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Ready for the Rapture

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER 1: NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR THE HOUR	13
CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION?	20
CHAPTER 3: THE SIGN OF HIS COMING	25
CHAPTER 4: HOW DOES THE TRIBULATION PERIOD RELATE TO THE RESURRECTION?	42
CHAPTER 5: IS THE RESURRECTION DIFFERENT FROM THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST?	61
CHAPTER 6: THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CHURCH	67
CHAPTER 7: THE RESURRECTION PARABLES	96
CONCLUSION	105
APPENDIX 1: CHECKLIST TO SEE IF YOU ARE READY FOR THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST (THE RAPTURE)	107
APPENDIX 2: THE 14 MAJOR EVENTS OF MATTHEW 24	110
APPENDIX 3: THE EVENTS OF REVELATION	

13 AND 14 THAT PRECEDE THE RESURRECTION OF THE CHURCH	112
APPENDIX 4: THE SEVEN CHURCHES CHART	114
APPENDIX 5: SCRIPTURES CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION AND SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST	120

INTRODUCTION

This book will provide a concise study of Old and New Testament scriptures about the resurrection, or rapture of the church. The primary focus will be on examining scriptures that precede the rapture in order to help the reader prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We will examine the following topics throughout this book:

1. What Jesus Christ expects from us before the Rapture
2. What to expect from Jesus Christ before the Rapture
3. The steps we need to take to prepare for the Rapture.

Christians need to be ready for the rapture. The rapture should be the most anticipated event that we look forward to. Once it happens, the physical and spiritual nature of many things in heaven and earth will change. Those who take part in the rapture will be given new,

glorified bodies, rewards in heaven and perfect knowledge. Salvation through the born again experience will no longer be necessary and the earth will later come under the dominion of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we should be preparing for the rapture so that we can experience these wonderful blessings. Every generation knows of the imminent return of Christ, also referred to as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Wise Christians will prepare for this event and work to help others be ready to meet the Lord in the air.

I would like to give my personal testimonial about the power of prayer. A few years ago, the Lord delivered me from a sickness by the power of my prayer as well as the prayers of others. In September 2006, I had been suffering from Ulcerative Colitis and bleeding, for several months. After spending several weeks in the hospital, I was cleared to go home for rest and recuperation. I was not showing much improvement at home and continued to bleed every time I went to the bathroom. Early one morning, I awoke and went into the bathroom where I continued to bleed severely as I had done for days. When I tried to walk back into the bedroom, I passed out and fell on the floor. I don't

know how long I was unconscious, but my wife found me lying on the bathroom floor and she began trying to wake me. When I came to, I began gasping for air and was unable to breathe. Later we found out that this was due to having suffered severe blood loss and dehydration. My mother and aunt came upstairs after hearing my wife screaming and crying and called 911, and they helped my wife carry me back into the bedroom, where things only got worse. It was getting harder and harder to breathe. I felt my life slowly slipping away. After a few minutes, the struggle just became too great and I could barely keep my eyes open. At that moment I knew that I was going to die. As I lay on the floor there was a strange peace that came over me. I felt that I was living in my final moments. I looked up at my wife and whispered, "I love you." I then closed my eyes and everything went black.

When I opened my eyes, I saw nothing but extreme darkness. It appeared that I was in a large open space, like a valley, with a black sky that had no stars. The ground beneath was blackish grey with cracks in it like a dry desert. Everything had the appearance of desolation. While there, the pain that had constantly been in my body for the

past weeks had disappeared, and I had intense feelings of fear and loneliness. I stood there for what appeared to be several minutes looking around and wondering what was happening. Having been a Christian for fourteen years, and a pastor for the previous two years of my life, I was expecting to see something quite different in the afterlife. What I was seeing did not make any sense.

I thought to myself, *this cannot be all that there is in the afterlife! I have served God for too long and know that God is real. I have felt His love and Holy Spirit too many times.* There must be a God and there must be a heaven! I began praying Psalm 23, and about halfway through, a bright flash appeared in the sky above me. When I looked up, I could see a large city with a bright gold aura, surrounded by angels in white robes. It was the city of New Jerusalem mentioned in Revelation 21 and 22. Instantly, the loneliness seemed to vanish away as now I felt joy and relief from knowing that heaven was real and I would be going there. I then felt that there was something above, and to my left. When I turned and looked, I saw more angels, who were closer and smiling. They were standing around someone who had a white robe, golden girdle, and whose face shined

with a white brightness so intense that I could not make out the features. I soon realized that this was Jesus Christ!

