

THE  
LORD'S  
RAPTURE

Jesus said: "...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.  
(John 14:2-3)

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## ***The Return Of Jesus***

We live in a world that is unaware;  
Yea, they don't even seem to care  
That the day is perhaps very near  
When Jesus is going to appear.

We live in a world that has little concern  
That one day Jesus is going to return.  
They're too busy searching for earth's treasure  
And forbidding nothing that brings them pleasure.

We live in a world where there is little fear  
Of the day when Jesus will suddenly appear;  
'cause their minds are evil and their souls are black,  
They couldn't care less that Jesus is coming back.

We live in a world that struggles each night and day;  
Each one making a life in his own helpless way.  
Their mortal bodies are tired and their spirits sour  
Yet aren't consoled by His return at some soon hour.

## Aids And Explanations

I wish to apologize for any mistakes to be found in this book. I wish there were none but that is unlikely. Some mistakes may be mine while others will occur in the production process. I hope that any grammar, punctuation, or typographical errors will not detract from the value of the information or your enjoyment.

Following are the explanations of terms used throughout this book.

**Tribulation period** refers to the **last seven years** just prior to Christ's return to earth to set up His Millennial Kingdom (1,000 years of earthly rule in Jerusalem).

**Pre-tribulation** means **before** the tribulation period begins.

**Pre-tribulation rapture** suggests a rapture which occurs **before** the tribulation period begins.

**Pre-tribulationists** **are** those who believe that the rapture of the church will happen **before** the tribulation period begins.

The below examples show how to read Bible references used in the book.

**Revelation 19** refers to Revelation Chapter 19

**Revelation 19-21** means Revelation Chapters 19 thru 21

**Revelation 19,21** means Revelation Chapters 19 and 21

**Revelation 19:21** means Revelation Chapter 19 verse 21

**Revelation 19:21-24** means Revelation Chapter 19 verses 21 thru 24

**Revelation 19:21,24** means Revelation Chapter 19 verses 21 and 24

**Revelation 19:21-24,30** means Revelation Chapter 19 verses 21 thru 24 and verse 30

# Introduction

## A Discussion Of The Rapture

The rapture is probably the most arousing prophetic subject for Christians. Regrettably it is one of the most mistaught prophetic subjects. The rapture is always connected to the tribulation period in one of three positions.

1. BEFORE the tribulation (pre-tribulation rapture)
2. DURING the tribulation (mid-tribulation rapture)
3. AFTER the tribulation (post-tribulation rapture)

The question has been asked, "Does it really matter when the rapture takes place?" Yes and No. To those who have passed on it makes no difference. To those who are here when the tribulation arrives it will matter a great deal. It is this author's opinion that many who live today will greet the tribulation period.

We begin by defining the word "rapture." It is widely known that the term "rapture" is not in the Bible. That leads some to question the validity of the rapture but the absence of the word "rapture" is not grounds for its dismissal. "Trinity" is not in the Bible but it is commonly recognized as Biblical. Trinity defines God as existing in three persons: God the Father, Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The original language of the New Testament is Greek. Later the Greek manuscripts were translated into Latin. In the Latin translation the Greek word "harpadso" was translated "rapture" which was adopted by the English translators. The Greek word "harpadso" means to seize or snatch up which loosely describes what will happen at the rapture. Christians will be snatched up bodily to meet the Lord in the air at the rapture. Paul expressed it as being "caught up" in I Thessalonians 4:17.

The Bible tells of several individuals who were raptured (snatched up or caught up) to heaven. Enoch was the first. He was strolling along one day in communion with God when he suddenly disappeared from earth. The Bible says, *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*

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Genesis 5:24 Enoch experienced a rapture in that he was snatched from earth to heaven by God.

Next is Elijah the prophet. He was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire. (II Kings 2:11) This too was a type of the coming rapture - a "snatching up" from earth to heaven. In Revelation we see the rapture of God's two witnesses in Jerusalem during the tribulation period. The Antichrist murdered them but that was not the end. Look at what happened.

*And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them.* Revelation 11:11-12 Here we have both a resurrection and a rapture. God's two witnesses were revived (brought back to life) and raptured (caught up) to heaven.

