


TIME SERIES NO. 16

RAPTURE

A WESTGATE
MONOGRAPH

NO.16 RAPTURE

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph is No.16 in the present series. It sets what we know from the biblical prophecy alongside where we are in history in the context of the international signals to which our Lord referred.

The “war to end wars” was followed by the Second World War another next world conflagration feared by strategists and politicians has been stalled by high-level networking, diplomacy and more importantly by “Him who hinders”.


Westgate Monograph No.16 examines the prophetic denouement, Jesus’ teaching on the time of unprecedented trouble and the apocalyptic vision of John the divine and seeks to stable the results within a running order of future events.

**Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored
He hath leased the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword
His truth is marching on.
Glory glory hallelujah Glory glory hallelujah
Glory glory hallelujah, His truth is marching on**

During the Thatcher era our Sovereign prepared an address to the nation in the event of the onset of the 3rd world war. Such realism serves to concentrate the mind.

Bob Coffey Westgate August 2013

THE RAPTURE

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CONTINUITY OR CRISIS

There is a lot of talk in Christian circles of **this earth as our eternal home**. This idea surfaced strongly in Jehovah Witness teaching over half a century ago and is now fervently espoused by a surprising number of those who take pride in positioning themselves within the Reformed Tradition. We are to receive without question the idea that we are back from heaven on this earth after a bit of spit and polish – and the "New" (καινος) **heaven and earth** is the "Old" one revamped. If scripture said "New" (νεος) "a new phase" very well – but with this system of which we are part "passing away" and "rolling up as a scroll" and "melting" a really "New" home is called for – especially since in Isaiah 65 & 66 which many who are not over subtle take to be the "eternal state" "the curse" and "death" are stated to be present – hardly the scene to which God is treating us for eternity. I'm afraid continuity, however comforting to good environmentalists among us, is not the bible's answer. We can still speak affirmatively of the "end of the (transient) world" as we know it and the beginning of the world fashioned without sea or sun where the Lamb is the light thereof.

THE END OF THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY

Q. Why talk about Christians being taken away?

A. In a word because it is right theology, right ecclesiology, right logic and right prophetically!

There are a number of serious reasons why the Christian Church has a *terminus ad quem* – a deadline for the

completion of its work under God. I will set out first the unavoidable logic of the Rapture.

NO OTHER POSITION COVERS ALL THE BASES

(1) There simply is no other *feasible* proposition that can be fielded by Christian A-millennial historicists or historians who avoid talk of Rapture, Tribulation and future Millennium but terrestrial continuity sine die.

(2) There is no defensible theological compromise of Systematic Theology that can replace the stance of the Bible's Prophetic Eschatology and maintain **the Sovereignty of God** at the same time. Without "the Rapture" the **Sovereignty of God** as Pantocrator or Perfecter of everything *He promised by Covenant* to the Patriarchs and **by commission** to the Church cannot be maintained. Without the rapture the New Heaven and New Earth that replaces this one that "melts" (2Peter3.12) **τηκεται** is inaccessible.

THE RAPTURE IS THE KEY

(1) Jesus said "One shall be taken and another left" Matthew 24.40 and Luke 17 34-36 Where will they be taken – to the throne and another or heavenly dimension. How? **By the Rapture of course!**

(2) Paul wrote "We who are alive will be caught up with the risen ones in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" 1Thessalonians 4.17 "Caught up?" Surely not! Do you mean like Enoch and Elijah and Jesus and Paul and the persons who rose after Christ's resurrection. Are you serious? I am very serious. Where do you think Jesus went? Where is Elijah? Where are the many saints who rose from the tombs after Christ? Are they back in the grave – let's hope not! No indeed – they have gone home to the Heaven and Paradise of God. Why wait till the oracle of death convinces you of this.

