

# The Prince Of Peace Returns

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## THE HOPE OF MANKIND

In the hearts of many people today there is a lurking fear that the days of our civilization are numbered. Statesmen, scientists, financiers and educators have in recent months expressed their conviction again and again that we are headed for a world catastrophe, so vast and terrible that it may end all life in this planet. In words that are reminiscent of the ancient prophets, they are declaring with alarm, "Time is running out". Some years ago, in fact until the outbreak of the Second World War, such opinions would have been considered nonsense. In those days it was generally considered a mark of mental instability or certainly a lack of education to speak of the end of the world and the shortness of time. Those people, brought up to believe in the theory of evolution felt certain that somehow or other man would find a way out of his problems, and build himself a brave new world of brotherhood and peace. Few people talk that way today. The shattering upheavals of the last few years have changed the whole direction of human thought, as if an earthquake had turned the Amazon into a new course. Those who were the most adamant in proclaiming their faith in man's ability to save himself have now become the most dismal prophets of doom. They are convinced that another global conflict is just ahead and that it will result not only in the extinction of our 20th century civilization, but most likely in the total dissolution of man and all his works.

This has resulted in a cry for world peace and this cry is sounding in all the world today, and friends, it will grow into a deafening crescendo, just before Christ comes in the clouds of heaven. Now this, too is a sign of His near approach. It is also a demand on heaven, that He, Who is our Peace, must come.

It is rather significant, that the shortest proposal for world peace that was submitted in a competition staged a few years ago consisted of only two words, "Try Jesus". Of course, the judges in the competition were so intent on finding a solution whereby man would effect universal peace, that they passed by this suggestion with a smile. They didn't give it a second thought. However, "Try Jesus" was the one and only sensible plan submitted. It is the only plan that will work. We have been trying to cure the world's recurring illnesses with remedies that have been tried and have failed a thousand times. Since wars have become worldwide in extent, we have heard much of reconstruction. However, the Bible says that the only genuine reconstruction will take place when Christ appears. You remember when talking to His disciples, Jesus spoke of "The regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory". Matthew 19:28.

Peter voices the same truth: "Repent you therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things." Acts 3:19-21. And again I read from Revelation 21:4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Another translation reads: "For the old order is passed away" We have certainly heard quite a deal about new orders, regeneration, reconstruction, and restitution, but the word of God declares that these will take place at our Lord's return.

You remember the song the angels sang when hovering over Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago. Yes, they sang, "Peace on earth" and this will only be realized when Christ, whose first coming the angels honored, returns again the second time, "without sin unto salvation".

A well known British author declared that "the cry for a new world echoes forever down the corridors of time. It, and the intoxicating promise of it, has been in the mouth of every conqueror from Alexander to Attila; from Julius Caesar to Napoleon Bonaparte. It is, in fact, the worship of illusion. A worship that has cost humanity millions of lives and oceans of blood." Yes, so far the hope of the new world wherein war is unknown and peace is universal has been naught but the worship of illusion. Sometimes we have been told that peace is to be seen on the horizon, just ready to break over the world, but that vision has always proved a mirage. Yet, praise God, according to His own Word, the day is coming when the mirage will become a reality. We read this glorious promise in Isaiah 35. This chapter is really a prophetic pen-picture of the Earth, as it shall be reformed at the time of the great regeneration at the advent of our Lord. The seventh verse, contains our promise, but let us begin with the first verse to get the picture in all its radiant colors. Listen! The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen you the weak

hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water.” Isaiah 35:1-7. The margin of the Revised Version says, “The mirage shall become a pool.”

Some years ago I was crossing a great desert. It was midsummer. The heat was well-nigh intolerable but suddenly as if by magic, there appeared just ahead, a silver strip of water, a lake. No mountain pool ever looked so cool and refreshing, but alas, as quickly and as mysteriously as the phantom lake came it vanished. It was no pool of life-giving water, it was an illusion, a mirage. Just so in this life, the things we most yearn for - peace, happiness, health - about the time we think we have them, they vanish, we know not whither. They burst like bubbles in our grasp, and they leave us, disappointed. But you notice the prophet Isaiah says that the glad day is coming when the mirage will become a pool of water, not a mockery, not something that tantalizes us to the point of expectation and then disappears.

