archangel calling them and all the rest of the dead in Christ. It is the time of the first resurrection. With a shout, the sound of a mighty voice, all believers at one time are invited to gather together, in the clouds, with the Lord. These two are likewise a part of that great and glorious company who are raptured to be with the Lord. Rev. 11:12 They are an integral part of that great heavenly host who will be assembled unto the Lord. The Lord has prepared a plan for the end of the age and we may read it and understand His every move and function for the last day. The Lord does

nothing haphazardly. He has a definite time schedule and is proceeding accordingly.

RAPTURE. 35

There are several actions attached to the coming of the Lord Jesus at the end of the age. It is not all just an instantaneous happening. That particular aspect of His coming is attached to the change which will take place in the physical bodies of those who are in Him. 1 Cor. 15:52 The "change," the transformation, is the only subject matter embracing a time element, as short as the twinkling of an eye, to be found here in this portion of scripture.

One of the visions given to John was that of seven angels each possessing a trumpet. They are found in the immediate presence of the Lord, before His throne. Reason would tell us that where there are a series of seven trumpets, the seventh is the last trump. Rev. 8:2 The last trumpet will be that which will introduce a number of phenomenon, supernatural acts of the Lord, which will result in the consummation of time. 1 Cor. 15:52 These seven trumpets will be sounded individually, over a period of years. The first four are pre-tribulation trumpets. While each sounding will institute a judgment, it must be said that in all actuality, these are warning acts of mercy. Thus, the Lord will afford the wicked an opportunity and time for repentance.

The tribulation begins when the Bride, the perfected church of Revelation twelve exercises her escape mechanism by being transported into the wilderness through the power of the Holy Spirit, or eagle wing power. Rev. 12:14 The Lord ever merciful and the church ever loving will give the message of the gospel as she is transported into her place. In this manner the scripture will be fulfilled that all nations, tongues and tribes shall hear before the coming of the Lord. Rev. 14:6 She will also pronounce the fact that the three trumpets yet to sound are titled as woes. Great and severe judgments which will be upon the earth during the great tribulation. Rev. 8:3 Every prophetic declaration or sign and wonder will be made manifest as indications of His coming, and will be consummated prior to His appearing. Warning, heaped upon warning, is being given and will be intensified as that day approaches. There are many events leading up to the second

coming which are yet to fit into place. The Lord is a God of order and has established the future state of affairs relating to the glorious appearing of His Son, the Lord Jesus. Nothing with Him is circumstantial or happenstance. He is in absolute control. The Lord has appointed the day. Dan. 11:27c, Acts. 17:31

RAPTURE. 36

The introduction of the tribulation period is as follows. The sounding of the fifth trumpet and the ensuing proceedings establish the beginning of the tribulation end time events. A star is seen falling from heaven. Rev. 9:1 The cause of his fall is warfare in heaven between the great red dragon and Michael (who is like God), the Lord Jesus. Rev. 12:7 A battle which will take place when the male child is caught up to God immediately at his birth. Rev. 12:5 The fallen one is identified by name as being the Devil and Satan. The master of deception. Himself deceived and deceiving the inhabitants of the earth as even now there are his emissaries, false Christ's in the world. Rev. 12:9 He and the fallen angels who follow him are cast down from heaven to the earth. Rev. 12:8 The antichrist will receive his commission at this time. All satanic power and ability will be transferred to him. Rev. 13:2

Please note, even though he is defeated in heaven and is cast down, he is seen as a star, a bright light streaking from above and coming to the earth. Even in his defeated and fallen condition, he will imitate the rapture. He first will attempt to destroy the male child. Rev. 12:4 Having failed in these efforts of destruction he will turn against the woman and once again be defeated in his ungodly purpose. Rev. 12:13-14 His anger knows no appeasement. It is at this moment of time that he will turn his wrath toward the remnant of the woman's seed. Those left behind, who enter the tribulation. Rev. 12:17

Identity theft is the blight of our day. It is being perpetrated by clever thieves all over the world. Note Ecc. 7:29 NKJV. Man has created many schemes. They simply follow the pattern of their father, the devil. He is a deceiver. Jesus is identified as coming like lightning. Jesus said; He saw Satan fall as lightning. A blazing light is identified with both. Paul warned that Satan is

able to transform himself into an angel of light. That requires the ability to discern between true light and false light. 2 Cor. 11:14 Do not expect Satan to present himself as anything but a proper and respectable being. He is extremely clever at covering his true nature until it is too late for the deceived to escape. Ezekiel presented him as a very attractive, handsome, beautiful creature. Eze: 28:13-17 His ugliness is manifest only after he has trapped a sinner in his claws. The last day church will know his deceptions as no others have known in the entire church age. He is out to deceive Eve once more.

RAPTURE. 37

A dire warning issued by the angel pertaining to participation in the order of the antichrist during the tribulation. Those who enter the worship of the beast or his image are permanently designated to eternal punishment and death. Involved also in this angelic message is a word of encouragement to the saints. It is obvious that some are still around whom must make a decision concerning the mark of the beast and the ungodly worship required. Rev. 14:9-13 Those who die at that period of time were designated as being a very special people. It is continuously evident from the Word that there will definitely be saints who unfortunately enter the tribulation and in order to maintain their faith they will die as martyrs.

A prophetic utterance of the introduction and works of two beasts is found in the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation. They are the antichrist and the false prophet. How clever of Satan to include a false prophet in the satanic trio. He knows the promise made that before the great and notable day of the Lord would come that He would send the prophet Elijah. Mal. 4:5 While Elijah will minister during the tribulation there will also be the imitation, the powerful false prophet. The man of great deception. Be sure that the prophet and the prophecy which is followed and heard is of the Lord. For all that he will accomplish, we are most interested in the fact that he will make war with the saints. Rev. 13:7 Showing us that there are believers who enter into the tribulation. The only ones whom he cannot harm are those who are in their rightful place. In the presence of the Lord. Rev. 12:6, 14

All who die as martyrs during the tribulation period will be a part of the resurrection of the dead at the time of the second coming of Christ. They

are those who are called “the dead in Christ.” 1 Cor. 15:52 The only living will be those who are under the divine protection of the Lord Jesus in the place which will be prepared for them. All will be changed at one and the same time. That is, receive bodies which are immortal. 1 Cor. 15:53-54 These all participate in that which is called the “first resurrection.” Rev. 20:5b This is better understood when included with verse six. These who participate in this great event are gathered together after the tribulation. Mt. 24:29 It is followed by the millennial reign of Christ on earth. All those gathered will live and reign with Him for that blessed period of time. Rev. 20:6

RAPTURE. 38

The view, the revelation of Peter in relationship to the coming (rapture) of the believer. He linked the word parousia to the day of God. 2 Peter 3:12 There is no difference when it is referred to as the day of the Lord, the day of God or His coming. The scriptures tie the references together and make them all one day. Paul made a beautiful comment concerning that day by calling it the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. While at the same time praying that the people of the Lord be preserved without fault and absolutely blameless, in other words holy, sinless. 1 Cor. 1:8 All of which is the standard for the Bride of Christ. The Bride of His perfections.

Peter also spoke of the Lord Jesus coming as a thief in the night. Too many stop there and seemingly do not read all of the statement made by Peter. 2 Peter 3:10 It is marvelously true that Jesus will come in as a thief in the night. Paul gave the same witness and testimony of the return of the Lord Jesus as a thief in the night. 1 Thess. 5:2 John received an identical revelation accompanied with a warning to remain spiritually alert and clean before the Lord. Rev. 16:15

Paul however, had an answer to those who took the stand that we would be caught absolutely unaware of what was about to happen. He gave an indication that this is to be an occasion which will happen in darkness, in the night time. It will be extremely dark, spiritually. There will be great darkness on the unsaved in the day of His coming. Naturally, parts of the earth will be in the night time when He will come and will circle the earth that all might see Him. At the same time there are a people who are not in

darkness that, that day will overtake them as a thief in the night. The true church will have perfect knowledge for they are not walking in the ignorance of darkness. Some today are just guessing, giving prophecies and making statements that He is about to appear, when actually they have no spiritual knowledge nor comprehension of world events. 1 Thess. 5:2

One of the signs of the last days is one that is often overlooked. We have arrived at the information age. "Knowledge has increased." We now have professional students, even of the Word. Always studying, seeking knowledge but never able to arrive at the pure knowledge of the truth, as it is in the Lord Jesus. 2 Tim. 3:7b So many today are simply repeating what some other uninformed scholar has said. We need to listen to the great teacher, the Holy Spirit, and hear the truth.

RAPTURE. 39

Now think on these things. Peter is considering the rapture (parousia) as he describes some of the universal changes which will take place at the time of the second coming. These events make a secret, pre-tribulation coming impossible. The second coming concludes life on earth as it is lived now. What can exist after Jesus returns with flaming fire destroying all the physical and material elements of this present universe. 2 Peter 3:12 For clarity, we must understand that Peter used the word rapture (parousia) in relationship to the horrendous judgmental actions which will take place when Jesus comes. He will come (rapture) accompanied by flaming fire which will burn and melt all that can be destroyed in the universe.

There is no difference between His coming, rapture (parousia) and His coming, revelation (apokalupsis). We understand this by the events which both Peter and Paul state will take place at His coming. It is Paul who wrote of His coming as His revelation. 2 Thess. 1:7 Both write of the transpiring of one and the same event. That is, the flaming fire which will be so destructive. Paul used the same Greek word when writing to the church in Corinth concerning the coming (revelation) of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 1:7 Here he emphasized the fact of the visibility of His coming. Which corresponds with the words of the Lord Jesus as he gave John the revelation of the end of the age. Rev. 1:7

The antichrist who have been in control for the entire tribulation period is set to be destroyed at the “brightness of the coming” of the Lord Jesus. As we have noted previously, this requires the antichrist to be on the scene and to have accomplished his purposes before the rapture. The coming appearing in glory, the brightness of the Lord, will be the end of that ungodly reign. It is the brightness (epiphania, the shining forth) of His coming (rapture) which will destroy the reigning powers of darkness. 2 Thess. 2:8 please note that this third word used in the scriptures describing this particular aspect of His coming is indelibly linked to the rapture. Thus these references are of one and the same event. If His coming is secret why do we await His appearing? His appearing is our blessed hope, His coming. The moment of resurrection or catching up. An event that is much anticipated by the church which is evidenced by His appearing (epiphania) Titus 2:13

Rapture. 40

Horroric final judgments which lead up to the second coming of Christ. The condition of the world at the time of these actions of the Lord will be totally wicked and violently corrupt. The powers that rule in that day are deserving of all that will take place. The people who support them are likewise worthy of all that will happen to them. Seven angels with seven great plagues which are to be poured out on the earth. Rev. 15:1 The Lord pronounced seven judgments or plagues upon those who walk contrary to Him. Lev. 26:21 These are forerunners of the second coming.

The time element for the enactment of these great catastrophes are very plainly indicated. We see a large number of people who have come out of great tribulation. They had resisted unto the shedding of their blood, unto death, any worship, in any manner of the antichrist. Rev. 15:2 These could not have been delivered before the tribulation. They conquered the efforts of the ungodly religious and political order of the day to force them to follow the antichrist. Until this becomes a reality, Christ will not come. First things first. The antichrist and the martyrs must have fulfilled their lot in life before Jesus can return. Inasmuch as they sing the song of Moses (one of the two witnesses) and of the Lamb, they are largely Messianic Jews who converted to Christ during the tribulation period. The song of Moses is a

song of victory. Ex. 15:1-18 He will no doubt lead them in this post tribulation song unto the Lord.

The number of tribulation martyrs having been made complete by the deaths of Moses and Elijah it is now time for the seven calamities to be poured out upon the earth. The seven angels each with a bowl of gold (Amp.Ver.), containing a mighty judgment, are gloriously and beautifully arrayed. Thus, we see the righteousness, the justice, the Word of the Lord producing a just and holy sentence upon a world which is grossly wicked. Rev. 15:7-8 The heavenly sanctuary was filled with smoke, the atmosphere of his shining glory and splendor. It is a display of contrasting powers. The ultimate demonstration of the power of darkness and evil versus the beauty and majesty of the God of light, glory and all power. The seven last plagues which lead up to the return of the Lord Jesus will be poured out at the conclusion of the great tribulation.

RAPTURE. 41

In relationship to the seven golden vials we are given no time element as to how long each plague will be in effect. They will be poured out as a part of the events taking place under the sounding of the seventh trumpet. John does mention a period which he called "days" in Rev. 10:5 The extended sounding of the ram's horn when the Israelites marched around Jericho and their shout caused the walls to fall. Josh. 6:5, 14 Whatever the time element used to finish the judgments of the Lord, it will be brief, but will seem like a lifetime to those being judged.

The first vial is poured out upon the earth. Rev. 16:2 The first trumpet, while greatly different in fulfillment, nevertheless, it was a judgment against the earth. Moses brought an earth judgment by throwing the ashes of the furnace into the air. Ex. 9:8-11 This is a tribulation judgment. It is certified by the fact that these putrid, cancerous sores break out where the sign of the antichrist is placed upon the bodies of those who receive it. These people had also been caught up in the worship of the image of the beast. They are totally given over to the great deception of the last days. Thus, they have brought upon themselves the final acts of judgment from the Lord.

