
The Rapture

Bill Holdstock

LATEST

Suddenly, without warning the true church will simply disappear from the face of the earth and will meet their Saviour in the air. Of course, most people do not believe this will happen, but then most people do not read their Bibles let alone study it to find out if statements like this are true.

The Bible says 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

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.

2000 years ago, the Lord came the first time as a baby, and while writings, preachers and prophets declared the fact of His coming birth, most of the world missed Him because of unbelief. This time, although He will not land on the earth, and Christians will meet Him in the air, still many will miss Him. Why? Because they are not looking for Him, not only with their eyes but mainly with their hearts and again because of unbelief. If we all knew for certain that Jesus would return next Wednesday at 6 o'clock pm we would all get ready for Him. We would spend some time in prayer, we would repent of our sins known and unknown, we would warn our neighbours and friends and family. Some may even look to the heavens for any sign of His appearing. But one thing is sure vast numbers of people saved and unsaved will be looking toward heaven at 6 o'clock Wednesday evening, just in case!

But because we haven't had an experience like this before to compare it with, we can't envisage it happening in this modern age, so we don't think it will happen at all. Noah was told by God there would be a flood of waters on the earth, Noah told the world around him that they should repent and turn to God. But no, because they had not seen a flood before that would hold a ship the size Noah was building which, incidentally, was about half the size of the Titanic but much more seaworthy, they ignored him, they laughed and made fun of him. But they were soon banging on the ship's hull pleading to be let in as the powerful waters that fell from heaven reached up to their necks. They were too late! They should have taken notice of Noah in the first place.

Now when we share what the Bible says about the closing days of time and that Jesus is getting ready to come back for His people. There are people who just like those in Noah's day completely ignore the Bible, cut God right out of their lives and join the crowd who laugh and jeer. There are those religious people who perform all the rituals and acts of worship that make them feel better, even use the name of the Lord but as the scripture says, in Matthew 7:21-23.

Not everyone who says unto Me Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of My Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord Lord have we not Prophesied in your Name and in your Name have cast out devils? And in your Name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, *I never knew you depart from Me you who work iniquity.*

I hope you don't mind me pointing these things out to you, that is what the Bible is doing so that we all get our lives in order and prepare for the Rapture. Those that don't make it will be thumping on the 'ship's hull' as it were wanting to be included, shouting "I am sorry", "forgive me" "I was a church leader" "I ran a Christian TV programme". Many will be astonished at the Lords reply believing their works for God will give them a passport to heaven not realising that works is not the criteria but its faith in Christ Jesus and what He did at the cross that counts. (Eph. 2:8-9) ...depart from Me! Fancy hearing those words from the Lord, what happened to "gentle Jesus meek and mild look upon this little child!" a prayer we were taught as young children and said before we were tucked up in bed. We really must get serious about Jesus and our eternal destiny and not take the Lord for granted.

He was very serious about you and me once. He suffered, bled and was crucified on a horrible Roman cross to pay the price of our sin. He left His Father's house, a house and home we have no words to describe its wonder and beauty. He came to a wicked world to give us life, real life and set us free from sin but we spurned Him to His face, we use His Name to relieve our tempers and to prove how clever we are amongst our friends. But to humble ourselves bow down and ask forgiveness and pray will He remove this Covid19 sickness that is ruining all our lives at the moment, no, we are too proud for that. "Anyway, I don't believe in God", we keep hearing that on the TV. That's all right but you must be prepared to suffer the consequences of your choice, like the suffering we are all in just now with more to come, Thank God my family and I do believe in God and we do pray for God's mercy. Our faith is in Jesus and what he did at the cross. Our family is protected by the Blood. We have all been to the cross and been washed in the blood of the Lamb of God and our sins have been forgiven. How about you?

If you have never seen yourself as a sinner and the need for a Saviour and you have never by an act of believing faith, put your trust in Him to save you from your sin through His precious blood, then you are not ready for His coming again. And when He comes again as undoubtedly He will, you will be left behind to go through the terrible suffering that is to come that the Bible warns us about. Oh! You prophet of doom Bill. No! I am just telling you what the Bible says. Saved or unsaved we should all ask ourselves if there is anything that would prevent communion with Jesus especially as the trumpet of God could sound at any moment and call us up to be with Him.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

If I shut up Heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I sent pestilence among My people.

I know some believing Christians who don't believe God would send such pestilence upon the earth. They say, "He may allow Satan to do it, but God is a God of love". If God leaves it to Satan to send correction or a wake-up call then God is not in control, Satan is. And what if Satan does not send correction on God's people when it is needed, he is no fool, then God's people get let off and they continue down the wrong path with no correction!