Ah, no, in the wilderness of our wanderings will waters break out and streams in the deserts of our disappointment, and the mirage of our broken hopes will in that time, become pools of realization. You remember the prophet Micah by inspiration gives us this beautiful picture, this hope filled prophecy of Christ. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel. Whose going forth have been from of old, from everlasting. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace.” Micah 5:2,4, 5. “This man” ah, that is Jesus Christ, and Him alone. He’s the One and the only One who can give this troubled and war-vexed world the perfect peace that we so long for. In Him and His coming is the hope of the world. Of course, the individual Christian, friends, may now have the peace of Christ yes, even now - in this present evil world. When about to leave this earth 1900 years ago, Jesus said to His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27.

Though there may be “upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity the sea and the waves roaring and men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after the things that are coming on the earth,” yet the hearts of the followers of Christ may be at perfect peace.

Isaiah wrote of God: “Thou shall keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.” Isaiah 26:3. Trust and faith in God guarantees peace within. No matter how fiercely the storms may rage without, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Psalms 46:1-3. And this peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. This peace is a pledge of the peace that will obtain all over the world “when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever.” Revelation 11:15. Yes, this Man, Christ Jesus is our peace now individually, and then His peace shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

O Prince of peace Who once did rise In splendid triumph over the skies  
Before the rapt disciples eyes, O, come Lord Jesus, quickly come.

## **SIGNS OF OUR LORD S RETURN**

There has been much futile speculation regarding the time of the coming of the Lord. Many have set dates, and stated the exact time for this event only to be proved false. Remember it is quite impossible for anyone to figure out the exact time for the return of Jesus. That is one thing God has not revealed. In Matthew 24:36 I read: “Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only”. So whenever you hear people stating the exact time of our Lord’s return, you can know with assurance that they are wrong.

However, while it is impossible for anyone to know the exact time for the coming of Christ, it is our business to know when His coming is near. I would like you to notice the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:32; “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: so likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door”. This picture of the fig tree is something that everybody understands. When the buds on the trees begin to swell, we all know that means Spring is here. Jesus tells us that when we see the signs that He has given, we may know that His coming is near, “even at the door.”

Some will say: “Mr. Burnside, people have been expecting Christ to come for hundreds of years. Time and time again they have preached that His coming is near but He hasn’t come. How can we know that it is any nearer now?” Is our day like other times? Absolutely not. There never was a time like this. Our day is different in its financial, industrial, scientific, mechanical, national, international, physical, moral, religious and social aspects.

Our day is set off from every other time in the world as a day of rapid transit. People are travelling many times faster than they ever traveled before. What does this mean? Nahum 2:3,4 says: "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall seem like torches they shall run like the lightning", Do we see this? Indeed we do. This is the great age of speed. There never was such a time. Just over a century and a half ago men were travelling at the same speed as they were four thousand years ago - on land, as fast as the horse would carry them; on sea, as fast as the wind would drive the ship. But about one hundred and fifty years ago something happened. Men suddenly began to move faster. In 1809 the first steamboat, invented by Robert Fulton, made its way down the Hudson River. The first passenger train ran down the tracks in 1825.

In 1890 the first motor car made its appearance. In 1903 the first airplane made a successful flight with the Wright Brothers at the controls and thus ushered in the age of speed. Today thousands of people are travelling through the air from six to seven hundred miles an hour. Millions of motor cars are dashing along the highway at a mile a minute. Trains are clicking along the shiny rails faster than the wind. What does it all mean? Every airplane roaring overhead, every motor car that dashes by, every train rushing across the country, is a travelling sign of the end of time and is saying to you and to me, "This is the day of God's preparation. Get ready to meet our returning Lord".

Without doubt, our day is one of greatly increased knowledge. There are endless inventions and discoveries. But what does it all mean? Daniel 12:4 will tell you. Here are the words written twenty-five hundred years ago, and you see them fulfilled now before your eyes.

"Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "The time of the end" is a little space of time before the actual end of time. What is going to happen in that period before the end? "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased".