Embrace the thoroughgoing evidence we have for "The Rapture" and take ownership of it as an inalienable part of the sovereign purpose of God and fundamental truth not a take it or leave it viewpoint or a doctrine that might or might not be valid. It is subject to biblical validation because it has prophetic and historical prelude is a matter of promise "**I will come and receive you unto myself**" and is plainly taught in the New Testament scriptures. Twenty one times no less the LORD promised us He would return again.

WHY OH WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH FACE THE VIALS OF REVELATION?

(3) The church is not to abide on earth in tribulation (a) God did not appoint us to wrath-1Thessalonians 5.9 and (b)I will also keep you from the hour of trial which will come on all the world Apocalypse 3.10

(4) During the Tribulation the story of which is written in Apocalypse 4-18 (15 chapters) the church is spoken of as in heaven over 7 heavenly parentheses recorded at this time as follows

(i) A 4. 4 and 10 the elders who represent the church in heaven cast their crowns before God and the Lamb

"OUT OF" TRIBULATION OR "AWAY FROM" TRIBULATION

(ii) A 7.9,14 ff (In heaven) a great innumerable multitude...**who came away from the face of great tribulation** – "stoles" (used both of " clothing" for such as engage in warfare and for the distinctive dress of "sons") There is no explanation for this innumerable host but "The Rapture"

(iii) A 10.1. The One who had clothed Himself with a cloud is described as Jesus in A1.9 **had conducted the rapture** (cf

the Cloud) and had a rainbow on His head (sign of the messenger from among the gods

(iv) A10.6 The ONE with the book gave notice of 3.5 years of "bitter" judgment in which the Church can have no part – we are not called to suffer wrath **but obtain salvation by "The Rapture"**

(v) A11.16 Are the elders in heaven who respond to the notice of Christ's Advent as king divorced from the church on earth? Heavens No! This whole section of the Apocalypse from Chapters 4-18 has **no** reference to the Church on earth – **"The Rapture" has seen the Church home to heaven**

(vi) A12.10 **The church in heaven** rejoices at the ending of satanic accusation of Tribulation saints still witnessing on earth. How did the church get to heaven? **By "The Rapture" of course!**

(vii) A 14 3The elders enjoy the company of the Jewish "firstfruits" tribulation martyrs.

THE ULTIMATE ANTICHRIST WILL BE REVEALED IN HIS TIME-NOT THIS TIME!

(5) The "Whore"(A 17 15-18) religious establishment is only possible because the church has been gathered to glory and a situation such as Jesus described in Luke 12.39 develops to revamp religion in Antichrist style. **No replacement can be envisaged for Christ and Christianity till Christianity needs replacing – because of "The Rapture"**

(6) **There is no other explanation of Daniel 7 13** when the Son of Man comes *with clouds* and returns to heaven to receive a kingdom than **"The Rapture"**

THE 70TH WEEK NERO'S DAY OR OURS?

Jesus said there would never before or afterwards be such a time as the tribulation-so it must be in the latter days.

(7) The church was not a factor in the first 69 weeks of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9 24-27) and the logic is that neither will it be in the 70th tribulation period – for it is in heaven. **That this should be so necessitates "The Rapture"**

(8) The Tribulation or trial is to "try those settled down on earth for permanent" (as they think) and to "turn the hearts of Fathers to children and restore all things" through the ministry of Elijah and the 2 witnesses or Olive Trees which is exclusive of the commission of the church. **This change cannot come about without "The Rapture"**

(9) The Church's commission ends with the gospel being taken to every Gentile nation – that purpose is achievable by the means now at the Church's disposal in the very near future. Matthew 24.14. When this purpose is achieved Matthew 24.40 – **"the Rapture" ensues**

(10) It is both logic and justice and besides in accord with the promise of Christ that the Church cannot come under the judgment of the rebellious (Romans 8.1, John 5.24, 1John 4.17). When before his death Christ taught us to pray "Lead us not into the Trial" He was calling on us to believe that would be answered in the positive. By His death He guaranteed that the church would not be judged on earth with the world. To fulfil that promise the ecclesia (called out ones) must be **called away in "The Rapture"**.