There is no need to doubt the rapture just because it is not Biblical language. God performed real life instances of the rapture with Enoch, Elijah, and His two witnesses of The Revelation. Paul wrote an accurate description of the rapture in I Thessalonians 4:16-17. Instead of "rapture" (snatched up) Paul said we would be "caught up" to be with the Lord. There will be a rapture regardless of the terminology used.

Now, concerning the time of the rapture, it is routinely preached that it could happen at any moment. This is referred to as an "imminent" rapture meaning "any moment" rapture. For there to be an imminent rapture there must be no prophecy which has to be fulfilled before the rapture. In other words, there is no unfinished prophecy keeping the rapture from happening NOW.

The pre-tribulationists say that the rapture can occur at any moment meaning it is imminent. That means that the tribulation period, in a sense, is also imminent because it immediately follows the rapture. That can not be! The tribulation period is scheduled for a specific date on God's prophetic calendar and it will not happen before the planned time.

The truth is there can be no imminent rapture or tribulation period because there is prophecy now in progress and prophetic events yet to come

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which bring us to the tribulation period. Yet we continue to hear of an imminent rapture. Here are some Bible verses which are purported as teaching an imminent rapture.

Matthew 24:36 *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

Matthew 24:42 *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

Matthew 24:44 *Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

The fact that the Lord's return is unknowable does not necessarily translate into His imminent return. All the above warnings refer to Jesus' appearing in Matthew 24:30 which comes AFTER the tribulation period. (Matthew 24:29) Therefore, imminency cannot be ascribed to the Christ's return, the rapture or the tribulation.

The imminent rapture theory finds basis in the apparent truth that Paul and the early Christians expected Christ to return in their lifetimes. That expectancy is seen in the following verses.

Peter wrote: *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.* I Peter 4:7 Do you suppose that when Peter said that the end of everything is *at hand* that he had the year 2008 and beyond in mind? Not likely. Doubtless Peter believed that the *end* would come in his time.

Paul wrote: *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.* Romans 13:11 Notice Paul's use of the plural pronouns *our* and *we*.

It seems certain that Paul and his companions believed that the Lord Jesus would return while they yet lived. Paul's *knowing the time* refers to the spiritual depravity of those days. In light of that spiritual darkness Paul said that their salvation (rapture) was *nearer* than they had believed. Do you think that *nearer* in their minds stretched to the year 2008? No, they expected deliverance from this sinful world by the rapture in their lifetime.

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I Corinthians 15:51-52 *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* Paul named we three times indicating that he expected that he and his fellow Christians would be alive at the rapture.

I Thessalonians 4:17 *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* Notice again the use of the plural first person pronoun *we*.

I Timothy 6:14 *That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul admonished Timothy to keep his commandment until Jesus Christ appeared.

It is obvious from Paul's letters that he and the early Christians believed that the Lord would return in their lifetimes. Of course we know that He did not because we await His return. What happened? It will be explained momentarily but first let us look at Paul's comment about his impending death.

*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day...* II Timothy 4:6-8

Paul declares his readiness to be a martyr for Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has convinced Paul that the Roman Emperor, Nero, will soon take his head. He accepted the fact of his death and no longer expected Jesus Christ to return for him and the church beforehand. How could it be that Paul had believed that Jesus Christ would return in his time but now with his death near knows that it will not be so?

The fact is Paul never taught an imminent return of Jesus Christ. Their belief that Christ would return in their lifetimes was not born of any Biblical or church doctrine. In fact, Paul gave an abbreviated outline of prophetic events which discounts an imminent rapture.



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II Thessalonians 2:1-4 *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

To understand Paul's prophecy we need to know what *that day* in verse 3 is. *That day* refers to the *day of Christ* in verse 2. Paul explained that the rapture, *our gathering together unto him* (verse 1), in *the day of Christ* (verse 2) would not occur before: (1) a time of *falling away* and (2) *that man of sin be revealed*, which is the Antichrist.

Those two events did not happen in Paul's time so how could he and his Christian brethren believe that Christ would return in their time? Simple, they expected those events to happen in their time. They did not know how far in the future those events were. Considering the oppressive Roman rule and the unchecked Christian persecution of their time it is understandable how they believed that Jesus would come for the church in their time.