The answer is as much in the hands of you and I, this is what God says,

If my people, which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

No preacher I know could explain this verse better than God Himself who wrote it, read it again slowly, better still learn it off by heart and remind yourself of it every day. And take note He said "if my people called by my name" that's His church.

The Rapture Revelation Chapter 4:1

My grandfather was a church leader and a preacher all his life and I sat under his ministry many times in my very early days, but I don't remember hearing him preach on the Rapture once. His son, my father, was also a minister and preacher, the Holy Spirit gave him a greater revelation of the scriptures than his father. He preached the Rapture and the Second Coming so strongly my wife and I wondered if we would ever have time to get married! Now this subject is so heavy on my heart I must tell you about it.

After this I looked and behold a door was opened in Heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me which said, come up hither and I will show you things which must be hereafter.

John was to write to the churches, all seven of them, things which the Lord had commanded John to say which he did in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. This is sometimes referred to as 'concerning the churches.' The condition of these churches can be better understood from the study of them in more detail in Revelation on my website www.wordlightmypass.com. There were seven churches that God needed to address, and these churches are typical of the churches across the world today. What God says to these churches in Asia Minor He says to us today in your church and mine. I will give a very few lines showing the spiritual state of each church giving the reason God wanted John to bring to the notice of the Pastor of each church the need for change. Much more detail about these churches is highlighted on the website www.wordlightmypass.com under the heading Revelation.

The first church was Ephesus.

God was pleased that this church in Ephesus was doing their best to be a true witness to the area. He said,

Revelation 2:2

I know your works and your labour and your patience and how you cannot bear them which are evil, and you have tried them which say they are Apostles and are not and have found them liars.

And you have had patience and endured and laboured for My Name's sake and have not fainted.

Then He said in verse 4 of Chapter 2,

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against you because you have left your first love.

A good church, committed church, a church who did not tolerate liars or evil men. But then God said they had left their first love. Not lost it, not had it stolen from them, they *left* it. They turned away from the cross, their first love, and God was not pleased with them.

How many of our churches are like this church?

The second church was Smyrna, this church and the church at Philadelphia were the only two churches who did not receive a rebuke from God, but they did receive a lot of encouragement. This church at Smyrna did get a lot of tribulation, persecution, poverty and blasphemy mostly from faithful followers, but God, who can see the hearts of men said they were from the synagogue of Satan. The faithful members of this church, called the remnant were encouraged to persevere to the end to receive a crown of life.

How many of our churches are like this church?

The third church was Pergamos a compromising church, a church that was very much linked to the world. This church was quite content to flirt with the world to keep favour while doing its best to keep

a semblance of godliness without actually standing up for Jesus. God called them to repent or He will fight them with the sword. As we know the sharp two-edged sword is the Word of God which edifies, corrects, encourages, judges, quickens, comforts, and rebukes. Our congregations should be disciplined in the way of Christ to produce a church that is strong enough to combat the sin in this world and not compromise with it.

How many of our churches are like this church?

Thyatira was a small town but a very busy commercial centre. It had a particularly strong trade union presence and everyone who worked was required to be a member of the trade union. One of Paul's first converts was a woman called Lydia (Acts 16: v14). She had a growing business selling purple, a rich colour that came from a snail found in Tyrus, very popular with the Noblemen in Rome. As a Christian Lydia may have found it too difficult to work under these trade union pressures and rules, so she sold her business and moved to Philippi. The whole area had a spirit of Jezebel surrounding it, the worship of Baal was encouraged which included all sorts of licentious practices including child sacrifices. Satan had a hold on this town and God had a few things to say to them. Again, there is more about Thyatira on the web site. www.wordlightmypath.com.

How many of our churches are like this church?

Sardis had a reputation of being a live church, it attracted the young people and the middle aged who thought they were still young! The Sardis church thought they had it all, the star or Pastor shone brightly on the outside and was full of life. But when God looked at the heart, He said the church was dead. It is amazing how blind we can be to our own spiritual condition in the light of God. Jesus said those that had not defiled their garments by sinning were counted worthy to walk with the Lord. We are made worthy only by our faith in the blood of the Lamb and the cross, nothing to do with our works or who we are, it's all about Jesus.

In verse 5

He who overcomes 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.