ARE YOU GOING TO THE MARRIAGE OR NOT?

(11) The Church is to be presented to the Son by the Father in accordance with Ephesians 5 25-27 and Jude 24.10 in what is

generally called the Marriage feast of the Lamb. This is not an earthly event so we must leave the earth to take part in it – hence **"the Rapture"**

(12) Christ is presented as coming for His Church as the bridegroom to take us from our house to the Father's house – Matthew 25 1-13 Matthew 22 1-14 and Luke 12 35-41. **This entails "The Rapture"**

From the fore-going it should be very clear that "The Rapture" is radically embedded in the doctrine of the Church, Eschatology and inextricably bound to the final resolution of this era and the introduction of its biblical sequel. To duck out of "The Rapture" is simply to hide one's face in the sand or to swim against the tide of scripture and call out "A plague on biblical prophecy".

(1) THE APOSTLES TAUGHT THE RAPTURE

Richard Bauckham in drawing the attentions of modern thinkers to Jurgen Moltmann's eschatology has gained greater prestige for the study of the "last things" and rekindled anticipation of the future kingdom (of Christ) within history. So the "resurrection of all the dead" and the "new creation of all reality" and "the Kingdom of glory" are guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The achievement of Moltmann is that he shows that future eschatology is the way to make Christian faith relevant in a modern world. To talk of the "last things" is not just as Karl Barth commented to add "a harmless little chapter at the conclusion of Christian Dogmatics."

The early apostles to a man believed Jesus when he said, "I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you unto myself" They believed He was Israel's Messiah but also the Church's Lord who commissioned them to evangelise the Gentiles till the unknown hour when He would come

again in a Parousia or visit to conclude the ministry of the church and take His church to the Marriage feast of the Lamb. "The Rapture" was apostolic doctrine as sure as the "Resurrection". In 1 Corinthians 15 12-18 both doctrines are intertwined.

The following scriptures supply evidence that the Apostles understood the Pre-tribulation home-going of the church.

(1) **Matthew (Levi)** records for us the "Parable of the Ten Virgins" and the famous Midnight Call which is couched in the Jewish concept of the bride being whisked from her home and taken to the home of the groom. This "visit of the bridegroom" mirrors the Parousia or Rapture. Matthew also literally refers four times to the "Parousia" in Matthew 24.3, 24.28, 24.37 & 24.39. Here are his references: –

(a) **The disciples** ask "What is the sign of your Parousia visit and of the end of this aeon or age? This united statement of the 12 should itself serve to validate the agreement of the Apostles on the Parousia.

(b) "As the lightning comes from the east and shines to the west so is the Parousia of the Son of Man – where the body is (to be lifted) there will the eagles (like angels who know what they are looking for – in their case saints) be gathered."

(c) "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the Parousia of the son of Man be-**before the cataclysm** they were eating and drinking marrying and giving in marriage until the very day Noah entered the ark. Similarly before the **Great Tribulation** the Church shall be taken away:–

(d) "So shall the Parousia of the Son of Man be – two in the field one taken the other left; two at the mill – one taken the other left. Watch for you know not the hour when you're Lord comes'"

(2) **Mark** who wrote down what **Peter** said records, "Then the Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather his elect from the four winds – from the highest point of night or time or summer of the earth to the topmost point of heaven" Mark 13.27.(cf. also 8.38). Now Peter was brother to **Andrew** and there can be little doubt that what Peter taught Andrew also knew by mutual contact with Jesus.

(3) **John** set down Jesus own words "In my Father's house are many suitable places – if it were not so I would have told you – and if I go I will come and "receive you unto myself that where I am there you also may be". John 14.3(cf. also 1 John 2.28 &3.2. Also the Apocalypse where chapters 4-18 cover the Tribulation Heptad of seven years and show us time after time that the Church is in heaven) John had a brother **James** who became an early martyr – he would have been apprised of the same experience in the Jerusalem interior.