Are they of the early church to be faulted for believing that Christ would return in their time? Certainly not. It was this expectancy that motivated and sustained them through serious tribulation. The Bible teaches Christians to live in expectation of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13)

We must not overlook the fact that the imminent rapture theory is not without contradiction. Many who teach an imminent rapture also believe that the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 represent seven specific and successive church periods within the Church Age. Ephesus, the first church, represents the first church period. Smyrna pictures the second church period and so on with Laodicea being the last church period.

Do you see the problem? If the seven churches represent seven successive church periods in the Church Age then the rapture cannot be imminent - cannot happen at any moment. It could not happen until the completion of the Laodicean church period which many feel is where the church is now. If the rapture is imminent then there can be no seven church

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periods. If there are seven church periods then an imminent rapture is not possible.

An imminent rapture? Impossible! Jesus, Paul and John all placed the rapture AFTER the tribulation period.

We will now investigate the

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The Lord's prophecy in Matthew Chapter 24 points to one main event and it is a knockout. Jesus prophesied,

*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*  
Matthew 24:30-31

This is the climactic event of the Lord's prophecy. All that was said before this event points to it and all that follows explains it. In His tribulation prophecy Jesus voiced two urgent warnings: *watch* and *be ready*. verses 42, 44 Both warnings relate to the climactic event.

There are two critically different views concerning the identification of the climactic event which Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:30-31.

View 1 The event is the gathering of the Jews from around the world back to Israel. That makes this event the second coming of Christ to earth when He sets up His Millennial Kingdom.

View 2 The event is the rapture of the church at Christ's appearing in the air. He sends forth the angels to gather the church to Him.

This is no petty matter because the two views are different events which occur at different times. Whichever view a Christian holds will affect his/her outlook and expectation of the Lord's return. They will display one of two attitudes depending on their belief of the climactic event.

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First attitude. Christians who believe this event to be the gathering of Israel into the Millennial Kingdom assign the Lord's prophecy to Israel. They tend to pay little heed to Jesus' warnings to *watch* and *be ready* because they believe that this event concerns Israel.

Second attitude. Christians who see this event as the rapture of the church realize that Jesus' prophecy is for the church. They understand that the church will experience the tribulation that Jesus preached. They will take seriously His warnings to *watch* and to *be ready* and live expectantly of His coming.

The climactic event will be a thriller for both Israel or the church. We have got to settle in our minds what this climactic event in the Lord's prophecy is. With that as our spur we will carefully study this climactic event to determine its identity.

## Israel's Gathering

We begin by looking at the gathering of Israel at Christ's second coming to earth. By many prophets God warned Israel that they would be driven from their land and scattered among the nations if they failed to keep His commandments. Moses issued the first such warning. *And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other...* Deuteronomy 28:64

Foolishly Israel failed to observe God's many warnings. Consequently Israel was taken captive by many nations over a period of time. Foreign powers such as Assyria, Syria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome besieged Israel destroying their land and taking the Jews captive. They have been populating foreign lands for nearly three thousand years. Many millions of Jews never knew their homeland. This is truly a tragic story.

Israel remains a scattered nation but one day they will return to the land God gave them. With each warning of dispersion there was a promise of gathering, such as this one by Jeremiah. *And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord...* Jeremiah 29:14

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While it is true that Israel has seen a partial gathering since 1948 it is a prelude to the total gathering promised throughout the Old Testament. The tribulation period will create in the hearts of the Jews an intense yearning for their Messiah. When Jesus Christ comes back to earth and saves Israel at the Battle of Armageddon the Jews will recognize their Messiah. They will return to Israel from all over the world to serve their Messiah King.

God spoke of this future gathering of Israel through the prophet Ezekiel. *Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.* Ezekiel 39:28

When Jesus Christ returns and establishes His Millennial Kingdom ( a thousand year reign on earth) all Jews from around the world will return to Israel, their promised land. Not only will they repatriate their land but they will dwell in complete safety as spoken by Ezekiel.

*"And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid."* Ezekiel 34:28

IMPORTANT: All the prophecies pertaining to the gathering of Israel will happen when Jesus Christ returns to earth. Jesus Christ does NOT return to earth in Matthew 24:30-31. He only appears in the heaven for the rapture of the church which Paul described in I Thessalonians 4:16-17

When we have finished this book we will know that it is gathering of the church which takes place in Matthew 24:30-31 NOT the gathering of Israel.