I tried to look into his face to make out His features, but the more that I stared, the brighter the light around his face became, forcing me to look away. Suddenly, I felt great shame and sorrow. I later realized what Daniel 10:8 meant when he said: “my comeliness in me is turned into corruption.” Compared to the righteousness, and holiness of God, I could feel the sin of my lowly human nature and knew that however righteous I may have thought that I was, it was nothing compared to God’s true holiness. I felt so ashamed and embarrassed that I didn’t want to look up at Jesus. I stared at the ground and thought, “I wish that I could go to that city.” Immediately a thunderous voice reverberated throughout my entire body and spirit saying to me; “You can come here if you want.”

I looked up with excitement and thought that I wanted to go to the city above me. I was immediately propelled, at an incredible speed up in the air toward the city just as quickly as I imagined going there. As I got closer, I could see that there were many angels surrounding the city and they were

all smiling, with white robes and gold trumpets pressed to their lips. The city was completely made of gold, yet it had a white translucent glow that made it shine brightly. There were large walls, with three gates on each, made of white pearl.

It was very interesting to me that I saw large buildings, which resembled skyscrapers of different sizes behind the walls, which had what appeared to be windows. I turned to look and a large screen suddenly appeared. I felt that there was something behind me. As I turned to look, a large screen suddenly appeared and I felt myself come to a stop. Different groups of people began to appear before me on the screen. Some I recognized as pastors and their wives, while others I did not know. At that point, a heavy burden for them and sadness swept over me. I quickly realized that it was God's burden for the ministry and humanity. I could not help but feel that the Lord showed me these people for a reason. At that moment, I understood that a decision had to be made. I thought, "Lord, they have no one to help them." Suddenly everything went dark and I felt myself back in my body again.

After being sick, and full of pain for weeks, I noticed the difference of not having any pain when my soul was outside of my body, and then feeling the pain once again after the two were reunited. I opened my eyes and saw my wife my mother and aunt above me crying. I also noticed that I was having trouble breathing again. As strange as it seems, this feeling was new, as I did not remember having the need to breathe before I returned. The paramedics arrived a little while later, put an oxygen mask on my face and took me to the hospital emergency room. I was given a blood transfusion and IV liquids through two PIC lines that were inserted directly into veins in my neck. The doctors told us that even in severe cases, it was normal to only use one PIC line into the vein to transfuse blood. However, because the situation was so critical, and I was in danger of imminently dying, they had no choice but to insert two lines. I had lost a great deal of blood and was severely dehydrated.

Later, after I had recovered, my wife told me that I was lifeless and not breathing when I was in her arms for at least five minutes back at the house. She had been rebuking the spirit of death and praying for God to put my life back

in my body, when I suddenly came back to life again. This life changing experience led me to study more about the resurrection in detail and share what happened to me with others. I began an intense study of all Bible scriptures associated with the resurrection, which has resulted in the writing of this book. Discussions with various pastors and ministers about the resurrection has shown me there is no a clear consensus on the topic of the resurrection or related end-time events While many Christian believers are unified in doctrinal beliefs, there does not seem to be a general consensus in Christianity when it comes to the rapture. There seem to be many varying opinions about the timing and purpose of the Rapture among Christians today. I prayed, wanting clarity, knowledge, and understanding for others and myself. I will admit to having personal bias when I began this study. My own opinions soon vanished under what God revealed to me through his Word and Holy Spirit. My desire is to be prepared to meet the Lord, not to be right in my own sight. The Bible is rich in evidence and explanations about the resurrection. Righteous men and prophets of God like Enoch have been aware of the resurrection since early in our history, (Jude 1:14) calling it the “Great Day of the Lord.” Their hope, as well as mine in

writing this book, is to help believers be prepared for the
Coming of the Lord on that “Great Day.”