Now we cannot cite Philip and Bartholomew and Matthias nor James – Alphaeus or Thomas or Simon Zelotes or Jude – James but we can be confident they were all taught of the LORD. Futhermore if we study Peter's exposition in 2 Peter 3 and John's Apocalypse we know that like us they were being taught by the Spirit of God – to the same end – the coming of the Lord for His church and the return of the King in his kingdom. We do know, however, through *Irenaeus* references to *Papias* that Philip and Thomas and James along with John the Presbyter held to Jewish views of Messiah's reign and linked this with the Second Advent much in the way *Papias* who knew John's teaching thoroughly understood that truth.

(4) **Paul** the apostle (to the Gentiles) born out of due time has given us many references to the "Rapture". I will quote the most famous and refer to others. Paul wrote in his earliest

letter to Thessalonica "The LORD Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall have first risen. After that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up to meet the LORD in the air." From this quotation we get the word **αρπαζω**(ARPAZO) which means "to snatch away" "to take hastily" "to tear from the arms" "to snatch up" or "plunder". Jesus spoke of the ecumenical leader of the last days who was to be blind to the rapture and was as surprised as the world around at the coming of Christ – and even thought of it as a theft from his household. Luke 12.39. Other references to the Rapture from Pauline writings are Romans 8.23, 1Cor 15.49 1Thess. 1.10, 2Thess. 2.1, Philippians 3.20-21, 1Timothy 6.14, Titus 2.12-13.

(2) CHURCH FATHERS AND THE CURATE'S EGG

The early church fathers by and large consented almost to a man to "The Rapture" but as we shall see a change came about through the adoption of a Greek style or Origen-led hermeneutic – which was further consolidated by deflection from earlier orthodoxy led by Augustine.

This period of history divides itself neatly from Christ to Origen and from Origen to Constantine – Augustine and beyond. We can say as in the case of the curate's egg that it is part good and part bad and that the first period reflects ancient orthodoxy and the second neo-orthodoxy or heterodoxy.

(1) THE EARLY PATRISTIC PERIOD TILL 350AD

The Messianic millennial kingdom according to *G.N.H Peters* passed among the best Christians for two hundred and fifty years as apostolic doctrine. It was accepted along with the truth of the Parousia everywhere. Let me demonstrate from Peters the widespread acceptance of these doctrines. This

message of the kingdom and the manner of its coming was taught by Papias in Phrygia, **Justin** in Palestine, **Irenaeus** in Gaul, Nepos in Egypt, Apollinaris and Methodius in Greece, Victorinus in Germany Tertullian in Africa Lactantius in Italy and it was specifically stated in the Council of Nice AD323 in France.

The early church did not incorporate any great eschatological detail into the "esse" of its belief though *Harnack* affirmed that the glorious reign of Christ was so early taught as to deserve inclusion into doctrinal statements.

IN THE SECOND CENTURY the Pre-millennial "Rapture" was taught by Pothinus (AD 87-177), Justyn Martyr (AD 100-168), Melito of Sardis (AD 100-170), Hegesippus (AD130-190), Tatian (AD 130-190), Irenaeus (AD140-202) Tertullian (AD 150-220 and Hippolytus (AD 160-240).

Advocates in the next century included Cyprian (AD200-258, Commodian (AD200-270), Nepos (AD 230-280), Victorinus (AD 240-303), Methodius (AD250-311) and Lactantius (AD 240--330).

Justin who taught in the holy land and Irenaeus who taught in France both held that there were **three classes of men**

- (1) Heretics who deny the resurrection of the flesh and the Millennium.
- (2) The exactly orthodox who assert both the resurrection and the Kingdom of Christ on earth.
- (3) The believers who consent with the just and yet endeavour to allegorize and turn to metaphor all those scriptures produced for a proper reign of Christ and who have sentiments agreeing better with heretics who deny than orthodox who maintain this doctrine of the reign of Christ on earth.