## The Church's Gathering

Old Testament prophecy repeatedly declares that one day all Jews will be gathered to Israel but that is not the event Jesus related in Matthew 24:30-31. Many believe that it is but it cannot be for these reasons.

1. Jesus does not come to earth at this event. Therefore He cannot set up His earthly kingdom and receive the Jews back to Israel.
2. Jesus dispatches angels to gather the elect and bring them to meet Him in the air. The Jews will be gathered to meet Jesus in Israel not

in the air.

3. No Jews will come from heaven at the gathering of Israel. To explain that we read Mark's parallel writing to Matthew's 24:30-31.

Mark wrote, *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.* Mark 13:26-27

Jesus will send the angels to gather His elect from all of earth and all of heaven. That will not happen with the gathering of Israel. The Jews will migrate to Israel from all over the world but none from heaven. At Christ's appearing all Christians on earth and in heaven will be gathered together to meet the Lord in the air. (I Thessalonians 4:13-17)

The climactic event of Matthew 24:30-31 becomes clear if one understands the prophecy before and after it. Here is a simple outline of the Lord's prophecy leading up to the climactic event.

verses 4-8      world tribulation  
verses 9-14     Church tribulation  
verses 15-21   Israel's tribulation  
verse 22        the promise of deliverance  
verses 23-26   false religion, false Christs and false hope  
verses 27-28   the manner of Christ's appearing  
**verses 29-31   The Climactic Event**

The following outline explains the climactic event.

**verses 29-31   the Climactic Event**

verses 32-35   explain how to know the nearness of the event  
verses 36-39   explain the lack of awareness of that event  
verses 40-41   explain a separation that will happen at that event  
verses 42-44   explain the need to watch and be ready for that event  
verses 45-51   explain the faithful and unfaithful servants

In verses 30-31 Jesus described the climactic event as a "gathering." We will learn that this gathering is the rapture of the church. At this gathering some will be taken to be with Jesus Christ and some will be left behind. In verses 45-51 Jesus explains that the faithful will be rewarded while the unfaithful will be punished.

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We will now proceed to show that the event in Matthew 24:30-31 is the gathering of the church at the rapture. The method of proof will be to compare language of the text with other accepted rapture verses. We begin with:

### The "clouds" Of The Rapture

Clouds are associated with the Lord's return at the rapture a number of times. Interestingly this truth has its beginning with the Lord's ascension into heaven after His resurrection.

*And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Acts 1:9-11*

After giving the apostles their final instructions on the Mount of Olives Jesus returned to heaven. The apostles watched as He rose and disappeared into a cloud. How shocked they must have been. As they stood eyeing Jesus ascend to heaven two angelic men adorned in white robes suddenly joined them. They informed the apostles that Jesus will return in the same manner in which He left.

That means that Jesus will return from heaven bodily and visibly. Also, whereas Jesus disappeared into a cloud at His departure He will appear from the clouds at His return. Here are four more verses which agree.

Matthew 26:64 *...nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

Mark 13:26 *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.*

Mark 14:62 *...and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

Luke 21:27 *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

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Perhaps Paul gave the best presentation of Jesus returning in the clouds of heaven in this most cherished description of the rapture. He wrote:

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* I Thessalonians 4:16-17

These are cornerstone verses for the rapture of the church. What Christian does not know these verses? Jesus Christ will appear from the clouds of heaven and perform the resurrection and the rapture. We will be escorted by angels to meet the Lord in the *clouds*. Paul's description of the rapture compares with that of Jesus in Matthew 24:30-31. They gave us two different views of the same event - the rapture.

The Apostle John greeted the seven churches of The Revelation with Jesus coming back with clouds. *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.* Revelation 1:7

*Behold, he cometh with clouds* can only be the rapture of the church. Some have declared this to be Christ's return to earth but that is prophetically improper. Surely John and all the Christians he wrote to were looking for the rapture. The church still waits for His appearing in the clouds at the rapture. Christians are not waiting to COME BACK with Christ. They are looking TO GO to Him at the rapture.

John saluted the seven churches with *Behold, he cometh with clouds...* That is what Jesus said of His appearing *...they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven...* Matthew 24:30 It is unshakeable that John greeted the seven churches with the hope of the rapture not Christ's return to earth.