There are a couple of things we need to highlight in this verse, firstly God says if we overcome, He will not blot our name from His Book of Life. This verse proves therefore that it is possible to have your name removed from God's book if we do not overcome. Overcome sin, overcome temptation, overcome our tempers. Secondly if we do not overcome, we will not be clothed in white raiment, and our names will not be confessed before the Father. What does your church make of that? The last sentence of verse 6 reads,

He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

Each town had one or two scribes who painstakingly and with much skill wrote the local news to keep the townsfolk informed. They were masters of their profession in days when there were no printing presses, no typewriters, only men writing the news by hand. On the very few occasions a mistake was made that caused the scribes to find liquids that would remove that mistake such as muriatic acid. This acid removed the original ink of burnt ivory cork and gum, together with the mistake using a small sponge dipped in this acid and the writing could be completely removed leaving a perfectly spotless page with no trace of ink at all. The mistake was blotted out. That is just how God says He would deal with our sins if we confess them to Him, but He says He will also blot our names from His book of life if we turn our backs on Him.

How many of our churches are like this church?

Philadelphia was reminded that God had set before them an open door that no man can shut. This was the door of present opportunity. He said that they had little strength, but they had kept His word and not denied His name. In the time of ultimate testing and in the middle of trying circumstances the

door still stands open for a witness to the power of the gospel. In the work of God, whether as an individual or as a church, to have little strength is not an indication or sign of weakness. In the case of the Philadelphia church the numbers may have been small, but it is God's principle that so long as our hearts are right before God it is in our weakness God can show His strength. He looks for humbleness and a prayerful attitude through which He can work.

The Pastor is not required to do it all! That's why God gave instructions in Ephesians 4:11. of the calling of the ministries in the church. God does the calling, not a committee or the deacons much prayer needs to be given to appoint men or women who have a heart for God as well as a heart for lost souls. A very good Pastor friend of mine confided to me that (in his opinion) one of his deacons was a much better teacher than he was and could preach much better than he could. This disturbed him, and embarrassed him so I asked him if that man could handle a room full of children like he could, and how was he at talking one to one with someone who had lost a loved-one, could he come alongside and encourage a person who needed lifting up and pray with them like he could? My Pastor friend smiled and said No, but he is a better preacher than I am! That low esteem soon lifted and together the church prospered because everything was in place under God.

How many of our churches are like this church?

Laodicea was a church that has to be reminded what faithfulness was. Little by little the deception of Satan began to infiltrate into the life of the church and little by little things that were not of God were taken to heart and so the church became contaminated. Satan is like that you know, it is always "little by little" Talk to Pastors of our churches today and you may find they are too busy organising programmes to keep their congregations interested in church, or to keep up with the church up the road who have come up with a great idea to get people in! Jesus said **If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me.** We have got to learn how to fellowship with Jesus, and work with Him, He is more interested to get people saved than we are, He suffered and died for them.

How many of our churches are like this church?

- A survey taken in the USA has just been released that says that more than half of adults and 30% of Evangelicals do not believe Jesus is God. (John 17:11)
- Pope Francis says; "The church no longer believes in a literal hell where people suffer. This doctrine is incompatible with the infinite love of God. God is not a judge but a friend and lover of humanity". (Luke 10:15)
- A church in England has installed a helter-skelter in the pews to attract more people to its services. (What are they doing to attract people to Jesus?)
- Another church is copying that church but taking seats out and replacing them with a crazy golf game to attract more people!
- A TV programme uses churches all over England to sell old furniture.
- A church in England invited a farmer to bring a selection of farmyard animals so they can be blessed during the service. (please bring your own bucket!)

- Oral Roberts, now with the Lord, founder of the Oral Roberts University was awakened one night from a deep sleep by the Lord who wanted to chat about his University. Part way through their conversation Oral Roberts asked, "when are you coming back Lord" the Lord replied, "I can't come back yet because of the state of My Church". Not the bad state of the world, but the bad state of His church! I don't know about you but that reply really upsets me. I have a CD of that testimony it's called Awake! and it doesn't please me to play it, What an indictment on the church, and regrettably on the Pastors and Leaders of the church to allow their congregations to get into such a bad way so as to hinder the return of Christ.

Write the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which are to come.

- Write the things you have seen. This is the vision that John saw.
- Write the things which are. This is the Church age of which you and I are a part.
- Write the things which shall be hereafter. That is after the Church age.

John is to write about “The things which are” this must refer to the 7 churches, their spiritual condition and the message of the Lord to them in Chapter 2 and 3.