Do we see it? There has been a greater increase of knowledge in the last one hundred years than in all the previous history of mankind. Life has been revolutionized. The tallow candle has become the electric light; the quill has become the electric typewriter; the broom has become the electric sweeper; the horse and cart the motor car; the needle, the electric sewing machine. What does it all mean? In the time of the end "knowledge shall be increased". It means that we are in "the time of the end" and the end of time is drawing near. It was also foretold that the last days were to be marked by a great accumulation of wealth and bitter labor troubles. In the last part of James 5:3 speaking of the men of wealth, we read: "You have heaped treasure together for the last days". The Revised Version makes it clearer: "You have laid up your treasure in the last days". Since 1900 there has been a heaping up of wealth, a piling up of great fortunes, a making of millionaires and multi-millionaires never seen before. One of the most striking features of our day is the struggle between capital and labor. What does this mean? James 5:8 will tell us: "Be ye also patient; establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draws nigh."

There can be no mistake about it. God says that when you see these great fortunes being piled up, and this rising tide of labor trouble, and endless strikes that the coming of the Lord is drawing nigh. This is the great double sign in the financial world.

Look into the political world. The last days are to be marked by the greatest war preparation ever known. Joel 3 tells us about it: "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up; beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong". That is what they are doing now. The whole world is in arms. The last days are to be marked by the greatest unrest this world has ever known.

"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring". Luke 21:25. Are we in the time of the "distress of nations"? Everybody knows that there was never such distress of nations as there is today. Look at Europe - the Middle East - the whole world! There is distress everywhere among all classes that surpasses any time that you have ever read about. Read right on: "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory". Luke 21:26, 27. We see on earth exactly what Jesus Christ said we should see in the very last days; and the next event in God's program is the coming of Jesus. The last days will be marked by the most terrible calamities. Luke 21:11 says: "Great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilence; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven".

Do we see these things? I wonder when I pick up my newspaper what will be the headlines telling about the latest calamity. It is crash upon crash, getting ready for the great final crash. In the 18th century there were eight terrible earthquakes. In the 19th century there were twelve. Since 1900 there has been, on the average, one destructive quake every year. As an old man tottering to his grave, this old world is tottering to her doom. Every earthquake tells the story. Since 1914 we have had the greatest war, the greatest earthquake, the greatest famine, and the greatest pestilence the world has ever known.

In Matthew 24:14 we have another sign - the most encouraging of all. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." Right then shall the end come. One great missionary movement, is

carrying the message of Christ's soon coming to every nation in over 800 languages. This is a supreme sign that He is near, and that brings you and me face to face with a tremendous question: "Are we ready to meet Jesus?"

That is what all this means to us. There will be no chance to get ready when He comes. The message of this hour is not to get ready, but to be ready. Be ready in the morning, at noon and at night. Be sure that every sin is confessed. We cannot avoid meeting Jesus at His coming. It is just good sense when you cannot avoid a certain thing to get ready for it, is it not? Solomon says, "A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." Proverbs 22:3.

We cannot stop Christ from coming. Even if everybody in the world doubts it, He will come just the same. It is a great oncoming that nobody in the world can stop or stay from a moment. "Be... ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes." Matthew 24:44.

When the flood in Noah's day was about to come, the people said, "How can it happen?" Noah warned them for one hundred and twenty years but they didn't believe, and they were lost. The only people in the world who were saved were the people who prepared to be saved. The call of this hour is to get ready. "Prepare to meet thy God." There will be only two classes of people when Jesus comes. One class will pray for the rocks to fall on them; and the other class will be saying, "Lo, this is our God." Revelation 6:14-17; Isaiah 25:9.

I want to appeal to those who know they are not ready. The only way to be ready is to have Christ in our hearts by His Holy Spirit. Jesus wants to come into our hearts. He says: "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:20. Let us extend to Him the invitation He desires, and do it now. Open the door and let Him in.

"Open the door, my brother,  
And let the Lord come in;  
His presence is sweeter, my brother,  
Than all the delights of sin,  
The way that seems broad and flowery  
Is the way that will end in gloom,  
The way that is straight and narrow  
Is the path toward love and home."