The second vial was poured out upon the seas of the world. Rev. 16:2 It is the sentence of the shedding of blood, from righteous Able to that of the two witnesses. Most definitely the shed blood of the Lord Jesus would be included. A blood thirsty world deserves such action taken against them. The false church has a reputation for having shed the blood of martyrs. She is literally depicted as being drunk with the blood of saints. She represents a religion without mercy. Ruling by force and the sword . Rev. 17:3 The statement of the resulting change of sea water into that like the congealed, corrupted blood of a dead man is to be taken in all actuality. The resulting death of all sea life indicates that the oxygen normally found in water would be completely squeezed out by the blood. The stench of the blood and dead carcasses of the fish will be horrendous. The impact of the sounding of the second trumpet will create a similar situation. Its effect will be but upon a third of the waters of the sea. Rev. 8:9 The trumpet is a merciful warning. The vial one of those final acts which precede the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

RAPTURE. 42

The third angel, the third vial. An addition to the second only this time it is the fresh waters of the earth which are turned into blood. The rivers, the streams, every source of water produces blood. The scripture is not merely indicating something causing the water to turn red but as a punishment all waters become blood. Rev. 16:4 Aaron and Moses turned the river into blood. The fish all died, causing the waters to stink. Ex. 7:20 The third trumpet will also greatly effect the waters of the world, causing them to become extremely bitter. Rev. 8:10-11

As terrible as these punishments are, they are executed by a Just and Holy God. Rev. 16: 5 The ungodly system of the world existing at that time will have shed the blood of the redeemed in great abundance. The harlot church will be noted for her executions. She is seen drunken with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Mind you, she is a tribulation figure. There are believers in Jesus who are there also. Rev. 17:6, 18:24 The justice of such punishment is proclaimed by the angel of the waters and by the martyrs who are seen before the altar. They attest to the fairness of such a harsh and horrible penalty, enacted by the Almighty. Rev. 16:6-7

The fourth vial poured out upon the sun. The sun becomes an object and sign of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. How much does the destruction of the Ozone layer around the earth enter in to this as a prelude to this sign? Does the warming of the earth act as a warning too? Compared to the fourth vial today's situation is minor. But, is it a warning of that which is to be? When the contents of the vial reach the sun it will become exceedingly hot. Jesus spoke of the unusual which would be demonstrated prior to His coming. Luke 21:25-27 One of the would be signs in the sun. As a matter of fact, all that Jesus mentioned in these verses are in evidence today. Most definitely in their infancy, their beginnings. Rest assured they will increase in power and volume as the time draws near for the Lord Jesus to return. The fourth trumpet is just the opposite, darkness, never the less, a warning of great importance. Rev. 8:12 The peoples of the earth will be burned, scorched by the exceeding great heat. Rather than coming in repentance they blaspheme the name of the Lord. These have gone beyond the time of salvation and have no hope whatsoever of eternal life. They are worthy only of judgment. Rev. 16:8-9

RAPTURE. 43

The vial directly poured out upon the throne of the antichrist. Rev. 16:10 The fifth vial. The number is of interest because the number five is the number of redemption by blood. They overcame him, by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Rev. 12:11 This is a direct assault against the powers of ungodliness which will have ruled the world for three and one half years. The consequences of this attack are most powerful. Full, total darkness and extreme pain. Darkness as great if not greater than that of Egypt. A darkness of fear. The description given of that darkness is terrifying. For three days they did not move out of the place where they were when the darkness came upon them. It is described as thick or agonizing darkness. A blackness of groping or inability to move or see. Ex. 10:22-23 This darkness will be accompanied by excruciating fear and great pain. So, much so that they will increase their misery by gnawing their tongues. Rev. 16:11 While at the same time blaspheming the God of heaven. All of which they could have escaped had they but made the right decision and followed the Lord Jesus.

The sixth vial is poured out upon the great river Euphrates. Rev. 16:12 This river was one of the four which watered the garden of Eden. Its name is variously mentioned as being sweet water, gushing or breaking forth. Which may be applied to the conditions which bring in the reign of the antichrist. Being the last mentioned it bears a connotation of the last days. Also, it was the extreme border of the land promised of the Lord to Abraham. Another indication of a last day action. Gen. 15:18 The waters of the river Euphrates will be dried up at this time. Waters speak to us of things spiritual. The demonic spirit infesting the peoples of the earth at this time will cease. Every duplication, every imitation, every false action of a satanic spiritual nature will cease and desist. The people will be left void of any sort of a spirit being, occupying and guiding them. Already void of the blessings of the Lord, now completely emptied of any spirit of any nature they completely lose heart. Their source of spiritual inspiration and satanic powers has been destroyed. That great river which had been their life has now ceased to exist. The act of the angel caused its source and flow to cease. Strange that one of the life giving sources of the world today, water, has suddenly become short of supply. The persistent warnings of the Lord are all around us in modern day life.

RAPTURE. 44

Preparation for the coming of the kings of the east, or originating from the sun rising. Rev. 16:12 East as used here comes from two Greek words. The first word, anatole, a rising light, i.e. dawn, dayspring, east, rising. The second word, helios, from hele (a ray); the sun, by implication, light, east. (Strong's Dict.) The word anatole is used by Zacharias in reference to the birth of the Lord Jesus. Luke 1:78 He called Jesus the "dayspring from on high." The dawn, the breaking forth of light. Jesus came as a light into the world. John 12:46 He came as the light of the world. John 8:12 He proclaimed his followers to be the light of the world. Mat. 5:14

The nature, the very essence of the Lord is light. 1 John 1:5 He cannot be anything But light. All light originates from Him. Before He created the sun, moon and stars, He, who is light eternal, created natural light on the first day. Gen. 1:3-5 A different light, which He later in creation was to place in the sun, moon and stars, on the fourth day. Gen. 1:16-19 It is not astonishing when the scripture calls Him a Sun, for that is exactly what He

is. The sun is not God but the one who created the sun is the most brilliant light in the universe. There is no star/sun which can compare to the glorious light which shines forth from Him. Ps. 84:11 The Lord Jesus having the exact nature of His Father is called the Sun of righteousness. He too, shines with the eternal glory of the Father. Mal. 4:2 His glory will embellish, clothe the heavens with the brilliance, the effulgence of His very presence. He is seen as the most brilliant of lights. Shining forth like lightening. His hands display the glory of His power as rays, beams of light shine from those nail pierced hands. This is the source of the mighty power of salvation. Hab. 3:3-4

For all this, it is little wonder that we find the house of the Lord to be a place of exceeding great light. There is absolutely no darkness in the Lord. His dwelling place is the house of light. A brilliancy that is completely unapproachable by mortal men. 1 Tim. 6:16 It is the home of the saved, those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. It is a place, for Jesus said I go to prepare a place (topos, topography) for you. John 14:3 Heaven is very real. The Lord has pitched His tent where it is visible to all who will see. His glory is revealed in His tabernacle. Ps. 19:4 The King and the kings of the east are coming in power and great glory. The majesty of that appearing will light up the skies like the explosion of an immense atom bomb.

RAPTURE. 45

Of all things, Balaam, obviously a false prophet, hired to curse Israel, uttered one of the most profound statements found in the Old Testament, concerning the Lord Jesus. It demonstrated the power of the Lord over all false spirits. The Lord is in control. He predicted the coming of a "Star out of Jacob". Num. 24:17 Each and every star in the universe is a sun, shining forth light like our sun. Jesus is the Sun of righteousness, shining with the eternal glory of the Lord. Mal. 4:2 Simeon entering the Temple at the time that the baby Jesus was being presented to the Lord, took Jesus in his arms and proclaimed Him to be "a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel". Luke 2:32 He is the very effulgence of the full glory of the Father. He is coming again in that fullness of the glory of the Father. Mt. 16:27

It was a star which they named, "His star". Mt. 2:2 Not a natural star but a light sent from the Lord. A star which had great possibilities. It was a light which led them directly to the house where the Christ child was to be found. How many stars are close enough to earth to direct someone to the precise house where their search was to end? Mt. 2:9-10 These men were not magi, necromancers, sorcerers or witch doctors. The judgment of God was to be pronounced on such as these. Lev. 20:6 The Lord is never inconsistent. He would not condemn such activity and then allow such individuals have a part in recognizing Jesus as the Son of God and the star as their guiding light. They were wise men, men who could both see the star and recognize its significance. Men on a mission.

Mt. 2:1 They came from the east of sun rising. Men of spiritual insight and light. They knew exactly what and whom they were seeking. They fully understood the meaning of the Star. The redeemed have been exalted to the status of kings and priests unto God. Rev. 1:6 Seeing as He will bring the resurrected dead in Christ with Him when He comes, these are they who are termed "kings of the east," or sun rising. This is further verified by the words of the Lord Jesus When He said that He would come from the east and shine unto the west. Mt. 24:27 The great river Euphrates to be dried up in preparation for this grand appearing of the Lord Jesus and His redeemed. The river, the fourth flowing out of Eden, the last will cease to be. The great harlot church and its practices will be destroyed prior to the second coming of Christ.

RAPTURE. 46

Also in conjunction with the sixth vial we note that there will be a real surge of satanic activity. Appearing from the mouths of the dragon, the Beast and the false prophet are three frog like creatures. They are described as being loathsome spirits. This has to be the very fullness of demon activity. The world has never seen such an outpouring of satanic power as is demonstrated by these three. Rev. 16:13 When Israel was delivered from Egypt the frogs filled their land. Even became mixed in their bread dough and into their ovens. Also filled their houses, even in the kings chambers. Upon the people and into their beds. What a slimy mess. To top that off, the magicians added to their great discomfort by duplicating the act and adding to the number of frogs. Ex. 8:2-7

These unclean and wicked demonic spirits have one purpose and that is to resist the second coming of Christ. They have the ability to create signs, wonders and miracles which will further deceive the nations of the world. An activity that is to be all too familiar in the end of the age. Their message is deceptive and is a lie. John 8:44 They marshal the combined armies of the world for a time of war against the Lord. They know that the great day of God has arrived. Rev. 16:14 Satan, from the time that he is cast out of heaven knows that he has but a short time. Rev. 12:12 He may not know the day but he knows his Bible and can see that he had better do his dirty work, quickly.

Before we consider the great day of God, let's look at Rev. 16:15. His coming as a thief in the night will take place here, at this time. It is noteworthy that there is in this scripture a continued warning to the church that they maintain a watch and preparation for that day. This scripture is very deliberately placed here in conjunction with the sixth and seventh vials. Showing very positively that the second coming is at the close of the tribulation. These seven events are all to take place in the end of the great tribulation, at the time of the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Most likely, the time chosen for their completion is at the longest, a matter of seven days. Rev. 10:7 Whatever time the Lord has allotted to these happenings, they will be quickly implemented. Peter wrote of that day when Jesus would come as a thief and described the horrific results of that day. They are catastrophic to say the least. 2 Peter 3:10 Note also that he called it the day of the Lord.

RAPTURE. 47

Regarding the day of the Lord the prophet Isaiah declared the coming of that day by calling it the "day of the LORD'S vengeance. Isa. 34:8 The Lord has a way of turning things around. It is the purpose of the wicked, satanic triad to attack Him. But in all actuality, He will gather them together that His retribution might be enacted upon them. They do not stand a chance against the Lord. While the scriptures refer to it as a battle and the language is that of warfare, it is over in an instant. Their armies will be totally destroyed by the Lord. The slaughter will be complete. There will not be a remnant of their armies. Isa. 34:1-3

The heavens themselves will feel the impact of this all so brief war. They will be destroyed and rolled up like a scroll. They will fall from their orbit. Complete and drastic changes lie ahead. Isa. 34:4 Jesus mentioned this day as being immediately after the tribulation. He spoke of the sun and moon being darkened and the stars falling from heaven. Mt. 24:29 Added to that, the whole of the universe will be shaken as well as the powers which now desecrate the atmosphere in which we live. Eph. 2:2 It is then that He will show Himself, coming in clouds. Mt. 29:30 Peter also mentioned the great catastrophe of that day. A day of destruction and burning. A complete alteration of the entire surface of the earth. He called it "the coming day of God". 2 Peter 3:10-12

Joel calls it the "day of the Lord". Joel 3:14 He said that it would be a day of the multitudes being gathered together. In a valley which is the valley of decision or threshing. Harvest is over. It is now the time of threshing, the time of judgment. The light giving elements will all be darkened. Joel 3:15 The voice of the Lord will be heard like a mighty roar. Certain to be a sound, the volume and likes of which, have never been heard before. It will cause exceeding great fear in the hearts of the unsaved. His voice, the shout, will be heard by all. Joel 3:16 What a fearful and awesome time that will be. It is the time of the great winepress of the Lord. The thrusting in of the sickle to gather in the sinner and the ungodly. The power of the sword of the Lord will be demonstrated by the river of blood flowing from the winepress of the wrath of God. When this time arrives the world will have been under the domination of the antichrist for three and one half years and will be totally dedicated to him. The judgment of the Lord is just. Rev. 14:18-20

RAPTURE. 48

The battle of Armageddon. The battle of the ages. A conflict which involves the whole of the armies of the earth. Which are under the leadership of the antichrist. Their inspiration and zeal to fight is inspired by demon forces. Rev. 16:14 The very fact that they muster their forces is an indication of a knowledge of the impending attack against them. The devil knows what the Word of the Lord says about the end of the age and he will anticipate the coming of Christ and try to intercept and defeat His coming.

It is well that we take into consideration that this warfare is in conjunction with the coming of the Lord Jesus as a thief in the night. Rev. 16:15 That the battle and His coming are linked together and take place at one and the same time is very plain in this portion of the scripture. This conflict involves the whole population of the earth. It is the time of the complete destruction of the ungodly from off the face of the earth. It is the end of people of iniquity dwelling on this world. Jeremiah, the prophet, will give us an insight into the extreme emotions and actions of that day. He is deeply moved to the very core of his being at the sounding of the trumpet and of the war. Jer. 4:19 He rightly named it to be "destruction upon destruction." Jer. 4:20

The comprehensiveness of the utter devastation of that day is to be understood by the condition of the earth afterward. According to the Word of the Lord it will be "without form and void." A return to Gen. 1:1 that will be the cleansing of the earth prior to the Millennial Reign of Christ. There will be a period of utter darkness. No human beings will be found there. The Lord will cause the whole earth to be most desolate at His coming. Jer. 4:27 Even so, it is not a full end. Isaiah also spoke of the complete alteration of the face of the earth and the end of human life upon it. Isa. 24: 1 The Millennial topography of the earth will bear no likeness to today's earth. Every mountain and island will be moved and will no longer exist. Rev. 16:20, 6:14-15 It is here, at this time that the peoples of this world will try to hide from the glory of His coming. They will cry out for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them that they might not have to look on His face. Rev. 6:15 The second coming of Christ is not the casual occurrence which so many make it to be. It is an awe inspiring time, both in the glorious majesty and in the fearsome judgments that are in the earth at that time. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

RAPTURE. 49

The seventh, the last vial is poured out into the air. Rev. 16:17 Spiritually, the atmosphere surrounding our earth has been polluted for a long, long time. Satan is the prince of the power of the air and has reigned by corrupting mankind. Eph. 2:2 As with our daily battle, so Armageddon will be a war, a conflict between right and wrong, good and evil. The strength of

the enemy is not in his armies nor in their numbers. This is a war against those in authority who rule in the kingdom of darkness. The wicked spiritual forces which reign in the atmosphere. Eph. 6:12 When the Lord Jesus returns, He will be seen in the clouds of the sky. The righteous will meet Him in the clouds of the air. 1 Thess. 4:17 Small wonder if the very atmosphere of the earth be the place of the great conflict of the ages.