Daniel wrote prophesied of Israel in the coming tribulation period but did you know that he too wrote about Christ coming in the *clouds of heaven*? In Chapter 7 Daniel related his vision of four beasts representing four Gentile world kingdoms which would be ruled by Christ.

*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came*

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*with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14*

Daniel saw *one like the Son of man* came with the clouds of heaven. His vision showed the Messiah returning in the *clouds of heaven*. That agrees with Jesus' appearing in Matthew 24:30. *And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven*. Daniel and Jesus spoke of the same event but with different prophetic view points. Daniel reported that the kingdoms of this world would be given to the Son of man at His coming in *the clouds of heaven*. This agrees with John's Revelation prophecy which reads:

*And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE BECOME THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD, AND OF HIS CHRIST; AND HE SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER. Revelation 11:15*

This happens after *the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven* (Daniel 7:13) which corresponds with *they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven* (Matthew 24:30) and *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him...*(Revelation 1:7)

Jesus taught that His *coming in the clouds of heaven* was to gather His elect which is the church. Daniel knew nothing of the church so he could not tell of its gathering. Daniel's prophecy concerned Israel and the Gentile nations at the return of Jesus Christ. He prophesied that all nations would come under the rule of Jesus Christ at His return in *the clouds of heaven*.

Clouds will be part of the Lord's return. The phrase *coming in the clouds of heaven* makes the event in Matthew 24:30-31 the rapture of the church.

## The "angels" Of The Rapture

Jesus said, *And he shall send his angels....and they shall gather together his elect.* Matthew 24:31 Angels were created to worship and to serve God just as man was. They had a very active part in the life of Jesus Christ. Here are some notable occasions.



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- \* Angels told Joseph and Mary of His coming birth.
- \* A host of angels praised God at His birth.
- \* Angels ministered to Jesus after Satan's temptation.
- \* An angel strengthened Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- \* Angels rolled away His grave stone after His resurrection.
- \* Angels were present when He ascended into heaven.

Angels will be important players in the rapture. Most Christians are not aware of this because the climactic event in Matthew 24:30-31 is believed to be the gathering of Israel at Christ's second coming to earth. That is ascribing church prophecy to Israel. It is little wonder that Christians are confused about the tribulation period and then rapture.

The angels will have a very important assignment at the rapture. *And he (Jesus) shall send his angels....and they shall gather together his elect...* Matt 24:31 The angels will descend to earth and gather the *elect* and transport them to meet Jesus Christ in the air. The *elect* of the New Testament are the church.

Jesus made these additional confirmations of the angels coming with Him at His appearing.

Matthew 16:27 *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*

Matthew 25:31 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the Holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.*

Luke 9:26 *For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of Him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*

The Apostle Paul divulged the most information about the rapture. In a letter to the church at Thessalonica he taught that Christians would receive rest from their tribulations when Jesus returned with the angels. *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.* II Thessalonians 1:7

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When will the church receive and enjoy its promised rest? When Jesus Christ is *revealed from heaven*. Who comes with Jesus when He comes to give rest to the church? The angels. Why? They will gather the church on earth and deliver it to their Savior in the air as He announced in Matthew 24:31.

II Thessalonians 1:7 (above) is thought by many to be Christ's second coming to earth. That is an unscholarly conclusion for these reasons. First, rest comes to the church at the rapture not at His second coming to earth. Second, the church accompanies Jesus Christ when He comes to earth not angels. (Jude 14, Revelation 19:14) Third, the word *revealed* is derived from the same Greek word which is translated "appear" in Matthew 24:30.

When Jesus Christ appears at the rapture He will bring an entourage of angels to gather the Christians. How will the angels know who to gather? For sure they will not escort anyone to meet Jesus who is not a Christian. Could Jesus have given the answer with His statement, *...Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.* Luke 12:8-9

The word *confess* in this verse means to declare ones allegiance to. Thus, Jesus said that those who declare their allegiance to Him before others He would declare His allegiance to them before the *angels*. How marvelous! Jesus will declare His allegiance to every Christian before the angelic host of heaven. Conversely, those who deny Jesus He will deny before the *angels*.