## **GOD'S PROGRAM OF COMING EVENTS**

Conflicting views and theories concerning our Lord's return are certainly current today. In view of this it is highly important that every person should have a clear and correct understanding as to just what the Scriptures teach in regard to that great event and the events accompanying it.

Some have thought that the second coming of Christ has already taken place. Volumes have been written in an attempt to prove that Christ came in AD 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem. However, In the book of Revelation, which was written long after Jerusalem was destroyed, the coming of Jesus is still a future event.

Others have claimed that Christ came in 1874, still others, in 1914, and that we are now actually in the millennium, and that Satan is now bound. Well, friends, if the devil is bound now, what will conditions be like when he is let loose? If the devil is bound it must be with a rubber chain, for it can stretch a long way. No, it is very evident that we are not in the millennium and the coming of our Lord is still future.

Some people have thought that the second advent of Christ takes place in two stages, separated by a period of seven years. First they affirm there will be a private, secret, silent, invisible coming of Jesus to "catch away" those ready to meet Him, while the rest of the world knows nothing about it. Seven years later they maintain, Christ will come in glory. During the intervening seven years, this world will go through a time of great trouble and tribulation. Many who have been led to believe this, when searching the Bible for proof have been disappointed to find none, and hence have rejected this belief.

Now here is a question sent to me. "Dear Mr. Burnside. I enjoy your tracts very much. I am glad you are so very sound on the gospel truths which are so much needed these days. Do you think the church will go through the tribulation?"

Well friends, really it does not matter much what I think about this great question. But if you will follow carefully you will notice I am laying down a foundation of Bible truth that will fully answer the question. The Scriptures must be our only authority. In John 6:44 I

read the words of Jesus. Notice the statement: "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Now when did Jesus say the righteous would rise? "At the last day." He repeats this in verses 39, 40, 54. Surely when we have Christ repeating it four times in the one chapter that should be sufficient to convince any Christian. Therefore, the righteous will rise "at the last day." In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 Paul reveals just when the righteous rise: "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." Now, this Scripture reveals that the righteous rise at our Lord's return. Jesus emphasized that it would be "at the last day." Thus we see that the coming of Christ, and the end of the world are combined together. In 1 Corinthians 15:23, 24 we read: "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end."

Paul again couples the coming of Christ and the end together. The disciples in the days of Jesus understood the same truth. In Matthew 24:3 we have the record of their request: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

A careful study of the events connected with the coming of our Lord will more than convince you all that the coming of Christ will mean the end of this present, evil world. The end of war, the end of tension, the end of sorrow, trouble and tears and the ushering in of the land that is fairer than day.

Not only does the Bible reveal that the coming of Jesus will be the climax of the ages, but it also reveals certain preliminary events. The first of these we will list as the close of human probation. When probation closes, the door of God's mercy will be shut for ever. Soon, we know not how soon, a solemn decree will go forth from the courts of glory. Those solemn words are recorded in Revelation 22:11,12: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly."

Notice carefully, that when the decree goes forth the destinies of all eternally fixed. This will take place a short period before the actual return of Jesus. This is made plain in the text. Just after the day of mercy closes, Jesus declares, "And, behold, I come quickly." During this short period between the close of Christ's intercessory work as our High Priest, and his return as King, the seven last plagues of Revelation 16 will be poured out. This will be the "time of trouble" referred to in Daniel 12:1.

Christ will not appear until after these plagues have fallen upon the earth. That is evident, as Christ does not come until the last day. This fact should be given due consideration, especially by those who have thought that Christ may come at any moment, to secretly "catch away" His people. These few Bible facts must answer clearly the question under consideration. Yes, my friends, I cannot escape the certain conviction that the church will go through the coming time of trouble and tribulation. Even now, I believe that we are on the threshold of the time of trouble. For more on this question see "The Impending Time of Trouble," by G. Burnside.

However, while God's people will be on the earth during the plagues, God will gloriously protect them. In Psalms 91:10 we read God's promise to his people during the plagues. Listen: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." In verses 7 and 8 we read: "A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked." That has never been fulfilled so far, but it will be during the time of trouble. In the days of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the plagues fell only on the Egyptians and God's people were safe, and these things were but types of God's final deliverance. In the last days God's children, His blood-bought people, will again be safe under the protecting wings of the Almighty.