A loud, strong voice is heard from within the temple in heaven, coming directly from the throne of God. The throne of the Lord is lightened with constant light. It is a light which is most fascinating. It is of such tremendous power that John described it as lightening. Rev. 16:7, 11:19 The very nature of the Lord is light. A light which is eternal, ever shining. A light of such magnitude that no man has ever beheld it. It is a living light and is life giving. Natural and eternal life both depend on that blessed light. It is the throne of the Lord of glory. Therefore, it is a place of the constant revelation of the glory of the Lord. A glory which when seen on Mt. Sinai appeared to them as a great devouring fire. Ex. 24:17 Ezekiel saw it as a source of beautiful colors like the rainbow. Eze. 1:28 Color is contained in light not in the materials in which we see color. Emblazoned with color, flashing, scintillating, shining with a brightness impossible for natural man to behold that majestic light, is a light originating from the occupant of the throne. What a glorious sight. Jesus is coming with flaming fire. 2 Thess. 1:8

The message is one of finality. "It is done." This is the same tremendous voice which had commanded the angels to pour the contents of their vials. Rev. 16:1 These words are akin to the words of the Lord Jesus on Calvary's tree when He uttered those blessed words, "it is finished." John 19:30 He sealed forever the plan and purpose of the Lord. It was fully accomplished by the shedding of His blood for our redemption. The ultimate of His eternal design will be accomplished when He has gathered together His Bride, the New Jerusalem. Then, once again He will declare "it is done." Rev. 21:6

RAPTURE. 50

The ultimate, the final, the most crucial of all earthquakes will transpire at this time. It is a part of the seventh vial and the coming of our Lord Jesus.

The scriptures leave no doubt as to the severity of these judgments. Rev. 16:18 In Isaiah there are prophecies, though they were not originally directed at the last days, they fit very well into the circumstances of the last days. Isaiah mention six details all of which will be seen in the end of the age. Isa. 29:6 It is the manifestation of the anger of the Lord. There is an addition to the list which includes that of hail stones. Isa. 30:30 The extent of things shaken even reaches into heaven. Joel 2:10, Hag. 2:6 We take note that this is a promise. In other words, it is something which positively shall come to pass. Heb. 12:26 This also will demonstrate the power of the voice of the Lord. The shaking is attributed to the voice of the Lord. The shout of His coming has to be the loudest sound to have ever been heard.

The intensity of this shaking is understood by the fact that all things which are shakable will be removed, that is, changed or be taken out of the way. An event so powerful and extensive that even heaven will feel its effects. Heb. 12:27 Isaiah also prophesied of this moment of time. He was very graphic in his prediction, proclaiming that the whole of the stars of heaven would be dissolved. The heavens would roll together as a scroll. While the stars would fall from heaven. Jesus also predicted these activities taking place at the time of His coming. Mt. 24:29 Peter related that these are tied in with the day when Jesus will come as a thief in the night. It is an utter impossibility for the Lord Jesus to come like a sneak thief in the night. Note carefully the things which transpire when He comes as a thief in the night. The heavens pass away with a GREAT noise. The elements are melted because of the extreme heat of the flaming fire manifest at His coming. The topography of the earth is to be utterly changed, consumed and destroyed. That also will include all the great cities with their tall buildings, all the works of mankind will be completely cleansed from the surface of the earth. 2 Peter 3:10-12 Isaiah declared that the heavens would vanish like smoke and the earth become old like clothing. While those who dwell there would die. Isa. 51:6 When we consider all that takes place at the return of the Lord Jesus it is easy to understand that there will be no sinners in the millennium. It is completely impossible for any unsaved to live through all this.

RAPTURE. 51

“For the great day of His wrath hath come and who shall be able to stand.” Rev. 6:15 These words are uttered at a very crucial time in the end of the age. The time is, the opening of the fifth seal. The seal of martyrdom. A scene which will take place immediately before and will then be intensified during the reign of the antichrist. Under the altar John saw the souls of those who had been martyred for their faith and testimony in the Lord. Their cry will be for the avenging of their blood upon the evil forces which will murder them in that day. Rev. 6:10 Their sacrifice will receive special notice from the Lord Jesus and they will be clothed with white raiment which are robes of righteousness. At the same time they will be exhorted to exercise patience, for there are yet others called fellow servants and brethren who will be slain for the same reason. They must wait until the full complement of martyrs is completed. Rev. 6:11

The sixth seal will increase in the volume killed until all victims are exhausted at the time of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. The events which are listed under the sixth seal are to be spread over a period of time covering the entire period of the great tribulation. For instance, there will be a darkening of light and the luminaries of the heavens. One third of the sun, the moon and the stars, one third of the day and a third of the night will be darkened. Rev. 8:12 This is a warning that there is far worse to yet come. It is an act of mercy whereby the Lord is giving ample warning of that which will transpire in the future.

Periodically we hear of an asteroid which could possibly strike the earth. The scriptures speak of stars striking the earth. Most likely it is referring to asteroids. Just one star hitting the earth would completely obliterate the earth. Nevertheless, it will take place, in one form or another. Rev. 6:13 The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll completely destroying the atmosphere so necessary for all life to exist on earth. It is at this time that the topography of the earth will be completely altered. Regardless of how strong the buildings and works of men are constructed, they will be completely destroyed. Every mountain and every island will be dislodged from their current place on the face of the earth and be moved elsewhere. Rev. 6:14 It is here, at this moment of time, at the second coming of Christ that the heavens and the earth will be shaken. Heb. 12:26-27

RAPTURE. 52

At the second coming the unsaved inhabitants of this earth will know a fear which is the fear of all fears. Jesus said that the hearts of men would fail them for the fear of the things that are coming on the earth. This is an indication that the world will not be without some kind of knowledge that they are in for a terrific beating and punishment from the Lord. They show themselves to be apprehensive of the events coming on the earth. So much so, that some will die because of the fear. Luke 21:26 To pinpoint the time of these events we are told that this will take place when He comes in the clouds and all men see Him. Luke 21:27

The prophet Isaiah prophesied of that day giving us further insight to its circumstances and fierceness. It is directed to the inhabitants of the earth warning them that the Lord will do a work on the earth which will empty it completely, making it to be a waste land. Accomplished by turning it upside down, dumping its peoples. Isa. 24:1 He declared that it will be utterly emptied and spoiled, of radically changed. Isa. 24:3 All shall perish. Isa. 24:4 The cause; the wickedness and disobedience of the people of the earth. Isa. 24:5-6 The few men left are the redeemed who do not have to face the fearsome judgments of the Almighty. Men will flee from the noise of the fear, the pit and the snare are about to come upon them. They are to be captured and incarcerated. Isa. 24:17-18

The earthquake which takes place at His coming is beyond the measurement of the Richter scale. This one will come from the very foundations of the earth. It will not cease after a brief period of time. Its purpose is to utterly break down the earth, dissolve it and see to it that it is moved exceedingly. It will not quickly be over but will continue to shake until it has accomplished its purpose. Isa. 24:18-19 The earth will be shaken out of its orbit and like a drunken person, reel to and fro. In that day there will be total punishment, both on earth and the unholy hosts of high ones, satan and his forces. They will be gathered together and incarcerated for a season. Isa. 24:21-22 Then released at the close of the millennial reign of Christ at the time of the second resurrection, the resurrection of the ungodly, to be judged guilty and cast into the eternal lake of fire. Rev. 20:14-15 They are found wanting, they come short because they fail to possess the glory of the Lord.

RAPTURE. 53

"Behold He cometh with clouds." Rev. 1:7 We are not looking at clouds such as are commonly seen in the sky above us. He is coming in the clouds of heaven. These are spiritual clouds. They are noted as being the clouds of heaven. That is something more than a natural cloud. Mt. 24:30 Moses went up Mt. Sinai into a cloud which would seem to be quite natural. However, the glory, the shining presence of the Lord was made manifest in that cloud. Thus, causing it to appear to be on fire. Ex. 24:15-17 Our God is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29 The fire used in the tabernacle was never to be allowed to die. Lev. 1:7 The original fire was kindled by the glory of the Lord. Lev. 6:12 The cloud of the Lord is a visible manifestation of the shining forth, the brightness of the Lord who is light. The only true light in all of creation.

Ezekiel saw that cloud and gave a good and vivid description of it. His spiritual status at the time of his vision was excellent. "The WORD OF THE LORD came expressly," to him. What he was about to see was based solidly upon the Word. All vision and prophecy must agree with the Word or it is false. Secondly, "the hand of the Lord was upon him." What a beautiful preparation for the Spirit to reveal the glory of the Lord. Eze. 1:3 The same is made available to all who will find their way into the presence of the Lord. He first mentioned the whirlwind which most certainly impressed him. Eze. 1:4

The whirlwind can be anything from an entertaining "dust devil" to the might and power of a hurricane of great force and destructive ability. It illustrates the mighty power of the Lord. Elijah experienced the translating power of the Lord when he was taken, alive into the presence of the Lord, into heaven. 2 Kings 2:11 The whirlwind and the cloud are associated together and in extreme weather conditions, where one is found, the other is present. The whirlwind of the Lord can be a blessing or a judgment. The anger of the Lord is likened to a grievous whirlwind sent forth against the unrighteous. Jer. 23:19 A whirlwind of fear, destruction and desolation. Prov. 1:27-28 The words of Isaiah likewise describe the fearsome destruction from the Lord in the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus. Isa.

66:15 Ezekiel saw a great cloud and indeed it is a massive cloud returning with the Lord Jesus. It will include the multitude of those who have died in faith. Paul said that those who sleep in Jesus He would bring with Him when He comes. 1 Thess. 4:14 They will be a very active part of that cloud. They are also declared to be a great cloud of witnesses. Heb. 12:1 We know now that the cloud is a living active cloud of eternal beings.

RAPTURE. 54

A great cloud, and indeed it is a massive cloud. The cloud of His eternal glory. The beauty and majesty of His eternal presence. Ezekiel saw the cloud of His glory and presence. It contained a whirling, living fire. Like a wheel, turning, active, blazing and yet contained within the cloud. The very unique fire of the Lord. A fire which needs no fuel, burning, flaming of itself. Eze. 1:4 The reason being that our God is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29 It is a very integral part of His nature. The Lord will come. He has not delayed, nor put off His coming. At the predetermined time, He will return. He will not keep silent. He is coming with a shout and the voice of the archangel. The fire of His glory will precede Him. It will be like a great and tempestuous storm surrounding Him Ps. 50:3

Ezekiel's vision of the fire of the Lord is one of tremendous brilliancy. Eze. 1:4 This is not an ordinary fire, this is the fire of the Lord. When the scriptures give us these glimpses of the various aspects of the Lord's nature, we must know that they are the fullness, the completeness of whatever is made manifest. There is nothing that can exceed the brilliancy, the shining, the brightness of the light that is our Lord. God is light. 1 John 1:5 There is no other source of light. It all emanates from Him. There is none greater, no light more brilliant, absolutely none can outshine Him. He is a SUN, outshining them all. Could all their light be accumulated in one place, He would still outshine them all. Ps. 84:11 What we are seeing in the scriptures is that the glory of the Lord is seen in the cloud. Ex. 16:10

The cloud and the glory of the Lord descended on mount Sinai. Ex. 24:16 Moses dwelling in the midst of that glory assimilated it until he shone with that glory. So much so, that it became necessary to wear a vail over his face when among the children of Israel. When he went into the tabernacle before the Lord, he took it off. Ex. 34:35 Moses was saturated with the

anointing, the glory of the Lord. That glory is the glory of resurrection. The Lord Jesus was raised by the glory of the Father. Rom. 6:4 Because of the power of that glory Moses appeared, with Elijah, on the mount of transfiguration. These two men appeared in the glory of the Lord. Luke 9:30-31 Their ministry is not yet completed. They will come to represent the Law and the Prophets to the nation of Israel during the great tribulation period. They are the two witnesses. Rev. 11:3 When necessary, they will exercise their former ability to cause judgments and calamities on the earth. Actions which lead up to the second coming.

RAPTURE. 55

"They shall see the Son of man coming in the CLOUDS of heaven with POWER and GREAT GLORY." Mt. 24:30 A most spectacular event seen by the whole of mankind, whether dead or alive. The cloud of the Lord is an amazing cloud. It is both darkness and glorious light at one and the same time. Mount Sinai is a good example. There was darkness, clouds and thick darkness while the fire of the Lord burned brightly. Deut. 4:11 The pillar of the cloud led the Israelites by day then separated them from the Egyptian army by standing between them and being a bright night light to Israel while it was darkness to the Egyptians. Ex. 14:19-20 How dark was that darkness? Like that which they had experienced back in Egypt? Most certainly a darkness creating fear. Israel moved at the instigation of the cloud. Ex. 40:36 Darkness is declared to be His secret place. While at the same time there is that glorious brightness which surrounds and precedes Him. Ps. 18:11-12 Sound like the second coming? His voice heard while He sent forth hail stones and coals of fire. Ps. 18:13

The cloud of the Lord daily covered the tabernacle and was visible at night as a fire. Num. 9:16 Thus, they had consistent evidence of the presence of the Lord with them. Moses, the man in whom the glory of the Lord was visibly present, had a most desirable relationship with the Lord. He had the privilege of speaking with the Lord face to face. Conversing as the most intimate of friends. Ex. 33:11 The Lord spoke "mouth to mouth" with him. Not in deep riddles but openly and with revelation. More wonderful yet, in their meetings he would see a similitude, a likeness of the Lord. Num. 12:8

All this because he had been in the glory cloud and had become saturated with its glory. The cloud of the glory of the Lord is a cloud of life.