Jesus passed this promise of confession to the Revelation church at Sardis. His promise was, *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* Revelation 3:5

Why would Jesus confess the names of Christians to the angels in heaven? One reason may be so that the angels can rejoice for those who repent unto salvation. (Luke 15:10) Another reason Jesus confesses the names of Christians to the angels may be so that He can *send his angels....and they shall gather together his elect.* Matthew 24:3

Could it be that the angels will know who to gather because Jesus

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confessed to them those who confessed Him? Perhaps each angel will be given a name or names to gather. Maybe the Christians will be gathered by their guardian angels who watched over them. One thing is for sure. The angels will take no one to meet Jesus at the rapture who has not confessed Him before others.

Jesus had alluded to the act of angels transporting Christians to heaven before He gave His tribulation prophecy. On an earlier occasion He was addressing the Pharisees and told them the true story of the rich man and Lazarus. They both died and of Lazarus Jesus said, *the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's Bosom.* Luke 16:22

Lazarus, a beggar and a believer, died and was escorted by angels into Abraham's bosom or blessed presence. Abraham is in heaven so that is where the angels took Lazarus. From that we can believe that the souls of deceased believers are whisked to heaven by angels. It should not then be hard to see that angels will transport believers to meet Christ in the air at the rapture.

This study of the word *angels* has shown that the climactic event in Matthew 24:30-31 is the rapture of the church NOT the gathering of Jews to Israel.

## The "gathering" At The Rapture

Evident throughout the Old Testament is God's promise to gather the scattered Jews and reestablish the nation of Israel. The prophet Ezekiel, along with others, prophesied this gathering. *For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.* Ezekiel 36:24

This promised gathering has been a burning hope for displaced Jews for two millennia. For many centuries the nation of Israel did not exist. Today Jews from all over the world look for their Messiah to come and restore the Kingdom of Israel. That gathering will happen when Jesus Christ returns to earth after the tribulation period to save Israel and to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

As the elect of the New Testament are not the elect of the Old Testament neither is the *gathering* of the New Testament the *gathering* of the Old

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Testament. Jesus identified the New Testament *gathering* in His tribulation prophecy. *And he (Jesus) shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* Matthew 24:31

The Gospel writer Mark also recorded Jesus' prophecy of the *gathering* of the elect at His appearing. Mark's language almost matches that of Matthew exactly. *And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.* Mark 13:27

We know that this "gathering of the elect" which Jesus promised is the rapture of the church because abundant New Testament teaching proves it to be. Earlier in this chapter several reasons were given why the *gathering* in Matthew 24:30-31 could not be the gathering of Israel. To call it so scrambles New Testament prophecy - scrambles church prophecy.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica of a *gathering*. He said, *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him...* II Thessalonians 2:1 Notice that Paul spoke of *our gathering together unto him* (the Lord Jesus Christ). Surely Paul was not thinking of Israel when he wrote *our gathering*. How can *our gathering together unto him* be anything but the rapture of the church?

We must not make the unforgivable mistake of substituting the gathering of Israel for the gathering of the church. The *gathering* in Matthew 24:31 is the rapture of the church because:

- \* Jesus does not come to earth at this appearing.
- \* angels will come to earth and gather the church.
- \* the church will be taken to meet Jesus in the air.
- \* angels will not gather the Jews and take them to meet Jesus in the air. Jews will gather in their homeland - Israel.

Proper understanding of the verb *gather* should convince us that the event in Matthew 24:30-31 is the rapture of the church at Christ's appearing.

## The "appearing" At The Rapture

This is the most defining word in the climactic event of Matthew 24:30-31. Confusion as to the identification of that event comes partly from the multiple expressions of the Lord's return. His coming - His return - His appearing and His revelation all speak of the return of Jesus Christ. We must get a handle on these terms before we can correctly ascertain the identity of this event.

Many Christians are unclear about the second coming of Christ because they do not comprehend the splitting of His return into two stages. The two stages are the rapture and the second advent or return to earth.

Stage 1 **RAPTURE**. Jesus appears in the sky but He does not come to earth. Angels come with Him and they gather the elect (the church) and take them to meet Christ in the air and they remain with Him.

Stage 2 **ADVENT**. Jesus comes straight to earth with no delay. The church comes with Him. Jesus defeats the world's armies at the Battle of Armageddon and sets up His Millennial Kingdom.