Under the sixth plague the nations will be gathered for the battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 16:12,16) This will be the "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." Daniel 12:1 This battle of Armageddon will be the closing act in the drama of human history. In connection with this struggle, the last plague - the plague of hail will be poured out, and the voice of God, out of the temple of heaven, from His throne, will proclaim: "It is done". Revelation 16:7. Also connected with the last plague there will be a "great earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great." Every city will be shaken to ruins, while mountains sink and islands disappear. Revelation 6:18:20. At that time the heavens will open "as a scroll when it is rolled together." Revelation 6:14. Through the parted heavens Jesus will come forth as the all conquering King of kings and Lord of Lords. Revelation 19:11-16. With Him will be seen the countless millions of shining angels as we read in Matthew 25:31: "The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the Holy angels with Him."

Millions of graves all over the world will be opened, and all the righteous will be raised to life eternal. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." 1 Thessalonians 4:16. This will be no secret, quiet, invisible coming. You will notice it is accompanied with a "shout", "the trump of God", and "the voice of the archangel".

What a gloriously thrilling time! From Abel the first Christian martyr, down to the last believer who falls asleep in Jesus - all the righteous dead, a multitude that no man can number - will come forth from their graves with glorified, immortal bodies in response to the Savior's call.



Notice further that as Jesus sounds the call over the land and sea it is the signal for the angels to gather the elect of God. Matthew 24:31 (margin) reads: "He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Note there is no thought of a secret or private coming for His saints. Cemeteries will be torn up as He utters a shout that will be broadcast by heaven's radio amplifier, to the very ends of the earth, and the Life giver's matchless voice awakens God's sleeping saints from their dusty beds. Thus "our God shall come and shall not keep silence." Psalms 50:3. At that same hour the living wicked will be slain by the Lord's presence. Jeremiah 25: 33: "And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be refuse upon the ground."

Thus the coming of Jesus Christ will instantly separate the righteous and the ungodly. Malachi 3:18: "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not." Humanity will be divided into two parts - the saved and the unsaved. Separated as far as the heavens are from the earth, the two classes will never mingle together again.

Solemn and awful words! How needful in view of this, that we ourselves be ready and persuade those nearest and dearest to us to be ready also.

My friends, you do not need to be among those who will flee in terror at the coming of Christ if you find refuge in Jesus today. For at the time Jesus returns He will protect everyone who belongs to Him. You need not fear the coming time of trouble, or the last day if you are a true Christian. Why not become one today?

## **THE COMING RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS**

The word 'rapture' does not appear in the Bible but comes from the Latin word 'rapio' which means 'to seize' or 'catch away', and the word 'rapture' is found in the Latin Vulgate Translation of the New Testament, in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The rapture, then, as far as the Word of God is concerned, is the catching away of the people of God at the Second Coming of Christ. There is no suggestion in the Scriptures, however, that this wonderful event will be secret. In fact it is just the opposite. The Rapture and the Revelation are not events separated by years of time as some have supposed, but both belong to the glorious appearing of Christ. Let us read 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, and I wish you to notice the public nature of it all - the shout, the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God. Let us read it: "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."

Now you notice there is nothing hidden or secret or concealed. This is the gathering of God's people at the sounding of the trumpet, before the open face of the whole world. As we read in Matthew 24:30,31: "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." This is not a secret rapture. Oh, no. The Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The angels are sent forth, not silently, but with a trumpet and a great voice, as the margin says, to gather together His elect.

Oh, what a thrilling day of heavenly power and glory! But notice, the appearing of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven is before the gathering of the elect, not afterwards. No period of years separates the events. On the contrary, they occur in immediate succession, as we read in St. Mark 13:26,27 where the picture is still more vivid: "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 to gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of heaven."

In this passage the sequence of events is emphasized by the word 'then'. Notice: "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory, and then shall He send His angels and shall gather together His elect."

These texts prove that the revelation of Christ in glory and the rapture of the saints, occur at the same time, and are both parts of the glorious appearing. Christ does not come alone, when He comes for His saints. Oh no! He comes with all the holy angels with Him. (See Matthew 25:31) And these holy angels are sent forth to gather all His people. This is possible because the resurrection of the righteous dead and the transfiguration of the righteous living takes place at this time.