The coming of the Lord Jesus is to manifest His own glory and His Father's glory. That is the fullness of the glory of the Almighty. Luke 9:26 He explains that majestic manifestation of the glory of the Lord as being comparable to the lightning which flashes across the sky in bright shining bolts of glory. Luke 17:24 His coming is when He will be glorified in His saints. The living and the dead will be filled with the eternal glory of the Lord. 2 Thess. 2:10 When the Lord Jesus comes to be glorified in His saints the ungodly will be eternally separated from His presence. His coming and the punishment of the wicked are at one and the same time. 2 Thess. 1:9-10

RAPTURE. 56

“What is truth?” With these words Pilate concluded his questioning of the Lord Jesus. He then reported to the people that he had found no fault in Jesus. John 18:38 Indeed, what is truth. Truth is that which is factual, reality, certainty. The completeness, the totality of truth is found in Christ. He is the optimum, the essence of all that is truth. Truth came to this world in the form of a babe. Born of God, born of man. Grace and truth are found in Jesus. John 1:14, 17 Whatever the price, follow the exhortation of the Word and buy the truth. By doing so, one will also gain wisdom, instruction and understanding. All of them being vital essentials to the Christian walk and life. Prov. 23:23

A proper understanding pertaining to the second coming of Christ and the associated events is a must for the spiritual comprehension of every child of God. There is blessed liberty and freedom from fear in knowing the plan of the Lord for the end of the age. We need not guess concerning every unusual happening if it might be a sign that His coming is just around the corner. Jesus gave a run down of the developments which would take place toward the end. Then He said; “all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” Mt. 24:6 “What is truth.” Truth is not to be found in the traditions of men, but His Word is the pure truth, the only truth. John 17:17

Extremely great responsibility is placed upon the life of those who minister the Word of the Lord. It is not a profession but a calling and possession. A state of being possessed by the Spirit and the Word. It is even as the Lord spoke through Jeremiah the prophet saying; "he that hath my WORD, let him speak my WORD faithfully. Jer 23:31 Paul, strongly urged his son in the gospel to spend time in the study of the WORD, not the traditions of the fathers. His purpose was that Timothy might present an anointed message based upon the Word of the Lord. Without the revelation of the Spirit resting upon our study it is time spent which is akin to secular learning. The Spirit inspired men to write the book and He will most definitely inspire and reveal one in the study of the Book. "What is truth?" His WORD is truth. Give more time to the study of the Word, it will improve your preaching. Embrace its most vital truths as a source of spiritual growth. A people fed the Word will grow by the Word which they hear and assimilate. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of the Lord. Rom. 10:17

RAPTURE. 57

Diligently search the scriptures for yourself to see whether or not these things pertaining to the second coming are truth or not. His word will remain true under the very strongest of scrutiny. His Word is forever settled in heaven. Ps. 119:89 Take for instance the words of Paul; "that day shall not come, except." 2 Thess. 2:3 Then he gave two definite situations which must develop before that day can take place. In the first place there must be a great falling away, a defection from the truth and from the faith. I have deliberately used the term faith, for the church will remain popular while spirituality wanes. Because of the first, the second is made possible and that is the revelation of the antichrist.

This world leader who is to precede Christ has a vile two-fold title conveyed upon him. He is the man of sin. He is the most vile of the vile, the most ungodly of all the ungodly. He reaches a low of unrighteousness achieved by none other. He is iniquity personified. His second title is like the first, a title of ill fame. The son of perdition. He is the extreme opposite of the Lord Jesus who is the sun of righteousness. The antichrist is the man of gloom and doom. He will lead his followers into destruction. They are helpless and hopeless. He has nothing to give though he offers everything.

There is a third title which Paul attributes to him. That Wicked, capitalized, thereby making it a personal name. Its translation fully illustrates its meaning, as being the lawless one. 2 Thess. 2:8 While the governments of the world are busy passing a flood of new laws, the ungodly and lawless are defying them by acts of disobedience. The spirit of the antichrist is already in the world.

Could it be stated any more distinctly than what is recorded. Christ will abolish him, remove him violently, with spirit of His mouth, the Word. Jesus will destroy him, making to be ineffective, by the brightness, the shining forth of the glory of the return, the parousia, the rapture of the Lord Jesus. 2 Thess. 2:8 Again, it is first things first. One cannot happen without the other having taken place. The antichrist spoils the world then and only then can Christ spoil him. There will be no appearance of Christ until we have first of all, an antichrist, for Jesus will destroy him at His coming.

RAPTURE. 58

BEWARE, there is a counterfeit coming, a parousia, rapture. When His disciples were asking questions about His second coming, the very first words of the Lord Jesus uttered were words of warning. "Take heed that no man deceive you." Mt. 24:4 The great and ultimate deception will be the antichrist imitating, duplicating the second coming of Christ. He has a parousia, a rapture. The identical Greek word used for the rapture in relationship to Christ is used regarding an event put on by the powers of the evil one. "Even him, whose coming, rapture, parousia." 2 Thess. 2:9

The casual return of Christ, such as presented by some in our day fails to take into consideration the full display of the power of the Lord at His coming. The fake coming will match every expectation that people have today of the rapture of Christ. Just a little flurry of activity, then the world continuing on as it is today, with Christians eventually taking over the government and the riches of the world. That is a perfect "set up" for the ultimate con man, the deceiver, to move in and take over.

The deception will be a display of satanic works. A manifestation of "all power." That is an amazing usage of words. It is speaking to the extreme, the strong and abundant display of false signs and lying wonders which will

be demonstrated at that time. As Jannes and Jambres, up to a point, duplicated the signs of Moses before Pharaoh. So, the antichrist will appear on the scene with a sufficient display of fake signs and wonders to convince some Christians that he is Christ. 2 Thess. 2:9 He will appear at the beginning of the tribulation to establish his kingdom.

This will be the deception of the ages. Pathetically, anyone who fails to love the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ will find themselves taken in and involved in this false scheme. The key to the whole matter is an attitude toward the truth. "Buy the truth and sell it not." Prov. 23:23a Because men do not seek the truth and strongly embrace it they will be sent a lie. The big lie is soon to appear. This pseudo coming is sent by the Lord because men in the last days will reject the truth of the Word. Unrighteousness is to be preferred to righteousness. 2 Thess. 2:10-12 The Lord is very protective of His truth and expects His people to receive and believe it without equivocation. The nature and being of God alone is truth. John 1:17

Rapture. 59

Revelation, a disclosure of important information. A showing forth, an unveiling a manifestation of an object or information. The revelation of the Lord Jesus at the time of His coming is a certainty. There is no difference in the timing of His coming (parousia) and His revelation (apokalupsis) they are one and the same event. It is evident that the words may be used interchangeably by the translation of apokalupsis to the word coming. 1 Cor. 1:7 Again, the flexibility of the word is noted by its translation, appearing, all one and the same event. 1 Pet. 1:7 Revelation, appearing or coming all speak of that glorious time when the Lord Jesus will be seen coming for His redeemed. Titus 2:13

The man of sin, the antichrist in his great deception will also have his moment of revelation. As Christ will be revealed to the world, so the antichrist will reveal himself to the world and proclaim himself to be the Christ of God. He has a definite, positive time when he will be revealed. 2 Thess. 2:6 His fall and manifestation are a key to the beginning of the tribulation period. 2 Thess. 2:3 This fallen man is like Lucifer and Judas, both of whom had positions of leadership in the kingdom of God. The worst

possible opposition does not come from the outside but inside. The reproach of an enemy is anticipated. The attack of a friend is shocking. How valuable their companionship had been, until enmity was manifest.

Ps. 55:12-14

The second coming of the Lord Jesus is an event, which from eternity, has been scheduled to transpire at a set time. Paul referred to it as “the mystery of His will.” Which will be worked out according to His own good pleasure. A matter which is fulfilled in the sending of His own Son into the world. Eph. 1:9 The consummation of His resolve will take place when the time elements concerning the earth will have been completed, and not before. It is called “the dispensation of the fullness of times.” Eph. 1:10 The interest and concern of the Lord for a proper measurement of days and years is demonstrated in His creation of the luminaries in the heavens. Gen. 1:14 The birth and death of Jesus was scheduled by the Father and fit perfectly into His plan. Gal. 4:4 Jesus our Passover was crucified as the Passover lamb was being prepared. 1 Cor. 5:7 That day and hour are completely in the hands of the Father and He will execute His plan, to a perfection, when the day comes. Mt. 24:36

RAPTURE. 60

The appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ is a great and significant event scheduled for the end of the age. The word itself is important for it relates to the visible coming of the Lord Jesus. The word as used by Paul, in the Greek, is “epiphanea,” meaning a manifestation or as translated, an appearing. He also verified the fact of the time element in the coming of Christ. It is a scheduled event on the calendar of the Father which will not, by any means, be altered. No work of man or powers that be, can hinder or deter the second coming. It is a predetermined and established coming. When that precise moment arrives the Lord will show, make known, exactly who is the King of kings, the only Potentate, the Lord of lords to the whole of the universe and to the people of all times past. 1 Tim. 6:15

Paul had given instructions to Timothy with great anticipation that he would follow them unto the very end. Since then, every generation of believers have taken his words to heart and applied them to their own walk with

Christ. The church of today should be no exception. More than any who lived in the past we are closer to His coming. It is of extreme importance that we hear the command and keep the commandments which have been given, perfectly, completely until His appearing (epiphanea.) Thus, once again, we see that His coming is highly visible and not invisible, or secretive. 1 Tim. 6:14 When He comes, in the clouds, every eye in heaven, hell and on earth shall see Him. Rev. 1:7

The eternal establishment of the “blessed hope” is the continual anticipation of the church. Its consummation is the millennial reign of Christ and the subsequent new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness prevails. 2 Peter 3:13 This arrangement begins with the glorious appearing (epiphanea) of the Lord Jesus. Titus 2:13 Once again, it is very evident that His coming is at the conclusion of the tribulation period. For then and only then could he establish His kingdom on earth. The only living, those who survive the tribulation period will be the Bride of Christ who is taken by Him into the wilderness. Rev. 12 They are a people who fully live in the “grace of God”. They shun all ungodliness. They are free from the lust of the world. Living soberly and righteously in the present world. They are a separated and consecrated people who have met the standard of holiness taught by the Word of the Lord. It is time for the church to begin to wake up to the fact that we have been called to holiness, particularly in these last days. He gave Himself willingly for a definite purpose and that was that he might have a people who are of the same heart and mind.

RAPTURE. 61

The true church will have reached the fullness of the stature of the measure of the Man, Christ Jesus, prior to the beginning of the tribulation. She is the woman of Revelation twelve. She is the ultimate work of redemption. All that the Lord has determined to accomplish in this world will reach its climax in the end of the age. The most wonderful, the most gorgeous of all is that married woman, His Bride. Outstanding, in her many spiritual achievements is the resounding unity of the faith (that which is believed, in other words doctrine.) That in itself is a miracle. Eph. 4:13 The body of Christ must come to total and perfect harmony. A body unified in every aspect, perfectly blended together. Speaking, teaching, preaching the same doctrine. A church without even the hint of a schism, split or the slightest

indication of any disagreement. Perfectly united in every portion of Word and Spirit. 1 Cor. 1:10

Every member of the five-fold ministry bears the divine responsibility of leading the saints to perfection. They have a God given calling to minister to the body in a manner which will edify the body, not personal ambitions. They are the gift of the Lord to the church, the church is not the gift of the Lord to them. We not to be lord's over the flock, but serve. Eph. 4:11-12

A living and personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus is vital to the perfecting of the bride. Knowing Christ is a prerequisite to being in His bride. Eph. 4:13b The whole purpose of the gospel is that the glorious light of God might shine into our hearts revealing the Lord Jesus. 2 Cor. 4:6 A casual knowledge is not sufficient. There must be an intimate understanding of His person and nature. John stated; that when He appears we shall be like Him. He is coming for a people, a living group who are like Him. 1 John 3:2 Note, he did not say, be made like Him, but like Him. Paul was determined to press toward the prize of the "High Calling" which is found in the Lord Jesus. That is, the perfections which are found in the Lord Jesus. Phil. 3:14-15 Paul had a vision which reached beyond a casual Christianity. He was extremely intense in his search to know the Lord. He was willing to lose all things, to count them as a sacrifice that he might achieve "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Phil. 3:8 He was fervent in his search for the reality found in Jesus.

RAPTURE. 62

The interest and anticipation of the church world has been centered on the coming of the Lord Jesus a second time, for a very considerable period of time. Is it because of the "blessed hope" of seeing the Lord Jesus in all of his majesty and glory? Or is that one might escape the coming tribulation? Jesus left a message, a warning for those who live in the last days. It is a word of preparedness, reading the fulfillment of the signs given in the Word and anticipating by the activities and conditions of the world around us that the day of the "blessed hope" is approaching. Be ready. Luke 12:40

The coupling of the word brightness (epiphaneia, appearing, or brightness) with coming (parousia, coming or rapture) by Paul in 2 Thess. 2:8 confirmed the truth that there is but one event to be identified as the second coming of the Lord Jesus. These are not two events but one and the same. It is well that we reiterate here that His coming is the utter destruction of all forces that are linked to the powers of darkness, the devil. First, that ungodly world leader, seen in the book of Revelation must appear on the scene. Then after he has run his course he will be destroyed by the very brightness of the coming of Christ.