The two stages can be explained quite simply. In stage 1 Christ comes to get the church while in stage 2 Christ comes to earth with the church. Both stages of Christ's return can be easily remembered by the letters **A** and **R**.

Stage 1 His **A**ppearing at the **R**apture **A = R**

Stage 2 His **A**dvent or **R**eturn to earth **A = R**

When the terms His appearing, His coming, His return and His revelation are used we must determine which of the two stages is meant. Does it really make a difference? It surely does because they happen at different times with different results. Remember the two letters of association, **A** and **R**. At Christ's **A**ppearing He will **R**apture the church. At His **A**dvent He **R**eturns to earth with the church.

The various terms for the Lord's return are confusing but they need not be. The terms *His coming* and *His return* are pretty much interchangeable. They can refer to either of the two stages of Christ's return. For example,

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the coming of the Lord in I Thessalonians 4:15 can only be the rapture or first stage. In Jude 14-15 His coming is to earth in judgment which is the second stage.

The revelation of Christ (visible manifestation at His return) is the same as His **A**ppearing. Pre-tribulationists often view the revelation of Christ as His **A**dvent or **R**eturn to earth when should be His **A**ppearing at the **R**apture. They are forced to that view because they believe in a secret or unseen rapture. One misinterpretation leads to another misinterpretation which leads to false prophecy.

For sure the world will see Christ's **A**dvent or **R**eturn to earth but that is not His revelation. The revelation is His spectacular **A**pppearance at the **R**apture. Here are three verses dealing with the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Luke 17:29-30 *But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*

On the day that Lot was saved God's judgment fell. Jesus said that when He is *revealed* judgment will fall on the ungodly like it did on Sodom and Gomorrah. *Fire and brimstone* (God's wrath) will fall the same day of His revelation at the rapture.

II Thessalonians 1:6-7 *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.*

Paul taught that the church will get rest from tribulation when the Lord Jesus is *revealed* from heaven with His angels. The angels will gather the church and present it to Jesus Christ in heaven. Then will the church have rest. That means that the *revelation* of Jesus Christ is the same as His appearing in Matthew 24:30-31.

I Peter 1:13 *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Peter tells Christians to be alert and hope to the end for God's grace

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which will come at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ. That grace is the salvation of our souls which comes at the rapture not Christ's return to earth. Therefore the *revelation of Jesus Christ* is the same as His appearing in Matthew 24:30.

*Appear* is the term used in the event of Matthew 24:30. Remember, this event can be called His return or His coming. Remember also that these terms can refer to either of the two stages of Christ's return: (1) His **A**ppearing in the air for the **R**apture or (2) His **A**dvent or **R**eturn to earth.

Can we know for sure which phase of Christ's return is given in Matthew 24:30? Yes. When applied to the return or second coming of Jesus Christ the terms "appear" and "appearing" always designate the first stage. **A**pppear = **R**apture. In the first stage Jesus **A**ppears (comes into view) in the sky but does not come to earth. He sends His angels to **R**apture (gather) the church and bring them to meet Him in the air.

The words "appear" and "appearing" are used twelve times in the New Testament in describing Christ's return. In all instances His appearing is linked to the church. In each case some benefit is promised or some truth concerning the church is given. In none of them is Christ's return to earth (stage 2) in view. The use of the terms **A**pppear or **A**ppearing always refer to the **R**apture.

The expert work of the famed W. E. Vine, M.A., is helpful here. He defined *appear* in his linguistic book **Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** as follows.

[Quote] PHAINO...signifies, in the Active Voice, to shine; in the Passive, to be brought forth into light, to become evident, to appear. It is used of the appearance of Christ to the disciples, Mark 6:19; of his future appearing in glory as the Son of man, spoken of as a sign to the world, Matt 24:30....the sign being the appearing of Christ Himself... [Unquote]

According to the famed linguist, Dr. W.E. Vine, the word *appear* in Matthew 24:30 refers to the sudden manifestation (visible appearance) of Jesus Christ in the atmosphere above the earth. He will not come to earth at this *appearing* which is the first phase of Christ's second coming. This **A**ppearing of Christ is for the **R**apture of the church. Following are other Bible verses which support this truth.