Now let us notice again this wonderful passage in 1 Thessalonians 4. You see, the Thessalonians were sorrowing at the death of loved ones. They had heard Paul preach about the coming of Christ and they could understand how Christ could take living saints home to the glory land, but they were concerned about the dead in Christ. So the Apostle Paul, under inspiration by the Holy Spirit, wrote, and I am reading to you from 1 Thessalonians 4:13. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." You see, he is talking about the dead, for, 55 times in the Bible death is referred to as a sleep. And so the Apostle Paul would

not have his people to be ignorant concerning those who are asleep in death, “that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so” or in the very same way, “even so”, or in the same manner, “even so, Just as Jesus died and rose again, “them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him. For this I say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent,” or as the Revised Version says, “shall not precede them which are asleep.” You see, the Apostle Paul is showing clearly that all God’s people will go home to glory together.

He wanted the Thessalonians to understand exactly how the dead in Christ would be received home to glory. So he says in verse 14, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so” or in the same way as Jesus died and rose again, “even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” For just as Jesus died and rose again, in the way, by a resurrection from the dead, will God bring His saints to glory with Jesus.

And you notice, he will be bringing them home to glory at the same time as he brings home the righteous living. This Saint Paul makes clear in verse 16. Note the statement “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the Archangel and 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” or in this manner, “shall we ever be with the Lord.” Therefore the redeemed of God, either by a death-and-resurrection route, or by a translation way without seeing death, are swept home to glory. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” And, what a wonderful comfort these words are.

The Lord Himself descends with the trump of God, and it is at the sounding of this trump that the dead are raised, as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:51,52: “Behold, I show 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.” The hosts of sleeping saints awake at the trumpet of God. This is no secret, silent, impersonal coming. Think of the shouts of victory over death and the grave.

It is a day of glorious victory. “Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” 1 Corinthians 15:54,55. It will be a time of singing and certainly not of silence.

There’ll be songs of greeting when Jesus comes;  
There’ll be songs of greeting when Jesus comes;  
And a joyful meeting when Jesus comes  
To gather His loved ones home.

Yes, it is when “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of God”, that the people of God will be caught up to meet Him in the clouds. It will be at the sounding of the trump of God that the dead in Christ arise. So you see, the rapture and resurrection of all the righteous take place at the glorious appearing of Christ and we will say then with Isaac Watts, the writer of so many beautiful hymns,

“Then let the last trumpet sound  
And bid our kindred rise  
Awake you nations underground  
You saints ascend the skies.”

## **THE RAPTURE**

A few months ago I walked to the top of the Mount of Olives where Christ walked with His disciples and as He talked with them, He raised His hands in blessing over His disciples and He began to ascend back to the Glory land. He was carried bodily upwards, His hands still outstretched in blessing “and a cloud received Him out of their sight”. Suddenly two angels of God in white apparel, stood by the disciples and said, “You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven”. Acts 1:11. And that great promise has lived down the halls of time till this day.

Jesus believed He was coming back again, the angels believed it, and I can assure you from the Scriptures, that all His apostles who wrote the Scriptures believed that Christ was coming back again - yes, every single one of them. There was the Apostle Paul. Did he believe that Christ was coming back? He said, “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven”. And how is He coming? Quietly? Is He going to slip in the back door? Is He coming in some mysterious way? Oh, no, no! “He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God.” The glorious publicity of that event is brought to view in three ways the

shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. It is certainly no secret rapture. The Bible pictures the coming of Christ as a great public event. The Lord Himself shall appear, the Bible says. He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a sound of a mighty trumpet and with the voice of the archangel. Oh, in that tremendous hour, we shall have no more radio broadcasts, newspapers will stop, printing presses will roll no more, but every body will know of this great event without having to have it announced.

In connection with the rapture of the saints, another act of Divine authority, takes place. The living wicked are destroyed by the fiery glory of our Lord's appearing. As we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10: "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God when He shall come to be glorified in His saints." Christ will come in a three fold glory, according to St. Luke 9:26: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and 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."