The display of the glory of the Lord, the light of His presence at His second coming will be the most brilliant display of light ever seen. In the first place God is light. An eternal luminous glow of exceeding great glory shines forth from His being. Described by in the Psalms as a Sun. Ps. 84:11 That by no means indicates in any way that the God of heaven is the sun. He is far more brilliant than our sun. The description of the Lord and of His throne given by Ezekiel is most dramatic and glorious in its display of sun like glory. Fire, because our God is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29 Active flaming fire, accompanied by great brightness. Eze. 1:4 Then he saw the throne with a man of glory occupying it. He saw the man of fire, a fire which was emitting a most brilliant light. Eze. 1:27 Is it any wonder then, that when Jesus appears He will come as the lightning shines out of the east unto the west. Mt. 24:27 Especially so, when we see the ark of the covenant, the Lord Jesus, revealed in heaven that revelation is accompanied by multiple flashes of lightning, voices and thundering. Rev. 11:19 God is light, no, light is not God but His being is light. There is no darkness to be found in Him. 1 John 1:5 Because His presence is light, He dwells in light. 1 Tim. 6:16

The majestic glory of the Lord is also very evident in the life of the Lord Jesus. The annunciation of His birth was given to the shepherds by the angel of the Lord whose presence was accompanied by a great light flashed and which lightened the area in which they were gathered. Luke 2:9 From the very beginning the glory of the Lord was to be made manifest in the life of the Lord Jesus.

RAPTURE. 63

Jesus spoke of His return and referred to it as coming in glory. We have seen what the scriptures have to say about the splendor and the majesty which accompany Him when He returns. His return is to be spectacular with great glory and with power. Luke 21:27 The evidence of His coming will be seen in the heavens in a display of glory and brilliant light accompanied by great power. It is important that we see that He comes and will be visible to the tribes of the earth. The fact that they see and know what is taking place will cause great consternation, anguish and fear in the hearts of the inhabitants of the earth. Mt. 24:30

His return will be in the fullness of the glory of the Father. That glory is a shared glory The Father will gladly bestow the fullness of His glory upon His son and manifest it at His return. Mark 8:38 Jesus said that He would come in the glory of His Father and in His own glory. Luke 9:26 Not only does He come in all the glory that heaven can impart to Him but He will also be seen sitting upon the throne of His glory. Mt. 25:31 The throne of His awesome glory will also become a throne of judgment where the individuals of the nations of the world will be separated one from another in flocks as sheep and goats. The sheep are located at His right hand while the goats are placed to the left. Those on the right hand are welcomed abundantly into His kingdom. Mt. 25:31-34 Those on the left were called cursed and ordered into everlasting fire, which had not been prepared for them but for the devil. MT. 25:41 This is verified by the word of the Lord Jesus when He declared His coming to be a time of rewards. Each individual receiving just compensation for their actions, good and bad. Mt. 16:27

His coming permanently seals the eternal condition of every individual. The scripture just quoted is repeated again in Rev. 22:12 with the addition that shows us that those who are unclean and unholy will eternally remain in that condition. While the righteous will continue in their righteousness, forever. Rev. 22:11 Paul's second letter to Timothy will also verify the fact that His coming is the moment of everlasting decision, the time of judgment. The Lord Jesus is destined to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and at the time of the establishment of His kingdom. 2 Tim. 4:1 Not only will the living see the great events which take place at His

coming but the dead, all who are in their graves, righteous and unrighteous, shall hear the resurrection call. John 5:28-29

RAPTURE. 64

Jesus spoke of the resurrection of life in general terms. He did not give a time element for the two resurrections. He did however reveal a status of the resurrected which is interesting. In response to the Sadducees (sad-u-see. Old joke. Excuse the aside.) The children of the resurrection do not marry in heaven. Luke 20:35 They will never die again. They are equal to the angels. Luke 20:36 Angels cannot marry, therefore cannot reproduce. This being so, how could the sons of God (Gen. 6:4) possibly be angels? They were not angels who married the daughters of men then, nor have they ever, nor will they in the future. (Forgive the rabbit trail.) Mt. 22:30 Mark 12:25

At the time of His coming the righteous come forth immediately, in the first resurrection, the resurrection of life. John 5:29 This resurrection will take place at the moment of His second coming. ALL which are in their graves shall hear His voice. The only first resurrection possible is that of the righteous dead and is all inclusive of the righteous dead. Those who cannot respond to it must await the resurrection of damnation. John 5:29 There will not be a series of resurrections, only two. Rev. 20:5b-6 The unrighteous will not be resurrected until after the Millennium, the resurrection of damnation. Rev. 20:5a The first resurrection will be the conclusion of life on earth as it is now. It will also usher in the thousand years where all who are raised from the dead in the first resurrection will live and reign with Him for that thousand years. Rev. 20:5

It is the Apostle Paul who begins to unravel the mystery for us. He stated that not all shall be sleeping, or in the grave at the coming of Christ. However, all, sleeping or living shall be changed. 1 Cor 15:51 Preceding this statement and in this chapter he has given a list of what that change will be like. He used an illustration of something with which they all were well acquainted. A seed planted in the ground dies, but the germ of life within it will cause it to spring up to life again. That is a constant witness of the future resurrection of those who are in Christ. 1 Cor. 15:36-37 As with all things in creation, the Lord is a God of infinite variety. Men are still

discovering new species of animal and plant life. Even as no two human beings have the same DNA, nor finger prints, nor voice prints, nor retinas of the eye, all of which express our differences and our individuality. So in the resurrection.

RAPTURE. 65

Heaven will not be occupied by a gathering of clones, look alike's but as always with the Lord there will be an endless variety. Best of all there will be the constant glory and majesty of the Lord manifest in each and every life there. The imprint of the Lord, the likeness of His eternal being, character and person will be seen in each and every occupant of that heavenly kingdom. We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Wonderfully, we shall bear His image and character throughout eternity. 1 John 3:2 Glorious and marvelous future for all the redeemed. The body which shall be is not the body of flesh which we now occupy. The process of resurrection and transformation will produce a new body, yet in appearance, it has to bear a similarity to the seed which had been planted. Its composition and capabilities will be identical to the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor. 15:38

The great variety and majestic splendor of the glorified body is evidenced in the description given by Paul to the Corinthians. 1 Cor. 15:40 His first and most glorious are those who will have a sun like glory. We see them as the Bride of Christ in Revelation twelve. There is a sprinkling of individuals who touched that extreme manifestation of the glory of the Lord. The face of Moses shone with the glory of the Lord. Ex. 34:29-30 The face of Stephen when called before the council was like unto an angel. What gave him that appearance other than the glory of the Lord. Acts 6:15 Jesus, on the mount of transfiguration was transformed until the everlasting glory of the Lord was manifest in Him. Mt. 17:2 Mark 9:2 The sun like glory is the greatest and most intense of the glory which will be revealed in the resurrected body.

The glory of the moon. A reflected glory. A lesser glory yet glorious. A type of the crucified Lamb of God. The moon is a dead body. Monthly it makes manifest the process of death and resurrection. Like the visage of the Lord Jesus it is pock marked and showing evidence of being struck by asteroids, etc. Strange, that among mankind, the moon is a symbol of love.

The infinite variety that we find in the Lord is seen in the stars. Literally, suns among which there are no two which are identical. Whatever glory one is allotted in heaven, none will be dissatisfied with their position and glory. 1 Cor. 15:40

RAPTURE. 66

“We shall all be changed.” 1 Cor. 15:51 The seed, the body of the deceased, is contrasted with what it was when planted and what it will be when resurrected. It is planted, in death, already in the process of corruption. In life, there may be many who boast of their physique or beauty, but in death all come to one common denominator, corruption. In resurrection, just the opposite is true. The seed which had been planted is raised to receive a body which will never again know death or corruption. 1 Cor. 15:42

The body occupied in life here on earth will go down in defeat. It is overcome by death. All the dignity, the grace, the beauty of the human body is overwhelmed as the result of Adam's fall conquers its human frailty and death reigns. In resurrection it is triumphant over the grave and death. It will then be a glorified body. Motivated and filled, saturated with the glory of the Lord. The ravages of sin, sickness and death can never touch the glorified body. They will not even exist in the new heavens and the new earth. v. 43

The planting of the body demonstrates its weakness. Its inability to defeat sickness, disease and old age. At its best, the human body is temporary and will die with one cause or another. Outside of the coming of Christ and the rapture, death is inescapable. In bringing forth from the grave the new body, the miraculous power of the Lord over the last enemy, death, is displayed. Having been raised by the power of the Lord the glorified body lives by that same power. v.43

As there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. The natural body is limited, the spiritual body is not bound with restrictions of the natural. Take for instance the appearance of the Lord Jesus in the room where His disciples were gathered, “the doors being shut.” John 20:27 It obvious that the resurrected body is of different molecular structure than the human body. It does not have the same restrictions that we now have. Yet, the

resurrected body of the Lord Jesus was a body of flesh and bones. Luke 24:39 Missing from the resurrected body is the life of the flesh, the blood. Lev. 17:11 Replacing the blood will be the Holy Spirit in His completeness. Rom. 8:10-11 Jesus is the resurrection and the life. John 11:25 In Him we have life, now and throughout eternity. All who have been born of the Spirit have the seed of life eternal in them and will come out of the grave at the first resurrection.

RAPTURE. 67

There is a natural body. We are well acquainted with the body of flesh. Our life is in this body of flesh. We have learned its capabilities and its limitations. Its health and its sicknesses. Its life and its death. It was created by the Lord out of the dust of the earth. It will return to the dust of the earth. Eccl. 12:7 It is natural, earthly and carnal. We consider it to be very real and to express who we are.

There is a spiritual body which is much more real than the natural body. The human traits and weaknesses seen in the natural body will never be found in the eternal spiritual life and body. The spiritual is the real substance, the natural is but a transitory shadow. It is here today and gone all too soon. Reality is found in that which is everlasting. Jesus said; that God Himself is a Spirit. John 4:24 This vile body of the flesh will be gloriously changed into the same type of a spiritual body as that possessed by the Lord Jesus. Phil. 3:21 The spiritual body will bear the likeness of the invisible God. It is eternal, contrasting the current temporary state of the human body. It is immortal, transformed from being a mortal body with the sentence of death pronounced on it. The spiritual body is as everlasting as the One who twice created it. The spiritual; body, due to its constant linkage with the Lord will be able to fully partake of His wisdom and knowledge.

1 Tim. 1:17

It is vital that we properly understand the change which is made at the time of the first resurrection. The change from mortal to immortal is that which will be accomplished instantaneously, In a moment, Strong explains it as an "atom" of time. It is so quick that it defies measurement by mans time. The twinkling of an eye as a jerk of the eye, or an instant. The change comes quickly, immediately with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. 1 Cor. 15:52

Be aware that the subject here is not the second coming but the resurrection of the dead in Christ. The second coming is not accomplished in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. There is a definite, positive period of time necessary for the events which transpire at His coming to be fulfilled. A time element is given in the words of Revelation concerning the seventh trumpet, "in the days, when he shall begin to sound." Rev. 10:7 The seven last plagues must be poured out under the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The sixth plague gathers the ungodly to the battle of Armageddon. Rev. 16:14-16 This is at His coming. The seventh angel causes a voice to be heard from the temple, proclaiming that "it is done." That is it, that is the final act of His coming. Rev. 16:17

RAPTURE. 68

The word "appearance" (Greek, epiphaneia) is also use in reference to His second coming. It is time to emphasis His coming from the standpoint of His appearing. Incidentally, this word, to appear strongly shows us that what takes place at His appearing is highly and totally visible. Titus called it the blessed hope. Surely a time of great ecstasy, expressed by the resurrected and the translated. It is the fulfillment of the age long expectation of all who are in Christ Jesus. The grand moment of the reuniting of the spirit of those who have gone to be with Jesus with a new and spiritual, eternal body. Titus 2:13 The mortal body will be replaced by an immortal body. The corrupted will have been cloaked with incorruption. Death will have been totally defeated and life, HIS LIFE, will prevail in all who look forward to His appearing with great anticipation. 1 Cor. 15:53-54

The moment of His appearing is of tremendous importance to us because of what will transpire at His appearing. It will be the time of an eternal judgment of those who are in the grave and those who are living at that moment. 2 Tim. 4:1 It is a day which has been set, established and will not be changed. A time when the measurement of judgment will be the Lord Jesus. It will be a righteous or just decision made by comparison with the righteousness found in the Lord Jesus. Acts 17:31 None will escape the responsibility of given an account of their acceptance or rejection of the Lord Jesus as savior and redeemer. Rom. 14:12 Every man, living or dead will kneel before the Lord Jesus and every tongue will confess Jesus to be Lord, that the Father might be glorified. Phil. 2:10-11 The secret things,

those things which are hidden from the eyes of men will be revealed and judgment will be passed on them. Rom. 2:16

How will He judge the heathen with equity? Paul wrote that those who are to be justified by the Law, must be doers of the Law and not hearers only. The heathen, the Gentiles who did not have the Law will be judged by their adherence to the righteousness of the Law. Every man has a conscience which speaks to him of that which is right or wrong. Among all the peoples of the earth there is a tribal code of ethics or custom which relates to actions toward one another. If they follow the dictates of their customs and their conscience and conducted themselves according to the righteousness of the Law, they are justified. But then, how many follow the dictates of the inner man? Rom. 2:13-15 Ye must be born again.