(2) THE INFLUENCE OF CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (Preceptor of the Catechetical school and teacher of Origen)

Origen Gaius and Dionysius Mosheim says of Origen "He wished to have the literal and obvious sense of the words of scripture disregarded, and an arcane sense, lying concealed in the envelope of the words, to be sought for. But the advocates of an earthly Kingdom of Christ rested their cause solely on the natural and proper sense of certain expressions of the Bible.

(1) Gaius and Dionysius first cast doubt upon the genuine inspiration of the Apocalypse since they could not parry appeals to it otherwise.

(2) They rejected the literal sense and substituted an allegorical and figurative sense and modified the prophecy.

(3) The portions of the Old Testament that supported the Apocalypse and Pre-millennial rapture they discredited.

(4) Anything they could not allegorise they attributed to a heavenly outcome and fulfilment.

(5) They counted promises made to the Jewish nation conditional and collapsed because of disobedience or simply transferred them as accrued blessings to the Church.

Reflection will confirm that much the same techniques of avoidance are employed by a-millennialists today.

(3) A RARE POST-NICEAN FIND

Ephraem the Syrian who flourished around 373AD wrote a sermon on "The last times the Antichrist and the End of the world". His writing represents the ancient view – now at odds with the Constantinian ideas swirling around him. He says, **"Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms the world... for all the saints and elect of God**

are gathered, prior to the Tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

(4) AUGUSTINE

With the welcome change from wholesale persecution to the ascendancy of Christianity under Constantine emancipated Christians however began to lose their lively hope of our LORD'S imminent advent and exchanged the conception of the temporal supremacy of Christianity as a fulfilment of the promised reign of Christ – which was now interpreted as the reign of Christ in the heart.

Into this setting came Augustine. Before him there had been no acceptable a-millennialist teaching. Now his writings brought about the shelving of pre-millennial teaching in the Roman Church which was fast becoming the mother church of the west. In his "City of God" *Augustine* set forth his dream of the church visible as the Kingdom of God on earth.

AUGUSTINE TAUGHT THAT: –

- (1) The millennium is the rule of Christ in the Church
- (2) The Binding of Satan (Apocalypse 20.2) is what we read in Luke 10.18 and is re-positioned within Jesus ministry not in the millennium.
- (3) The first Resurrection of Apocalypse 20.5 is the New Birth.
- (4) The 1000 years were first taken as the end of the sixth millennium of humanity-which he took as 650-since the creation was thought to be around 5350BC.
- (5) He denied the millennium would follow the Second Advent.
- (6) He taught that the Church is the Kingdom and that there would be no fulfilment of promises to Israel.

Single-handed he had contrived what we today call a-millennialism – and founded a counter to the true doctrine of the Bible and the apostles and the early church fathers. What is more he got away with it and as the glory of the Roman Church grew the popularity of his views grew in direct proportion.

During the immediate Pre-Reformation period the Albigenses and Waldenses accepted the pre-millennial stance but their writings are lost to us having been destroyed during the Catholic persecution of their communities.

(3) REFORMERS KICK THE DOCTRINE BACK INTO TOUCH

The Reformers downgraded tradition and other books in favour of Scripture. They also treated the early church fathers with respect. Soon after Reform took root Irenaeus "Against Heresies" was published which gave impetus to "futurism" and through its last 5 chapters it cast Daniel's 70th week into the distant end time future.

The Reformers repudiated much but certainly not all of the allegories and symbolism of the Medieval hermeneutic and adopted a literal approach to exegesis. Protestants also were in touch with Jews and they learned Hebrew. This awakened interest in Old Testament passages with promises to national Israel. Those who travelled that road adopted pro-pre-millennial ideas. Actually in the late 1500's pre-millennialism became known and was factored in once more amongst the tenets of the mainstream church. The blossoming of better biblical interpretation later in the Reformation yielded a contingent of pre-millennial scholars. Amongst these was Joseph Mede – the father of English pre-millennialism with his "Apocalypse is the Key" Another thinker Increase Mather was dedicated to proving that "saints would be caught up into

the air thereby escaping the final conflagration" Thinkers of this period separated out the Advent of Christ from the Rapture and did service to future developments in the recovery of earliest Apocalyptic doctrine.