God Bless and I hope to you in the air.

1

NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR THE HOUR

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my father only. But as the days of Nó-ē were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.” Matthew 24:37

When will the rapture take place? Many Christians wonder about this. There are debates as to whether the rapture will take place before the Great Tribulation, during the Great Tribulation or after the Great Tribulation. People have spent countless hours trying to discover the precise time of the resurrection. Jesus made it very clear that we will never know the specific timing of the resurrection and that our duty as Christians is to watch and be ready for His coming. Like every Christian generation, the first century

Christians believed that Christ was coming during their lifetime. The writings of the epistles all stress that 1st century Christians should be prepared for the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Despite this, we stand almost two thousand years later awaiting the return of our Lord and Savior. Is it possible that we will wait another 50, 100 or even 500 years before the Lord returns in the rapture? While this is unlikely, the Old and New Testaments do give us specific events that will occur and directly precede the resurrection of the church. We can examine these events to try to discover the timing of the resurrection.

Jesus speaks a great deal about the timing of the resurrection and the events surrounding His return, but also says that he does not know the day and time it will happen. He directs his disciples to wait, watch, and be ready. Was he trying to confuse us? No. In Matthew 24:4-41, Mark 13:5-37 and Luke 21:6-8, Jesus speaks clearly about the events occurring before his second coming, even quoting relevant Old Testament scripture. He even quotes relevant Old Testament scripture.¹ While it appears confusing, his style follows the typical pattern of Bible Prophecy where a

¹ Daniel 7:13, 11:31

prophecy is given in whole or part, but the precise date for the fulfillment is not given. The event may happen in days, weeks or many years. The key to grasping the meaning of any prophecy is understanding what events must occur before the prophecy is to take place.

God showed the prophet Daniel detailed prophecies about the end times. When he asked when the prophecies would take place and was told, “The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” (Daniel 12:9). Although he was given the prophecies, other things had to take place before what he was told could be fulfilled. So what is the believer to do about Bible prophecy we do not understand? Should we try to discern the events or wait until they occur? When God provides us with details about events in prophecy to prepare us for the event, not add more confusion to our already confused lives. This is why we should study Bible Prophecy and pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal what we do not understand. Revelation 19:10 tells us, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Bible prophecy is meant to reveal more of Jesus Christ to us through his Word, Spirit and fulfillment of the prophecy. Knowing this, we should not abandon, but embrace bible

prophecy to draw closer to Christ and have him reveal his purposes to us. When necessary, Jesus will even come to us in person when necessary to open our understanding of prophecy:

“Then he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered and to enter his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:25–27

We find two things in this portion of scripture. First, the disciples that Jesus spoke with knew a great deal about his life and ministry from spending so much time with him, yet they did not understand the prophecies about him. Second, Jesus reprimands them for not understanding and believing the prophecies. He had to re-instruct them and take them through the prophetic scriptures about himself. We can learn several things from this:

1. It is easy to misinterpret Bible prophecy, even after having spent time with Christ.
2. Believing what Jesus has already spoken to us is not easy, often because of personal bias.

3. Jesus must sometimes re-instruct us in biblical prophecies that concern him.

With this in mind, let us reexamine Christ's intent when he said that no one knows the day or hour of his coming. In, Matthew 24:37, Jesus, speaking of his human nature, says that even he does not know when the resurrection will occur. Here are several other scriptures that show the illusive nature of trying to determine when Christ will return:

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” 1 Thessalonians 5:2

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:10

Jesus Christ will come as “a thief in the night” to resurrect the church. The Greek word used for thief in both instances is *kleptēs*, which Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words interprets as a “stealer.” Christ will come using the thief's best weapon, stealth, and obscurity to

sneak up on his saints and resurrect them from this world. If you knew a thief was coming, then you would guard against it. A thief is crafty, and deceptive, so a vigilant homeowner would stay awake, waiting for his arrival. Knowing this, we must obey the commandment given to us in Matthew 24:42–51 and watching, preparing to be “stolen” by our Lord.