RAPTURE. 69

Paul sounded like a military commander when he exhorted Timothy to fight a good fight of faith. Our subject comes into view when Paul mentioned that he was to maintain his standard of Christian living until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Tim. 6:14 Thus we see the importance of the continuance of Christian standards right up to and until the second coming of the Lord Jesus. At which time it will be revealed that He is the only Potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. 1 Tim. 6:15 He will establish His kingdom here on earth for a thousand years. He will reign without opposition. His coming and the establishment of His kingdom are synonymous. At the time of the separating of the sheep from the goats. The sheep are invited to inherit the kingdom. Mt. 25:32-34 Thus, the kingdom comes with His appearing. Paul associated the appearing and the kingdom as one event. 2 Tim. 4:1

The faith of the saints is to be tested until Christ appears in glory and power at His second coming. The worth of tested faith is of far greater value than gold. Both of which are to be tested by fire. 1 Peter 1:7 As has been noted, the tribulation period will be a time of testing by fire for the saints who find themselves in that testing time. There is no difference between His appearing, His rapture and His revelation. They are one and the same event which will take place at the conclusion of the great tribulation. Mt. 24:29-31

One event with a double effect. The day of His coming will be a day of utter destruction for the ungodly. It is a time of the manifestation of the fiery presence of the Lord. All that can be destroyed by fire will be utterly consumed. The wicked will be burned like stubble, bringing life as it is now on earth to its conclusion. Mal. 4:1 On the other hand, that which is utter chaos and annihilation to the ungodly, is a glorious moment for the redeemed. For those who belong to Christ, who give reverence and honor to His name, it will be the rising of the SUN of righteousness. The revelation of the fullness of the glory of the Lord in His people. Mal. 4:2 As our sun warms the earth and supplies light for life. So the LORD God, who is a sun and shield, (Ps. 84:11) will give life to those who died in faith, and will bring forth their bodies in resurrection power, in newness of life. Natural life is maintained by the sun. Spiritual life is in the God who is the source of all light and in His Son who is the light of the world. John 8:12 He is the bright and morning star. Rev. 2:28, 22:16

RAPTURE. 70

Consequences, good and bad, of the blowing of the seventh trumpet, the last. The pronouncement of a change in the kingdoms of this world. Leadership changed from that which is temporal to that which is eternal. His coming will initiate the long anticipated kingdom of God on earth. Rev. 11:15 This could only take place at the conclusion of the tribulation period and the beginning of the Millennium. The Lord is praised because He has exercised His tremendous power in the resurrection of the righteous and the destruction of the unrighteous reign of the antichrist. Rev. 11:17

John was introduced to a world of angry nations. Rev. 11:18 With the opening of the second seal a spirit of anger and warfare has been loosed upon the earth. Rev. 6:3-4 Today it is much in evidence in the rage which burns in the hearts of the peoples of this world. From the nations, to the homes and the roads, rage is made manifest without restraint. Senseless murders and warfare are rampant, world wide. Who knows where, or in what country the next act of terror will be displayed. The epitome, is when those of the same religion kill one another because of doctrinal differences. If they do not respect their own, what concern will they have for Christians?

The second coming, among other things, is a time of the display of the wrath of the Lord. The nations will have challenged Him and rejected Him to such a degree that the only alternative will be His judgment upon them. There is an end to His love and mercy for this world. By the time of the second coming the world will have displayed itself to be totally against the Lord. It is here that the peoples of the earth dash for places of hiding, fearing the wrath of God that will be displayed at the coming of Christ. Rev. 6:15-17 Even the gentle lamb like nature of the Lord Jesus has reached its climax and a wrathful lamb is made known. Accompanying the sounding of the last trumpet there are seven last plagues which will complete the wrath of the Lord. These plagues are world wide. No one will escape them. They fill up or consummate the wrath of the Lord against the antichrist and his cohorts. Rev. 15:1 The wrath of the Lord is a just anger. The peoples of the earth will have been well warned of the impending judgments of the wrath of God. They will have been given every opportunity to repent and know the Lord as their savior. They have no excuse, nor right to blame the Lord for their predicament, they have brought it upon themselves.

RAPTURE. 71

The prophecy of Joel and the battle of Armageddon. The name of this clash is used just the once in Rev. 16:16 It is the satanically inspired preparation of the nations to try to prevent or defeat the second coming of Christ. Rev. 16:15 As usual, the actions of satan are thwarted and the Lord assembles them into this place called Armageddon. It is the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Rev. 16:14 It is that moment when the angel with the seventh vial will pour out the last vial.

The second chapter of Joel is introduced with the blowing of a trumpet. Joel 2:1 We find that there are seven trumpets blown in the book of Revelation, all of which must sound before the second coming. Rev. 8:2 He called it "the day of the Lord." Paul used the same statement in reference to the time when Jesus will come as a thief in the night. He too, called it "the day of the Lord." 1 Thess. 5:2

The time of the coming of Christ is a time of great fear on the earth. To depict the peoples of the earth as trembling is to put it mildly. The holes in

the rocks and the caves and dens, the basements and bomb shelters will be over crowded in that day by people trying to hide from His majestic appearing. Isa. 2:19 Jesus verified this blanket of fear covering the whole earth and the consequence of an excessive great fear. Lk. 21:26 The heavens will shake. The earth will quake. Mankind will tremble to such a strong degree that their hearts will give out because of excessive great fear. The kind where one wants to cry out or scream and cannot. Run and cannot even move.

The day of the coming of Christ is a day of exceeding great contrasts. It is to be a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. In reference to this gross darkness Strong gave it the figurative meaning of; "misery, destruction, death, ignorance, sorrow and wickedness." All of these are very descriptive of the happenings of that day. Mount Sinai was covered with darkness and thick clouds out of which the fire of the Lord burned, Deut. 5:22 Depending upon a persons position, the cloud of the Lord can be excessively dark or gloriously bright and shining. Ex. 14:20 The Lord Jesus, the angel of the harvest is seen as one sitting on a white (leukos, from luke, light.) cloud or a cloud of brilliant light. Rev. 14:14

RAPTURE. 72

A people. The word people is generally used in the old testament as referring to God's people, in contrast to the gentiles or heathen. This great and strong people are the people of the Lord. Joel 2:2 They are the armies of heaven who accompany Him. Riding white (leukos, light) horses, clothed in linen (righteousness), white (leukos, light) and pure. Rev. 19:14 The light manifest in these armies (angelic and redeemed humans) is the very light of God in all of its splendor and glory. The being of God is light. 1 John 1:5 Not only the Wicked one will be destroyed at the coming of the Lord Jesus but all sinners. It is here that the destruction is accomplished by the "brightness (epiphaneia, manifestation, appearing, brightness) of His coming (parousia, coming.) 2 Thess. 2:8 What a display of light and glory as these massive armies come from heaven. The mighty, majestic display of light shining forth from them is over whelming.

Coming in fire. This army is preceded by a destroying fire. Little wonder, for the Lord is an all consuming fire. Heb. 12:29 The Psalmist when proclaiming the Lord as King used similar language, “a fire goes before Him and burns up His enemies. His lightnings enlightened the world and the earth saw and trembled.” Ps. 93:1-4 A most awesome event. He will come with fire to manifest His displeasure with great fury.

He will rebuke with fire and the slain by His sword and fire will be many. Isa. 66:15-16 There is more than ample witness from the Word that Jesus is indeed to be revealed (apokalupsis) by fire. Those who do not know Him and those who refuse to obey the gospel will be completely destroyed when He comes in flaming fire. 2 Thess. 1:8

The land, previous to their visit is green and luscious. After they have passed by, it is nothing but a desolate wilderness. That speaks of utter and complete change. It follows the pattern shown in the scriptures of the complete devastation wrought at the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus. Joel 2:3 Twice the book of Revelation tells of the complete alteration of the topography of the earth where the islands and the mountains are removed out of their customary places. Rev. 6:14, 16:20

The sight of this fierce army is in itself frightening. They gallop like cavalry, in perfect unbroken rank. There is no obstacle that can stop them. They ride easily over the mountains . Their sound is like that of the fire consuming the stubble. They appear as a great and mighty army prepared to do battle. Woe to those who would try to resist them. Joel 2: 4-5

RAPTURE. 73

This is a great army of tremendous ability and strength. The people against whom they do battle do not stand a chance of victory or of escaping defeat at the hands of this great battle force. The reaction of their enemy is one of abject torment and fear. Their faces show the effect of having faced the flames of judgment. Joel. 2:6

Not all old testament prophecies have just one fulfillment. Some have a last day connotation reaching down to the end of the age. The Lord “sent a word unto Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.” Isa. 9:8 A prophecy

directed at one but being fulfilled in another. Or perhaps, having an even greater, a more complete fulfillment in the second. Isaiah prophesied to ancient Babylon, It has a greater meaning and completion in last day Babylon and its political structure.

Isaiah wrote of the day of the LORD with very similar language as Joel. A gathering of both armies. A great noise heard in the mountains. Isa. 13:4 He is declaring the coming of the Lord with weapons of utter destruction. Consider carefully the significant result of this visitation, “to destroy the whole land.” Isa. 13:5 They are called upon to howl, to cry out in anguish, to wail because the day of the Lord is a day of destruction. Isa. 13:6

One of the catastrophes predominant among mankind at the coming of the Lord Jesus is that their hearts would fail them for fear. Luke 21:26 Isaiah said that their hands would become weak and their hearts would melt, or liquefy. Filled with fear and totally incapable of responding in battle. Isa. 13:7 They are filled with great pain and sorrow. When they look at one another they see faces which are covered with flaming fire, the fire of judgment, causing the face to be blackened. Joel 2:6 This may seem like severe punishment, but we must remember the condition of the world at the time of His coming. The hearts of the people are completely wicked. They have taken the antichrist and his mark to be their hope and god. Therefore, “Upon the wicked He will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.” Ps. 11:6 The day of the LORD, the day of His coming will not be a pleasant day for the wicked. It is judgment day for all the ungodly. A day of reckoning and retribution for a life lived in wickedness and sin.

RAPTURE. 74

The rapture will lead to the kingdom age, the millennium, a thousand years of the reign of Christ on the earth. There will be no unsaved there. They would not like it if they could get in. The righteous will dwell there. Prov. 2:21 It is an entirely different story for the sinner. They will be cut off and uprooted from the earth. Prov. 2:22 Isaiah embraced the same doctrine. He prophesied of that “day of the LORD” as being a time of the display of the cruel wrath and the fierce anger of the LORD. The land would be made to be laid waste and in ruin. The peoples of the earth are to be utterly

destroyed, no sinners will be found in the Millennium. They will all perish at the second coming of Christ. Isa. 13:9

Let's take a good hard look at His second coming. A situation which will not happen until the close of the tribulation period. It is here that His saints are all gathered together. Mt. 24:29-31 His coming is so tumultuous and the catastrophe's so great that it would be impossible for anyone not gathered unto Him, at that time, to continue to live on this earth. Joel spoke of a shaking and trembling of the universe as well as the earth. The sun, moon and stars darkened. The voice of the Lord heard preceding His army. His camp is huge. A great multitude of the redeemed and angels. Those doing His will are people of great strength, His strength. It is a great and exceedingly terrible day. Who can stand in it? The answer of course, is no one. Joel 2:10-11 no sinner will ever find his way into the kingdom of God!

Now let us consider this. The battle of Armageddon and the second coming are one and the same event. The field of battle is Armageddon. Rev. 16:16 The events agree with Matthew and Joel. Frightening signs and happenings all of which are not only world wide but occur in the universe as well. It is here that the antichrist and the false prophet are captured and tossed into the lake of fire. Rev. 19:20 The remnant of humanity are then to be slain by the sword of the rider of the white horse. Rev. 19:21 This remnant are those who took the number, name or mark of the antichrist. Without question, every unsaved individual will have been marked before the close of the tribulation period. ALL the ungodly are slain. The sword proceeding from His mouth is the WORD of the Lord which originates with the Lord Jesus. Rev. 1:16, 19:13 John saw and identified the leader of the hosts of the Lord. The Faithful, the True, the righteous judge. It is an impossibility for there to be even one sinner in the Millennium.

RAPTURE. 75

The description of the method of warfare used by this great army and their capabilities is not necessarily something which they will have to do in order to accomplish victory. It is symbolic language showing the unstoppable advancement of the Lord's army. Joel 2:7-9 We have noted repeatedly that the Lord Jesus will return as flaming fire taking vengeance on all who know not the Lord and the disobedient. 2 Thes. 1:8

We have example of this type of instantaneous judgment of the disobedient. For instance, the offering of false, strange, a man made fire before the Lord caused the immediate death of Nadab and Abihu. Lev. 10:1-2 Also with the two hundred fifty who offered rebels who offered incense before the Lord and were destroyed by the fire of the Lord. Num. 16:1-35 It makes no difference whether few or a multitude, when fighting against the Lord, there will be immediate judgment.

The question which we need to answer is, “who can abide,” that day? Let’s pluck some thoughts from Nahum chapter one. The prophecy, while directed to Nineveh, we find that there are some obvious statements which portray our subject beautifully. First, there will come a man out of them. He typifies the man of sin, the son of perdition. The antichrist will come out of the church. He will be an evil man and will contrive to do wickedly. His purposes are totally vile and against the Lord. Nah. 1:11

The prophet proclaimed the nature of the Lord when faced with an enemy. The Lord is jealous, a righteous jealousy. He “has said thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Ex. 20:3 To worship other beings, articles or objects is to provoke Him to jealousy. Secondly, the Lord will avenge wrong doing, whether against Himself or His people. He is very protective and will display His fury against those who do Him or His people harm. Woe to those who would be an adversary of the Lord’s. He will display His mighty wrath and will display His vengeance against them. Nah. 1:2 Mind you, that when it is time for this mighty display of wrath and punishment He will have dealt with mankind for over six thousand years. He is indeed slow to anger. However, He will take unto Himself His tremendous power and display His mighty anger against all ungodliness. He will not acquit, there is no forgiveness for those who join the ranks of the antichrist. Nah. 1:3a

RAPTURE. 76

His coming is in a cloud of glory and with great power. Mt. 24:30 There is an aspect of the cloud which will beautify the majesty of His coming. In the promise of the Lord to never again destroy the earth by flood He said; when I bring a cloud over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud. Gen. 9:14

Should there be any less a display in the cloud of His glory at the time of His coming?

When we consider the glory of the cloud it is no wonder that the high priest became infuriated at the words of the Lord Jesus in relationship to His coming when He said; you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of glory. The knowledge of the high priest would have embraced: -

The experience of Israel in the wilderness where the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. How interesting. On the third day. Ex. 19:16 The second coming of Christ will introduce the third day or the Millennium. A day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. 2 Peter 3:8 After two days (the Gospel dispensation, a duration of 2000 years) the resurrection and His coming will take place. Hos. 6:2 The third day we will live before Him in His kingdom here on the earth. The circumstances of that day are not dissimilar with the manifestations at the second coming. Thunders, lightning's, a thick cloud and the sounding of the trumpet of the Lord. Which resulted in a great fear among the children of Israel. Ex. 19:16

The high priest would have remembered the history of his people and their visit to that awesome mount Sinai where the glory of the Lord descended and Moses entered into it. Ex. 24:16 The six days represent the sojourn of humanity on the earth. The seventh day that day of rest, the one thousand years of the Millennial reign of Christ on the earth. Note, the Lord spoke with Him on the seventh day. In his mountain top experience Moses was to meet with the Lord face to face as a man with his friend. Ex. 33:11 The mountain trip brought a great change into the life of Moses. Not only did he enter into the glory but it entered into him. He became saturated with the glory of the Lord. Ex. 34:33-35 If the Law had a glory, and it did. How much more glorious is that which excelleth. So much so that it dispels the brightness of the glory of the Law. 2 Cor. 3:10 That glory was received by the man Moses. The current glory is ours in Christ. Do we have it?