Then John is to write about the things *which shall be hereafter*. The Greek is literally “Ha mellei genesthai meta tauta” which means “The things which are about to become after these things” These things being the church age. Everything predicted after chapter 3, that is chapter 4 onwards will occur after the time of the church ends. That which closes the time of the church bringing it to an end, is the removal of the church from the earth, called the Rapture.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

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.

Remember our reference to Noah and his warning to the mockers and jeerers who were not expecting a flood and would not listen to Noah and ultimately drowned. Do you know there are people today just like them, they go on their way building their empires, singing and dancing, most in rebellion to the God of creation? When, according to the Word of God millions upon millions of people will just suddenly disappear and those left behind will remember reading about this happening, they will remember reading a website somewhere that warned them to be ready just like in Noah’s day. Fortunately, some Christians are feeling the need to stand up and be a voice for the cross in the middle of these uncertain times. I’ve seen groups of them praying in the street. Make sure you support them.

We have messages to the Pastors direct from God Himself to the 7 churches in Chapters 2 to 3 of Revelation. As we have seen God needed to correct all of them before chapter 4 verse 1. Just before the Rapture!

Revelation 1:19. Again, as we have seen all the letters were addressed to the Angel of the church which was the Pastor. Whilst the Pastors needs to sit up and take notice of what God is saying to them all, they do have a choice position, they are called stars and are held in the Right Hand of God, meaning they belong to God. They are in charge and responsible for what God calls the Seven Golden Candlesticks, which are the churches.

Verse 1. of Chapter 4 explains what will happen *thereafter*, after what? After the discourse on the churches. From Chapter 4 to Chapter 22 are things *after* the churches. So, the Church must be Raptured at the end of Chapter 3. Up to the last verse of Chapter 3 the words church or churches are mentioned 19 times, but not mentioned again until after the things that must be after the Churches are revealed, at the end of the book 22 Chapters later. Obviously, the church must be here during the time of the fulfilment of the things concerning the churches. Each church is addressed by the Lord in Chapters 2 to 3 giving correction, exaltation and revealing Himself to them. Christ said the things of Revelation Chapter 4-22 must be *hereafter*, that is after the churches, if that is true then the church is Raptured after the things of Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 and before the things of Revelation 4-22. The church is no longer on the earth when the events of Revelation 4-22 takes place. If the church were on earth during events of Revelation Chapter 4-22 it would surely be mentioned.

The Leadership must set the spiritual tone of a church. If the Leadership is lax the members of the church will be lax, if the Leader is tired and weak so will the church be tired and weak. Take time to

read the study on Samuel on the website. Samuel did his best to help Saul to become a God fearing and reliable king able to lead Israel in the ways of Almighty God, but Saul was the king Israel wanted he was not God's choice. Saul went astray lots of times and Israel were the ones who suffered spiritually as he did so. Saul lost God's best for Israel many times because of bad leadership. So did Eli the Priest, so did Eli's sons, also Priests, so did Samuel's sons who became Priests, they all lost their relationship with God and Israel suffered.

When a Leader stops preaching about the cross, when a Leader stops preaching about divine healing, or a Pastor stops preaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, and starts preaching about anything other than Jesus, you may as well pull the church down and build a supermarket, you've just turned God out of His House.

Ezekiel 9:3

And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon He was, to the threshold of the house.

The sins of Israel were now so bad they included weeping for Tammuz, a Phoenician god who was dead and the women were to pour out their lamentations over an image made of wax. This greatly upset the God of Israel who dwelt in the shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, that He left the house of God and rested up on the roof, He no longer dwelt in His proper place in the Temple. He said, **you shall have no other gods before Me.** Unfortunately, that is the sorry state of many of our churches today, the presents of God is missing because He has been replaced with helter-skelters, white rabbits on Easter Day, wall paintings of Dickens scenes, waterfalls and other religious stuff.

Notice how God spoke to all the churches, involving very many people to bring them nearer to Himself, reminding them they are flirting with Satan, that they left their first love, their fight against false prophets and a whole lot more, just before He leads to us the Rapture of the church, and as soon as He finishes talking to the pastors of the 7 churches and getting the church in order, the Rapture occurs. We all know we are living in the last of the last days, we all know that world governments, world-wide Law enforcement agencies, our Judges, our local Councils and all who have authority over us do not have the answer to bring about peace and stability to a Godless society. Look out for a new work of the Holy Spirit that will sweep over our churches with an awakening call to give us a last chance to get right with God before the Rapture. It will come, God said it would, today, now, this moment of time is our "Noah's flood" warning, for heaven's sake take notice.

Be blessed
Bill Holdstock
Bill@Holdstock.com