Since Jesus commanded the church to watch and be ready, then clearly, he expects us to study and understand the prophecies given to prepare us. Consider the events surrounding the first coming of Christ. Of the 38 prophecies fulfilled when Jesus came, how many of them did people recognize while he was alive? Herod sent for the chief priest and scribes to locate Christ’s birthplace to kill Jesus, rather than worship him. Even Mary and Joseph did not fully understand Christ’s role when they found him after three days in the temple hearing questions from and answering the doctors of the law. When asked why he had left them and what he was doing, his reply was simply, “How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business.” (Luke 2:49) The Lord expected them to know that he was sent to take care of the

master's business. As we seek to understand the rapture, we need to take care of God's business by spreading the gospel and building the kingdom of God. We should also know that, according to the scriptures, Jesus Christ is coming back to resurrect the church and carry out several other important objectives as well. We will examine the nature of the resurrection, as well as what Christ is trying to achieve when he resurrects the church in the next chapter.

2

WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION?

“For this we 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 them which are asleep. 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.” 1

Thessalonians 4:16–17

The word “resurrection”

The Old and New Testament contain many scriptures describing events surrounding the resurrection and the event itself. The word resurrection occurs 41 times, and in 40 verses of the Bible. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words defines resurrection as “a raising up,” “to cause to stand” or “the rising up.” This means that Christ intends to have his

believers, dead and alive rise to meet him in the air when he returns for us. 1 Thessalonians 4:14–17 beautifully describes how Jesus will come for the saints. It says that when Jesus Christ returns for the church, those who have died as Christian believers rise first followed by believers who are alive at his return. This means that there will be a two-part resurrection consisting of still living and deceased Christian saints. The Apostle Paul uses most of 1 Corinthians 15 to discuss why the resurrection must occur. 1 Corinthians 15:51–53 describes the physical change the body will undergo during the resurrection:

“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 trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” 1 Corinthians 15:51–53

These verses describe how our physical human bodies will change into a new, incorruptible, immortal, spiritual body free from sin and death. According to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:50, a change is necessary for us to inherit the kingdom of God and enter heaven.

The New Testament also uses two other Greek words for resurrection. Matthew 27:53 uses *egersis*, which means “a rousing.” The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines rousing as an adjective, meaning “giving rise to excitement.” Matthew 27:53 describes deceased saints rising from the dead and showing themselves to people in Jerusalem after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. At that time, there was excitement about dead saints coming back to life and appearing to large crowds. We can speculate that there will be significant excitement again when Christ raises the church. Jesus comes like a thief, stealing the church away in the resurrection and creating great excitement in the world! The resurrection will be the final determination of success or failure of one’s beliefs, regardless of doctrine and denomination. Questions of godhead, salvation, baptism, and holiness are answered moments after the saints have crossed the clouds! The left behind will ponder their fate as Gabriel, Michael and various unnamed angels will enact the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and bring this world under the subjection of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:11 uses the word *exanastasis* for

resurrection, which means “from” or “out of.” This means Jesus Christ will *take* his believers *out of* this world during the resurrection. Hebrews 11:38 describes the past champions of the faith by saying, “of whom the world was not worthy.” Our heroes of faith include apostles who laid foundations, built churches and established our unmovable doctrine. It includes every prophet that strained their bodies with prayer and fasting to receive and deliver words of enlightenment and encouragement from God. It includes pastors who labor, guide and give their lives for the sheep. It includes teachers training people in the way of the Lord and strengthening our faith. It includes evangelists, whose wearied bodies went from city to city, nation to nation strengthening, and confirming the churches. Surely, God will not forget the soul winners who filled churches by swaying men’s hearts with the glorious gospel, showing them a better way and forever earning the Lord’s favor. In heaven, all these shall have earned eternal joy and crowns for having stood fast in the Lord (Philippians 4:1). This is the resurrection! O Lord, come quickly!

Who will take part in the resurrection?

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ

were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:” Romans 6:3–5

The Bible tells us that those buried in baptism will take part in the resurrection.² Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ buries the sinner and their sins, spiritually changing them into a new person,³ ready for the resurrection. Being baptized in the proper way is necessary to take part in the resurrection because it changes the body and soul.

² Acts 2:38, Acts 8:16, Acts 10:47–48, and Acts 19:1–5

³ 2 Corinthians 5:17