RAPTURE. 77

The high priest would have recalled the leadership and guidance of the cloud in the wilderness. It was the awesome presence of the Lord. The glory of the LORD was made known in the pillar of fire and the cloud. Ex. 16:10 The LORD was their personal guide as He clothed Himself with the cloud. Ex. 13:21 On the day of the dedication of the tabernacle the cloud of the Lord came upon it and remained. Num. 9:16 The cloud became their tour guide as they moved only when it moved. Num. 9:18 He would have recalled the descent of the cloud on the tabernacle at its dedication. 2 Chr. 7:1-2 The experiences of the nation and individuals with the cloud were many and varied.

Jesus is to return in the clouds of heaven, the spirits of the just made perfect and the angelic hosts of His kingdom. He will appear with the fullness of the glory of the Lord and in the completeness of His power. Mt. 24:30 He is to be revealed from heaven accompanied by His angels of strength and power. 2 Thess. 1:7 Those who sleep, that is their physical bodies are in repose in the grave, will likewise be in that number who come with Him. 1 Thess. 4:14

He will return as the Son of man, in all of His heavenly regal, power and glory and will occupy the throne of His glory. Mt. 25:31 Jesus in His prayer requested that the Father once again make Him to be the recipient of the Father's glory. A glory which He possessed from before the existence of the world, but was laid aside to accomplish the work of salvation. John 17:5 This was an action which took place in eternity. From the time when He dedicated Himself to become the Lamb of God. In the eternal mind and purpose of God, Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world. Rev. 13:8 That would have assured a Lamb of redemption for all mankind from the very beginning of the history of the world. What had not yet taken place was assured and completed in the mind and intent of the Lord. The scenario was written, in heaven and in eternity but fulfilled and enacted in time and in this world. Very definitely, having done the Father's will, the glory of the Father was restored to Him for He will come not only in His own glory, but in the glory of the Father as well. That would be the fullness of the glory of the Godhead. He will also bear (and is) the glory of the angels. Mark 8:38 The angels who accompany Him have a particular duty to

perform. They will purge out all who are offensive, all who are living in sin and remove them from the kingdom. Mt. 13:41

RAPTURE. 78

The cloud, His coming, the bow in the cloud. The rainbow is the sign given by the Lord that He will never again destroy the earth by flood. It is the sign of an eternal covenant which He made with the earth and all living creatures on the earth. Gen. 9:13, 16 He called it His bow. In all of His covenants the Lord has inserted somewhat of His own being and nature. In order to create the rainbow a cloud and droplets of rain are required. The sun must also be shining. We have here a type of the Godhead. The sun, the Father. The cloud and the rain, the Holy Spirit. The evidence, the visible one. That which is between the sun, the rain and the earth, the Lord Jesus.

The three major colors of the rainbow are also a witness of the Godhead. The red on the outside of the circle. Red, the witness and color of the Son. The yellow, the color of the Father. The blue the color of the Holy Spirit. The seven primary colors speak to us of the seven fold Spirit of the Lord. Rev. 1:4 Amplified Version. It is the witness and testimony of the Lord revealed in the heavens. The rainbow is produced by sunlight coming from behinds us and shining on rain which is before us. It is light refracting and reflecting from the droplets of rain. The invisible, light is made visible, in color by its reaction to rain. Light is the nature of God. 1 John 1:5 Rain is a type of the outpouring of the Spirit. The Lord has promised an abundance of rain in the last days. Hos. 6:3 In the light of the Lord we see the light of the truth of His being and Word. Ps. 36:9

Ezekiel's experience when He saw the throne of the Lord caused him to fall on his face before the Lord. What price would we pay to see what he saw? His vision was awesome and terrifying if the person did not have the Spirit of the Lord upon them. He saw the occupied throne of the Lord, among other things. Eze. 1:26 In keeping with our subject he also saw the glory of the Lord which appeared to him as a rainbow circling the throne. This would be a complete rainbow, a full circle, compassing the entire throne. The glory of the Lord was brilliant, shining brightly and clearly. If the Lord God is a Sun, and He is (Ps. 84:11,) then this will be the brightest light that man will ever see in time or eternity. Color is the refraction of light when it

strikes the pigment of an object, be it leaves or clothing. The color is in light, not in the object. In darkness all things lose their color. Because God is light (1 John 1:5) heaven will be a place of majestic and glorious colors.

RAPTURE. 79

In the making of a covenant the Lord always has taken of Himself and injected it into the covenant. While mankind may be the recipient of the benefits of the covenant, he is not a partner in the making of the covenant. The covenant is made for him but the full responsibility is on the Lord. He can find none greater than Himself by whom He may confirm the covenant. Heb. 6:13 Therefore we see the evidence of the covenant is a symbol of the Triunity. Three elements are required to produce a rainbow. The sun, the cloud and the presence of mist or rain.

The beauty of heaven will originate from the glorious throne of the Lord flooding the whole with its spectacular display of color. The Lord revealed His glory to Ezekiel in great brightness and a circle of color and perfection. The brilliance, the shining, the scintillating glory of the Lord is that which marks the heavenly throne of the Lord. Light and the fullness of the spectrum of color will be displayed eternally. It is the nature and sign of the living God. Eze. 1:28 The presence of the rainbow in the glory of the Lord enables us to identify the angel of great strength and might. Rev. 10:1 It was Jesus who said; "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Mt. 28:18

His place of origin was none other than heaven itself. He is the heavenly messenger. The man bearing a great declaration and message. He is the one who, between the sixth and seventh trumpets will proclaim the cessation of time. Rev. 10:6 He will introduce the end of the last age in the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the pouring forth of the seven vials. Rev. 16:1

His clothing was that of a cloud. He was fully furnished with the cloud of His presence, the manifestation of His Divine presence in the cloud was their constant support and stay. Isa. 63:9 The beautiful, glorious rainbow was upon Him as a crown of the eternal glory of the Lord. King David prophesied that the Father had crowned His Son with glory and honor. Ps.

8:5 While this is not the second coming, it is very certainly a very close prelude to it. It is the pronouncement of the fullness of times And the immanent gathering of the redeemed unto Himself. Eph. 1:10 The Lord Jesus is seen here in His eternal status as being the vessel of The fullness of the Lord. A place of great prominence which is highly pleasing to the Father. Col. 1:19

RAPTURE. 80

The face of that cloud shrouded mighty angel is enough to lighten the cloud and all who are in His presence. The Sun is that great light which lightens every day of our lives. As we have seen in the scriptures our God is the greatest light in the universe. He is wonderfully unique for He is the only source of all light, natural and spiritual. The glory of the Lord is the light of His majestic presence. The New Jerusalem and the New Heavens and the New Earth will be lightened with the glory of His eternal presence. Rev. 21:23

The precious feet of this glorious, holy angel are like pillars of fire. Again a fire that exceeds all fires. Not any man made fire but the very fire of the God who is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29 A fire, as we have discovered which is an eternal burning fiery presence of the Lord. The same fire with which the Lord Jesus will return as He brings vengeance on His enemies. 2 Thess. 1:8 Be assured that no sinner will be able to slip past this momentous coming of the Lord Jesus and find His way into the Kingdom age. The display of His feet in such a fearsome manner is that all might know that He is coming in great judgment. Not only will His legs and feet be as fire but they are like unto fine brass. Rev. 1:15 Those blessed feet, pierced and torn, today offer salvation to the whosoever. In the day of His coming they will tread the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of the Lord. Rev. 19:15 John, when in the Spirit, that is under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord was able to see the throne of the Lord. He used the color or appearance of stones to convey the color of the occupant of the throne.

The jasper has a variety of colors much in keeping with the rainbow which surrounds this throne. It is also transparent as is the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:11 There are no hidden or ulterior motives to be found in that which is redeemed and eternal. Total transparency is the nature of the Lord and all

that is eternal. In today's world the jasper is restricted to an opaque stone which may be highly polished and of many colors. The sardine stone was transparent. The most valuable being red. Thereby, we see the color of blood on the throne. The only price of redemption, being the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The emerald generally green in color. The color of life. His throne is the throne of life everlasting. Rev. 4:3 There is no absolute certainty concerning the stone as to their names or appearances. Of this we may be certain, Heaven is a place of many and very pleasing colors.

RAPTURE. 81

There are two events, both of real significance, which are related to the second coming of Christ. They are similar yet very different. The time of their fulfillment is not the same by any means. The first is a dire warning and demonstrates the mercy of the Lord. The second is a final judgment on those who have totally disregarded the salvation of the Lord.

The prophecy of Joel will be the first to be executed. What would draw more attention than an occurrence taking place in the heavens. A situation which would effect the sun, moon, stars and light of day and night. Joel pinpointed this taking place prior to the second coming. It is certainly a momentous indication of His soon appearing. Also something to which we may refer to assure us of the nearness of His appearing. Joel 2:31 Peter in his message on the day of Pentecost quoted Joel. Acts 2:20 This statement may then be taken as a true sign which will be accomplished prior to the second coming of Christ.

This sign will take place under the sounding of the fourth trumpet. Rev. 8:12 It is an introduction to the three and one half year tribulation period. We are not given a time period for its duration. Assuming that it would last just for one day would make a terrific impact on the peoples of the earth. If it continued for more than one day it could turn out to be a great catastrophe. A complete reversal of earth warming. There are five areas of our universe and our daily life, which are effected by this great and important sign. The Lord speaking through the prophet Amos prophesied of a day when the sun would go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. Amos 8:9 NIV.

These proceedings are not predictable from a scientific standpoint. They are acts of God. Conditions which may be brought to pass only by the Lord. An eight hour period of time with just two thirds of a normal sun shining would grab the attention of the peoples of the earth. Most definitely there would be a world wide drop in temperature. This will no doubt be experienced in each and every time zone to the full extent. That would be for at the least a full twenty-four hours that this phenomena would be in existence. This would then be followed by the same circumstances taking place with the moon. That would require another twenty-four hour period for it to run its course. These events must be witnessed by the total population of the world in order for them to be warned of the impending tribulation.

RAPTURE. 82

The third of the luminous bodies in the heavens to be stricken with darkness is the stars. A third of them will be darkened. Rev. 8:12 While the period of time relating to their darkness is not stated, to be effective it would have to continue for at least one twenty-four revolution of the earth. Added to these signs taking place in the universe. The day light hours are suddenly darkened followed by an equal time of darkness during the night hours. This will be like the darkness of Egypt, a darkness which was so dense that the Egyptians did not move from their places as long as the darkness prevailed. Ex. 10:21-23 These five terrorizing signs all take place before the Lord Jesus will return. Interesting, five is the number of atonement by blood. The ever merciful calling the world to repentance in these actions. The Word of the Lord will not lie. These are imperatives which must be accomplished prior to the second coming of Christ. He will not come without having given these awesome warnings to mankind.

Just imagine the fear, the consternation that will grip the hearts of humanity in those days. Already the world is filled with fear because of the strange and wild actions of people. What will it be like when these things begin to come to pass. Jesus told us the conditions of this world leading up to His second coming. What we have noted here is but the introduction of a time of trouble which will have a full effect on the whole earth. He said, that men's hearts would fail them for fear as they became partakers of the horrible times that are to come. Luke 21:26 Scientist are predicting a

dooms day sometime in the next ninety years. The Bible not only does likewise but also makes the circumstances very plain. However, it offers a door of hope and a way of escape.

Jesus said; WHEN THESE THINGS BEGIN TO COME TO PASS, Look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing nigh. Luke 21:28 The signs, the circumstances that He has set in place must all be manifest and consummated before He can return. As never before it is vital today that we study the Word and make certain that we are not being misled by others. People, even ministers simply repeat what they have heard others say without verifying for themselves whether or not these things are truth or a lie. Grace and truth came by the Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from Him there is no truth.

RAPTURE. 83

Signs and wonders which will precede the second coming of Christ. Peter in his initial message quoted from Joel 2:30 and gave us a series of happenings which warn of the second coming. Acts 2:19 These will be unusual circumstances, wonders and omens of the impending coming of the true Christ. He gave us a list of three elements which will be used in these unusual manifestations. They are blood, fire and vapor of smoke. Acts 2:19 These are not seen in the usual fashion but become emblems which are used in a supernatural way in the book of Revelation..

Blood. The two witnesses will possess the authority and power to repeat the acts of Moses before Pharaoh by turning water into blood and to bring plagues on the earth as often as they deem necessary. By their fruits we will know them. Mt. 7:20 Their actions are the same as Moses and Elijah. Compare them. These incidents are not red tides or some other naturally explained happenings. They are acts of God. This is something which they will display repeatedly during the three and one-half year tribulation. Note Ps. 105:29

The sounding of the first trumpet will again produce a manifestation of both blood and fire, cast down from heaven. Rev. 8:7 The seals and the trumpets once opened or sounded do not require an immediate fulfillment, It does mean that the event introduced can take place at any time following

its introduction. The blood and the fire will destroy a third of the trees of the earth. That will certainly make a difference of life on the earth. Trees are extremely beneficial and vital to life on earth.