(4) THE BLESSED HOPE SURVIVES FOUR CENTURIES

As we have seen Joseph Mede in the **17th century** and indeed Peter Jurieu with his "Approaching deliverance of the Church" kept alive the study of the Advent and the Rapture. Two bible commentators emerged in **18th century England** to maintain interest in the Rapture – Philip Doddridge and John Gill both of whom wrote a commentary on the New Testament – and each was emphatic on the pre-tribulation rapture and indeed recognised it as the most imminent matter with which the Church was faced. Both believed the Rapture to be separate from and previous to Christ's descent to rule on earth. Others as James McKnight and the well-known Thomas Scott taught that the righteous will be carried to heaven to be secure till the time of judgment is over. Meantime in America Morgan Edwards who in the years 1742-44 founded Brown University saw the Rapture as occurring 3.5 years before the Millennium. The most prominent figure in the 19th century was of course J.N.Darby who studied the Rapture whilst convalescing from illness in 1826-7. Then Bible Conferences such as the Niagara Conference became notable for inviting teachers on Advent topics.

(5) THE TWENTIETH CENTURY kicked off with William Blackstone's "Jesus is Coming" and the widely read Scofield Bible (1909). By now serious scholarship got behind the Pre-millennial theme in the United States. Amongst these

were Arno Gaebelein, Scofield himself, A J Gordon, James M. Gray of Moody, R.A. Torrey and the redoubtable Harry Ironside who was notable for challenging his peers publicly. Lewis Chafer the president of Dallas Theological Seminary whom I mention last was possibly the most learned of them all. His Systematic Theology has a generous Eschatological segment. As the 20th century closed social concerns emerged strongly and triggered a marked shift in the attention given to apocalyptic.

Today at the beginning of the 21st century a large body of popular literature and many TV networks who project Pre-millennialist thinking worldwide ensure that this ancient verdict on the nature of Christ's re-appearance in defence of His church and return in defence of His ancient people Israel and in line with His promise to consummate his Kingdom for an Aeon on earth is not about to be tucked away and this study makes its own small contribution to setting the matter before the modern church.

THE RAPTURE IS THE BIGGEST EVENT RIGHT AHEAD -THE PROMISE TO A GENERATION OF JEWS

More particularly to highlight this extraordinary promise we need to look again at the context with which Christ is dealing. Our LORD is handling two quite different topics which are threaded promiscuously through the narrative. However we only need to separate the state of Jerusalem during the earlier judgment under Titus and the state of Jerusalem of the end-times. The former was to be "taken stone from stone" v.6 and surrounded with armies v.20. Jerusalem in the last days was to be "trodden down of the Gentiles" until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. Today we have fair notice of the end of these times just as the Amorites had fair notice through the

armies of Israel massed on their borders under Joshua. The people and parliament of Israel legally are now masters of Jerusalem. **This has been historical fact since 1967.**

Whether we like it or not the Jewish clock has struck the hour the world was waiting for over centuries and two millennia. It is so ill to the taste that the nations are trying by every device to turn this fact on its head – to divide the land – and satanic powers are intent on throwing Israel out or even annihilating Israel. None of this makes sense and none of it will ever happen.

PEACE TREATY AND THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE AGES

The priority of politicians is a peace treaty of historic proportions with Israel and the Arab nation within her borders as signatories and the United Nations as the guarantor. The stakes are very high. The treaty must come either to avert war or by its breach to create war-but come it will. The war I speak of is that annotated at length in Ezekiel 38-39. The breach of treaty I mention is that of Daniel 9.27. All these events are inter-related. The emergence of the latter day "covenant" or "treaty" may well enable the building of a Jewish temple in the adequate space where it used to stand right opposite the "golden gate" or the Eastern gate as we now know it. This covenant could be an engagement current political leaders are contemplating as of now. The end of the church age and the beginning of the Theocratic Kingdom age are mutually exclusive so the Rapture is an event of some imminence supposing we stand on the threshold of an historic covenant that enables the building of the Fourth Temple.