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Colossians 3:4 *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* Paul told the Christians in Colossae that when Christ appeared they would appear with Him in glory. Jesus described His appearing in Matthew 24-30-31. *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven....And he shall send his angels....and they shall gather together his elect...*

At His **A**ppearing Jesus will send His angels to **R**apture the church and to take them to meet Him in the air. (I Thessalonians 4:17) Christians will then appear in glory with Jesus Christ as Paul said.

I Timothy 6:14 *That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ...* Paul encouraged Timothy to keep the faith until the **A**ppearing of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not **A**ppear during the life of Timothy but we know that Timothy would not have had to keep the faith beyond the rapture. Thus the Lord's **A**ppearing has to be the **R**apture.

II Timothy 4:8 *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

According to Paul all who love the **A**ppearing of Jesus Christ will receive a crown of righteousness on *that day*. What day? Surely Christians will be crowned with righteousness when Christ **A**ppears at the **R**apture not later at His **A**dvent or **R**eturn to earth. Christians will return to earth with Jesus Christ wearing their crowns.

Hebrew 9:28 *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* Jesus will **A**ppear again with *salvation* (deliverance from God's wrath and judgment) unto them that look for him. Salvation will come at Christ's **A**ppearing at the **R**apture (first phase) not His **A**dvent or **R**eturn to earth (second phase).

**A**ppear is what Jesus said He would do in Matthew 24:30. There are twelve New Testament references to the **A**ppearing of Jesus Christ. They all agree with *appear* in Matthew 24:30 which is the first phase of Christ's second coming. **A**ppear = **R**apture.



## The Lord's Rapture

We will end this exposition of **The Lord's Rapture** on a trivial but interesting note. Jesus told us in Matthew 25:13 that we could know neither the day or the hour of His return. Mark recorded Jesus as saying, "*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning.*" Mark 13:35

Of course Jesus is speaking of His coming at the rapture. He gives four times of day in which He could return: evening, midnight, dawn and before noon. Which time is correct? Actually, all the times are correct. When Jesus appears at the rapture it will be evening, midnight, dawn and later in the day around the world. The time of day for us depends on where we are located on the planet when Christ returns.

This completes our exposition of the Lord's rapture of the church which was the central point of His tribulation prophecy. We have compared the language used in Matthew 24:30-31 with other verses which are generally viewed as the rapture. There should be no conclusion other than the climactic event in the Lord's prophecy is the rapture of the church.

Before moving on it will be helpful to shine our attention on this glaring example of inconsistent prophecy interpretation. I recently saw a list in a book by a certain prophecy writer. This list had two columns. One column had Bible verses which depict the rapture while the other listed verses showing Christ's return to earth.

The writer put all verses with the words "appear" and "appearing" in the rapture column except one. He put Matt 24:30-31 in the column for Christ's return to earth. Inconsistency! This often happens when one's interpretation is guided by a preconceived belief system such as the pre-tribulation rapture. Incorrect interpretation leads to incorrect prophecy which leads to an incorrect future.

## The Rapture Folly

Sadly many preachers and their followers believe the prophetic folly that the rapture will occur before the end time tribulation period begins. It ought to be perfectly clear after digesting the information in this chapter that the Lord's climactic event in Matthew 24:30-31 is the rapture of the church.

Why is it seen by many Christians as the gathering of Israel at Christ's

## The Lord's Rapture

return to earth? The answer is found here.

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. Matthew 24:29*

Jesus was definite as to when the climactic event would happen. He said, *Immediately after the tribulation of those days...* What days? The days of the tribulation period. (Matthew 24:4-28 Revelation 6-18) Those who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture cannot accept the climactic event as being the rapture because Jesus unmistakably placed it AFTER the tribulation. They therefore must conclude that the climactic event is the gathering of Israel at Christ's return to earth.

## T H A N K Y O U ...

...for reading this short book on the rapture. I hope you enjoyed it and learned from it. I would consider myself as failing if you did not.

There is much more to be learned about the rapture which is presented in the following e-books offered on this website.

1. A Misplaced Rapture
2. A Secret Rapture?
3. Seventh Trumpet Rapture

## C O N T A C T M E

I would be very pleased to hear from you. Your comments, questions and suggestions would be most welcomed. You may contact me as follows:

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Again, thank you and may GOD BLESS YOU..... **Phil Jellerson, Author**