This will alter the manner of life on this planet for sure. The second trumpet will produce a judgment similar to that produced by the two witnesses, Moses and Elijah. Then waters of the seas will become blood. Again it is a dual manifestation of fire and blood precisely following the prophecy of Joel and Peter. A mountain is a symbol in the scriptures of a political power. The harlot church, Babylon, great in every aspect, rich, political, merchandising and with the leaders of this world will be destroyed by fire. Rev. 18:9 This great mountain, when cast into the sea will cause it to become blood. A city which is guilty of the slaying of innocent blood. Rev. 16:6 One third of the fish of the sea will die. The sea represents the multitudes while the fish speak of individuals. A third of the religious people who have embraced her will die with her. Rev. 8:9

RAPTURE. 84

The sounding of the fifth trumpet will introduce the third sign, Smoke rising from the earth. Smoke in such great volume that it will blot out the shining of the sun. The origin of the smoke is the great abyss. Satan is the fallen star to whom the key is given. From the smoke will come an insidious, ungodly, vile wicked army who will afflict the peoples of the earth with a venom which causes sickness for five months. They are forbidden to harm those with the seal of the Lord in their foreheads. In their day, death is removed from the earth and it is impossible for men to die. They must live in torment.

Rev. 9:1-6

The burning of the great city, the spiritual Babylon, called Sodom and Egypt and easily identified seeing as it is the city where our Lord was crucified. Rev. 11:8 It will create a huge column of smoke which will be observed by the political leaders of the world, the merchants and those who transport the manifested goods to the world. Rev. 18:9, 11, 18. From the words of the prophecy it is obvious that the commerce of the world will come to a screeching halt. The hopes and desires of all involved dashed in one hour. Another witness and sign of the impending end. All the myrters and heaven

rejoice because they are avenged by her burning and destruction. Rev. 19:3

Immediately after the tribulation and associated with the return of Christ there will be a great change in the luminous bodies in the universe. The sun and the moon will not continue to give light. The stars will be driven from their normal orbit by a mighty quaking of the whole universe. Mark 13:24-25 It is under these extreme circumstances that the Lord Jesus will be seen, "coming in the clouds with great power and glory." Mark 13:26 How could they possibly miss seeing Him coming in the clouds when He will be the only light in the heavens. Both Matthew and Mark speak of His coming at this time of darkness. To strengthen the fact that His coming is at the close of the tribulation it is here at this moment of time that His angels gather together His elect from all over the earth. In other words it is the moment of the resurrection and the ascension. Mat. 24:31 Mark 13:27 With the preponderance of scriptural evidence pointing to the fact of His second coming at the close of the tribulation period it is time for the church to swallow her embarrassment and search the scriptures diligently that the truth might be brought to the people of the Lord.

RAPTURE. 85

The day of the Lord. A term used by Peter to introduce the circumstances of that day in the manifest judgments of the Lord. It needs to be clarified that in the coming of Christ as a thief, it is the surprise, the unexpected, even the unbelieved element which is to be emphasized. His coming is not unseen or invisible to the whole world. His coming as a thief is accompanied by too many happenings for it to be hidden. A situation where He would slip in secretly and then slip out taking His saints with Him. Causing those left behind to wonder where all those nice people who have disappeared could possibly have gone. Sorry, very dramatic, but not what the scriptures teach. 2 Peter 3:10

Peter stated exactly the facts and conditions and happenings of that day. It has an entirely different ring to it than that which is the popular teaching. "The heavens shall pass away." With the dissipation of our atmosphere the earth would immediately become inhabitable for any man, animal or fish requiring air for breath. There will be an expected tremendous explosion as

Christ breaks the atmosphere, for He is coming in flaming fire. 2 Thess. 1:8 As predicted by Isaiah, it is that moment of time when the heavens shall vanish like smoke, the result of His coming as a thief. Isa. 51:6 The heavens are the work, the creation of the hands of the Lord. Even so, He will destroy them. They are waxing old. They will be changed. Heb. 1:10-12

The elements will melt with fervent heat when He comes with fire. The atomic structure of His creation will be completely disrupted and torn apart, destroyed. All objects, animate and inanimate will be destroyed by the fire of His presence. That includes all the ungodly, unsaved inhabitants to the earth as well. The Lord will not only empty the earth but He will turn it upside down and in that manner completely empty it of all that would remind Him of the old world. Isa. 24:1 All are now, currently reserved for the fire which will be revealed when He comes as a thief in the night. 2 Peter 3:7 He will accomplish a through work of purification and cleansing of the earth by utterly emptying the land of all of that which contaminates. Isa. 24:3 Because of the sin of mankind the earth has become polluted and contaminated. Therefore its destiny is to be purged and cleansed by fire. All the ungodly will be terminated with only a few men being saved. Those who are not destroyed are the redeemed, the saved who love the Lord. Isa. 24:6

RAPTURE. 86

Mat. 24:29 It is immediately after the tribulation, that the total darkening of the sun will take place, and the moon consequently will be unable to shine, the stars will be removed from their orbit, as the universe trembles and quakes. These are the words, the prophecy of the Lord Jesus, pertaining to His coming. Catastrophic because without the light of the sun, our planet and its inhabitants will die.

And then, when is this "then?" It is used in relationship to the sign of His coming in the heavens. Mt. 24:30 What is the sign? Basically it is the manifestation, the miracle of the greatest light ever seen in the heavens. It is variously described as , The Son of man coming in His kingdom. The kingdom of light, true light, spiritual light. That which is very God, Himself. 1 John. 1:5 He is the everlasting light and the glory. Isa. 60:19 Jesus is that true light, giving natural and spiritual light to the whole world. John 1:9 Jesus is the light of the world , the light which dispenses life. John 1:9 That

sign is that inapproachable light, the dwelling place of the Most High, approaching the earth at the speed of light. What an awesome and most fearsome sight. 1 Tim. 6:16 The Lord is the Father of lights, (note it is plural), aside from Him there is no light whatsoever. Anything and all that pertains to light must originate with Him. James 1:17 He is coming in the same glory and light which will eternally be the light of the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:23 His sign is light.

His sign is lightening. His coming will result in a lightening storm which will embrace the whole world, for they all must see His coming. Jesus said that His coming would be as the lightening which would appear from the east and shine unto the west. Mt. 24:27 Note, it is His lightening and He releases it throughout the whole world. Even to the ends of the earth. Total and complete coverage. Job 37:3 This mighty and repeated great display of lightning will greatly discomfort even the earth, the hills will melt at His presence. Ps. 97:4-5 The very nature of the spiritual world is to travel with the speed of lightning, like the living creature seen by Ezekiel. Eze. 1:14 How can one better describe the face of the Lord than to use lightening as an example, such as Daniel pictured Him. Dan. 10:6 The best analogy that John could use after having seen the throne of the Lord was that of multiplied flashes of lightning coming from the throne of the Lord. Rev. 4:5 His coming is in a most spectacular fashion.

RAPTURE. 87

His sign is that of fire. From the time of the fall and the expulsion of man from the garden, the flaming, fiery sword of the Lord has been His sign and signature. Gen. 3:24 The sword which proceeds out of His mouth is the Word of the Lord. Eph. 6:17 His robe has been dipped in blood. His own blood. The blood of the Lamb. The blood of redemption. Rev. 19:13 The sharp, two edged sword proceeding out of His mouth is in judgment against all that are ungodly. Rev. 19:15

His anger against the constant complaining of the people brought a manifestation of His fiery indignation against them. Num. 11:1 If the attitude of those who were His was so stern, what will it be with the ungodly? His fire destroyed the two hundred fifty men who falsely, and in disobedience to the Law, offered incense before the Lord. Num. 16:35 David presented an

awesome and a frightening description of His coming In smoke and fire. Ps. 18:8, 12-13 Isaiah was not without a vision of this flaming aspect of the coming of the Lord. Isaiah 66:15-16 Both New and Old Testament prophets and preachers gave witness to the majestic, yet horrible coming of the Lord. If we are in Christ it is the most blessed of times. If we are unprepared for that day and are still living in sin, it will be a terrible day of destruction.

Clouds are also a sign of His coming. Certainly the most evident and common of signs to the whole world. Clouds are a very necessary part of our daily, natural life. The clouds of the sky can be beautiful against the azure blue of a sunlit day or dark and foreboding when they are thick and dark. The Lord Jesus is coming in the clouds of heaven. Mk. 13:26 Those sleeping in Christ will rise and the living will rise into the clouds to be with him. 1 Thess. 4:17 The second cloud of Revelation fourteen is the cloud of His coming. It is the dark cloud. The cloud of His fearful and great judgment of the world. The vine, the families and nations of the world are gathered, for their time of full ripeness has arrived. Rev. 14:14:18-19 They have reached the epitome of unrighteousness and ungodliness. They have followed the ways of the false prophet and the antichrist. Therefore the wine of the wrath of the Almighty is directed toward them and they are thrown into the winepress of the Lord, fit only for eternal punishment. Rev. 14:10-11 The flow of their blood will be at least six feet deep by two hundred miles, flowing from the mighty wine press of the Lord. Rev. 14:20

RAPTURE. 88

There are a number of developments, both in heaven and on earth, which must take place before the coming of the Lord Jesus. That is why, woven throughout the Word of the Lord, there is made known the need of patience. Particularly so, in relationship to the second coming of the Lord Jesus. That is why Jesus after giving many signs pertaining to the time of the end, added "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Mt. 24:13 It is not an endurance contest but a need and manifestation of patience. The Gospels, mainly Matthew twenty-four when speaking of the coming of our Lord, gives us an introduction to the conditions of the world in those day. When these conditions of which Jesus spoke are evident in the daily life of the peoples of this world, we know the

end is nigh. However Jesus said in Mt. 24:6 that in spite of all these things being so apparent, “the end is not yet.” That is precisely where we are today. So many evidences, but not yet. There are still many things which must take place. The book of Revelation gives us great detail on these happenings which are a definite part of the circumstances leading to His second coming.

The detailed events of the end of the age are to be found in the book of Revelation, and they are numerous. The transactions of that day cover a period of three and one-half years. At the conclusion of that period of time the Lord Jesus will return. The tribulation is introduced by the birth of the man child and the casting out of the devil from the presence of the Lord. Rev. 12:12 He will recognize the fact that he has but a short time, that is the three and one half years of the great tribulation. Jesus spoke of a shortening of the days of the tribulation which will be a benefit to the redeemed, the elect. Mt. 24:22 Paul placed a seal on the culmination of the tribulation period by saying that the Lord would “finish the work.” Rom. 9:28 That He will do for certain. He will bring it to a complete end, speedily, when the day predetermined by the Father arrives. That day will come with the world being judged justly and righteously by the person of the Lord Jesus. James would teach us to exercise patience until the time of the coming of the Lord. He uses the analogy of the farmer and his waiting patiently for the rains to come. James 5:7 There is yet a revival. A great harvest destined for the end of the age which is seen in the book Revelation. This is the good harvest. The gathering of the wheat into the garner. The reaping of two thousand years of the Gospel seed having been sown. Rev. 14:15-16

RAPTURE. 89

“Behold I come.” Rev. 16:15 In our day, when so many travel by air, schedules are important. We can meet or miss a very dear friend or relative because of confused arrival times. While that day and the hour of the coming of Christ is not, nor will it be announced, the signs taking place in today’s world are sufficient to warn us that the day is quickly approaching.

For the past seven decades, we have watched the things which we were taught were signs pertaining to the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus

Christ, increase from a small trickle to vast floods. The volume, the intensity, the magnitude of these signs continue to increase. Just when we think that there just could not be an increase, the sign reaches a new high. That we are living in the day of His soon coming there is no question.

His statement to the church at Philadelphia pertaining to His coming “quickly” is well placed. The spiritual atmosphere of this church is that which is to be found in the true body of Christ in the end of the age. This is the church of brotherly love. The love of Christ reigns supreme in their hearts. There is no message of repentance written to this church. It is the church of His perfections. The people of love and victory. Rev. 3:7-13 They are the people of the Word and will be kept from the tribulation period. Those possessing the spiritual nature of this church will find the prophetic utterance of Revelation twelve fulfilled in them.

Watchfulness is a key word for we who live in these days. Many preach His coming but do little to prepare for that day. Observation of events is insufficient, there must be watching and praying. Jesus taught us to “watch and pray” that we might not enter into temptation. Mt. 26:41 Then He promised the Philadelphia church that He would keep them from the “hour of temptation” or the tribulation period. Rev. 3:10 To watch is to be vigilant, to remain awake and not to drop off to sleep at a most critical time. For all that has been accomplished in preparation for that day, there is still much to be accomplished before His return. Nevertheless, Paul said that the Lord would finish the work and make it to be a short work at that. Rom. 9:28 Time is in His hands and what He has set out to accomplish He will finish it completely, regardless of the time involved in carrying out His purposes.

RAPTURE. 90

The Lord Jesus will not return to receive a rag-tag, luke warm, backslidden church. Any spiritual change necessary in order to be accepted by Him at His coming is to be made now. The spiritual standard which He has established for those whom He will accept is clearly defined in the Word of the Lord. The model given us is none other than the Lord Jesus. We are to be like Him. We are to bear His image. We are members of His body. Eph. 5:30

John issued a warning for those who half-heartedly follow the Lord Jesus. We are to abide, remain in close and intimate contact with Jesus. Fervently follow Him, lest we be shamed before Him at His coming. 1 John 2:28

Paul gave instructions, a command to Timothy pertaining to the maintenance of a high level of spirituality. He then established this quality of action necessary until the coming of the Lord. He was to exemplify Christ by living without spot or blame until the return of Christ. 1 Tim. 6:14 This was not merely a personal requirement but is for all who would be received by the Lord Jesus at His coming.

The living, at His coming will be those who have entered into the things of Christ until they are entitled "sons of God." 1 John 3:2 They have achieved the highest goal of the Christian life. They bear His image and likeness prior to His appearing. Those who expect a last minute change in their spiritual status are misled and will be bitterly disappointed. The change in 1 Cor. 15:51 is in the physical body, not the spirit. The sin question had better be settled long before the glorious day of His appearing. Those who anticipate His coming will live in purity. 1 Jn. 3:3

His coming is a time of rewards for the faithful. The victory of the redeemed, those who keep the Word will be to praise, honor and glory, when He comes. 1 Peter 1:7 There is a crown of righteousness which shall be rewarded to the faithful. 2 Tim. 4:8 A crown of glory and majesty awaits those who triumph in Christ Jesus. 1 Peter. 5:4 To be tempted and tried is common to all Christians. It is not sinning when we are battling the onslaughts of our enemy. Sin is in yielding. The victorious will receive a crown of life. James 1:12 He is coming for a perfect church. (end)