1. WHY DOES THERE NEED TO BE A RAPTURE?

There are issues within the school of which I am a paid up member that I wish to confront to enable the reader to come to a verdict with regard to the prospective of Pre-millennialist teaching set out simply and broadly.

I intend to do this by fielding some searching questions.

You might come at the "end times" with an a-millennialist verdict. You might be saying – Jesus is coming back – He will judge mankind and all will be well. I don't understand the need to complicate it .

Answer. The short answer is "Read the Apocalypse". To flesh that out there are perilous times ahead. There are at least two events in the book of Revelation that decimate the earth's population. There is biblical testimony in Ezekiel 38-39 to a war with possible nuclear connotation leading into a series of wars and further testimony in the Apocalypse to famines and woes and Phial judgments set out specifically in seven episodes of pressure or trial or devastation on this earth. The Church (ekkleisia) for whom Christ died is by definition to be "called out" and according to His promise we are to be taken from wrath – "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...whether we wake or sleep we will live together with Him".

2. WILL ALL CHRISTIANS BE CAUGHT UP IN THE RAPTURE?

There are "Partial Rapturists" who imagine that those who are not living out their testimony scrupulously will be left when Christ comes and will suffer as martyrs in the ensuing Heptad of seven year pressure. I do not share that view. Scripture says "We who are still alive and are left shall be caught up" (1Thess.4.17). Paul adds no proviso and none is needed. Luke 21.36 has been so interpreted as to grant leverage to the "Partial" viewpoint. Luke puts four points: –

- (1) At the beginning of end times signs Luke says "Look up" for your "out-redemption" is near.
- (2) The emergent Jewish state and all the fruitful or evangelised nations show the time is near
- (3) Avoid being weighed down by debauchery worldly cares lust for wine
- (4) Its suddenness will trap the unready so let us strive to be those who "**have been** deemed worthy or determined to escape what is coming. Such "worthiness" is **conferred by grace** and all who are "saved" are recipients of sufficient grace. For their part each has by an act of the will (a decision) determined to seek shelter in the precious blood of Christ from the coming wrath.

3. WILL THERE BE A “MID-TRIBULATION” RAPTURE?

This question supposes that Christians may go through the first half of the Heptad. That would entail the church suffering under the events of Apocalypse Chapters 5-12. To be more specific that entails: –

A world conquest attempt by the white horse rider – possibly Persia

A bloody war to follow.

A Great Economic crash.

Its sequel a massive quake – and the darkened sun with great fear and men questing death.

Then worse still – a third of all vegetation ruined – a third of all mankind die and a third of all rivers poisoned. After this those who dwell on earth endure a 5-month military devastation.

During this period there are three heavenly parentheses which present the body and leadership of the Church in heaven already in possession of their rewards and casting them before

the LORD. The church will not be called on to endure these world shaking events.

4. HOW SOON WILL THE RAPTURE BE?

The bible clearly states that "no man knows the day or the hour" when Christ shall come for his own. (Matthew 25.13) That does not preclude awareness of the era and the signs anent this event.

(i) As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be – two men shall be in the field – one shall be taken the other left. Two women shall be working together making bread – one shall be taken the other left. The picture conveyed is not of a topsy-turvy world of tribulation but one of industry and normal activity – stretching to leisure and feasting too. Matthew 24.37

(ii) The Master of the house (oecumene) – a leading ecclesiastic-cum-scholar who will be taken unawares – his house will be rifled but he will not be an advent oriented leader. Matthew 24.43

(iii) The gospel must be first preached in all the world – Matt 24.14, 26.13 Mark 14.9 This target has been put within the reach of the church now on earth by the developments God has granted.