We have little conception of the glory of the rapture of the saints. The glory of Christ - what it must be! With one brief glance, Paul was blinded by it on the Damascus road, and he declared that it was "above the brightness of the sun". That is Acts 26:13. In a vision on the isle of Patmos, the Apostle John saw the Savior's countenance and He said it was "as the sun shines in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead". Revelation 1:16,17. We are told in Revelation that sinners, under the sixth seal, will pray for rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Christ. Revelation 6:15-17. In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 Paul says: "And then shall that wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming". The glory of Christ's presence is more than sinners can endure, but our Lord comes not only in this glory only, but in His Father's glory also. No sinful man can look upon the consuming glory of God, and live.

This is not all. Christ's coming glory is threefold - His own glory, the glory of His Father, and the glory of all the holy angels. Before the flashing glory of one angel, the military guard at the tomb of Christ, shook with terror and became as dead. The Gospel writer describes this scene in these words, and I read from Matthew 28:2-4: "And behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and His raiment white as snow: and for fear of Him the keepers did shake and became as dead men." This was by the glory of only one angel, and remember our Lord, is to appear with all the holy angels. In Hebrews 12:22 we read that there is an innumerable company of angels. In Revelation 5:11, we read of many companies of heavenly angels round about the throne of God and we are told that one company of these glorious beings numbers at least 100 million. And all the holy angels come with Christ as mentioned in Matthew 25:31. What an inconceivable light, when the heavens are all aglow with the radiant forms of the angels of Christ. Yes, the day of the rapture, will bring to this dark earth the threefold glory of heaven. The promise of Jesus in St. John 14:1-3 will be fulfilled at last. "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 you may be also." To be with Christ where He is, what more could the Christian ask?

In Matthew 24:30,31 we have it made plain that when He comes to gather His people all tribes of the earth shall mourn. They shall see Him, but are unprepared. They are filled with fear, as I read in Revelation 1:7: "Behold He comes with clouds and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kingdoms of the earth shall wail because of Him."

As Charles Wesley wrote -

"Lo, He comes with clouds descending  
Once for favored sinners slain;  
Countless angels in attending  
Swell the triumph of His train.  
Every eye shall now behold Him  
Robed in dreadful majesty.  
Those who set at naught and sold Him,  
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree  
Deeply wailing, shall the true Messiah see."

Our Lord went away in a cloud, and He returns in a cloud. Acts 1:9-11: "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, You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

The manner of our Lord's return, then, is not an impersonal, spiritual coming. It is personal, literal, visible, bodily, in the sight of all the world, and with glory and power beyond all other events in the history of mankind. The rapture will come, but when? We know not the hour, or the day, but the signs of the times proclaim it is near. For the Christian it will mean the end of sorrow of sin and of



death, yes, the end of sickness, the end of pain, the end of heartaches forever. Why do we not think more about it; plan for it, and pray for it more than we do? The last prayer in the Bible needs to be our prayer, too. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

When Jesus comes, His reward will be with Him, and every human being will reap the harvest he's been sowing. As we read from 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." At the coming of Christ, all teaching, preaching and praying will be over. There will be no more efforts to save the lost. Their opportunity will be over. My brother, are you ready? Remember, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2.

God's call is to all men. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Acts 16:31. The coming rapture of the saints at the glorious advent of our Christ is sure, but are we sure that we will be caught up to meet the Lord. I appeal to every one, study carefully the subject of the coming of Christ, and pray for God's own preparation in your hearts. One evening, in the year 1913, a great company of statesmen, captains of industry, journalists, scholars, and other leaders in various fields met in the great banquet hall in the newly completed Woolworth building in New York City. They had gathered to break bread with a man who had realized his dream in the tallest and most beautiful commercial building in the world. And as they sat there in the semi-darkness, suddenly away down in Washington, President Wilson, pressed a tiny button and 80,000 lights flashed into brilliancy through the mighty tower. So it is all the people of God are now among the shadows of earth's sin and death, but the day is not far distant when the light of Christ's presence will flash through the world and the sons of the Kingdom will find themselves in the banquet hall of the King.

In view of this great and glorious day, may your prayer, and my prayer be,

"Then, O my Lord, prepare, my soul for that great day,  
O wash me in Thy precious blood and take my sins away."

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