(iv) The generation of Jews who entered Israel in 1948 or their offspring are promised they will live to see the completion of the events including the rapture. Matthew 24.34 Mark 13.30 Luke 21.32.

(v) Plans for the construction of the temple in which the Antichrist must appear during the second half of the tribulation must be well advanced. Today the articles of ministry are ready. The white heifer is groomed and prepared. The Sanhedrin is constituted. Plans to develop the sanctuary north of the Dome of the Rock (which is given over to the

Gentiles) and on the base of Herod's temple opposite the Eastern Gate are in hand.

(vi) A peace plan is to be established as a result of serious mid east problems which will covenant with Israel concerning her security and on other associate matters. This will be broken in the midst of the Heptad or Daniel's 70th week.

(vii) Nuclear fission must have been discovered at the lead in to the day of the LORD and possibly used in accordance with 2 Peter 3.10 – but not as yet in a world devastating manner as in 2 Peter 3.12. It would seem that the use of the Nuclear button is a key element in the proximity of the coming of the LORD.

SUMMARY

"The LORD himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and or but the dead in Christ shall have risen first. After that we who are still alive (on earth) will be "caught up" together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air. And so we will be with the LORD forever." I truly hope you find yourself better informed from reading about the various phases that the church has gone through in dealing with Apocalyptic despite all of which this fact remains unaltered that Christ is coming to take His own to heaven.

What is seriously different from the position of the early church today is not just viewpoint but the thoroughgoing **imminence of the return of Christ** which was 2000 years away when the apostles first proclaimed the doctrine as set forth by Christ. Wherefore "You ought also to be ready".

POSTSCRIPT

WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT WE TO BE?

Jesus said in Luke 21

(1) Turn your attention to one another προσεχω The term is used in connection with bringing a ship safely to land and into harbour. Our first priority is to seek the welfare of our fellow men spiritually – to purchase the opportunities of evangelizing and turning men and women to God

(2) Let not your heart become heavy even once

Βαρυθυοσις This bidding in effect advises us that there is no place for a "hard heart" among the disciples of Christ. Our first priority is "to forgive" to keep no account of hurts – to be open to others – to be most gracious and understanding.

(3) Avoid profligate living κραιμαλη In the world of today too many are subject to "sick headaches" consequent upon very wrong indulgences in alcohol and drugs. Christ demands "clear headedness" and total discipline of mind.

(4) Avoid the hardening of drunkenness μεθη The word is our "inebriated"-brought into darkness by passion for alcohol. This was among Gentiles characteristic of the time of Christ and it was also linked with the time of Noah and so transposed in prophecy to the end-times by our LORD. It is linked with the companion passions of sex and over-eating.

(5) Do not be weighed down by life's anxieties

μεριμνας Βιωτιμας so that that day come upon you suddenly as the north wind-unwelcome and chilling you to the very core. Be ready and praiseful-be close to Christ and roll your burdens on Him

(6) Do not be a simple spectator totally at home on the earth καθημαι επιεισερχομαι Don't be someone who is watching from your armchair – and just content to be at home here with a good house and live entertainment. The coming of

Christ will be a "snare" to such as are worldly and it will trap many in the snare of the devil, the world, the flesh.

(7) Watch and always pray that you may be counted "very worthy" καταξιωω to escape and stand before the Son of Man in the bridal feast of the Lamb. Christians are not appointed to wrath but to "escape" (1Thessalonians 5.9) but Christ is saying "aim for the best" – "Keep in touch with me daily." Let your life be one of steady prayer and be ιντεντ ον the things of Christ αγρυπνω sleeplessly so. This then is the Master's advice in 2011 and every year till you stand before the Son of Man – "Be very worthy" in His merit and by your works of love to stand before the Son of Man in that wonderful and fast approaching Day.

MARANATHA

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