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The Rapture of the Church at Christ's Coming!!

By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #361 ~

All that has happened in all of history is leading up to the end of this age and the kingdom of God. And God has it all planned out, from eternity past to the creation of this world to Christ coming as Savior to the present and to His return as Redeemer, Judge, and King. Be assured that this evil age (one starting with the sin of Adam and Eve), this evil world, and the devil's rule are soon coming to an end (Rev. 11:15). What a blessing this will be for believers! Rev. 7:9-17

We have been going over Matt. 24, the most important eschatological chapter in the New Testament. We have talked about birth pains impacting people around the world, great tribulation affecting Christians, and the Antichrist desolating the temple and persecuting the elect. There's also lawlessness, deception, betrayal, martyrdom, gospel-preaching, and the need for believers to know all this in advance. Understanding these things gives us the wisdom, peace, and hope that we need to live for Him in these end-times. God does not want any of His children, any of the chosen, to be caught off guard. He wants us to

be holy, to be ready, and to be working, watching, and waiting for Him. Rom. 13:11-14, 1 Th. 5:1-11

Let's continue in Matt. 24, specifically the rapture of the church at Christ's coming. But first:
Matthew 24:28 – *"Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."* In this verse, corpse refers to man's moral corruption, and vultures refer to God's wrath. Alan Kurschner explains it this way: *"It is a pivotal structural verse in that it distinguishes two epochs of human history, conveying the principle that where moral corruption exists, divine judgment is required. When the world's depravity has reached full to the brim, God eschatological judgment will begin."* ("Antichrist Before the Day of the Lord", page 69). The judgment of the world begins just after the end of this age and the rapture of the church, which we read about in vss. 29-31.

Matthew 24:29 – *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened… and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."* This tribulation, this great, global persecution of the elect, of both Christians and Jews, is described in vss. 9, 21-22. And it will be cut short, it will not last the entire 2nd half of Dan. 70th week. It will be shortened for the sake of the elect – otherwise, *"no life would be saved."* And only God knows when this will happen.

After this tribulation is cut short, the celestial lights go out and the earth goes dark. And there's a *"great earthquake",* and *"every mountain and island"* is moved out of its place (Rev. 6:12-14). For unrepentat sinners, this will be one of the scariest, most traumatic times on earth. Lk. 21:25-26 says, *"There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea*

and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world." Rev. 6:15-16 also expresses the unbelievers' shock and fear, for they know God Himself is doing it, and that they cannot escape.

Both the prophets and the apostles knew that Is. 2:10-22, Amos. 5:18-22, Zeph. 1:14-18, Matt. 24:29, Lk. 21:9-11a, and Rev. 6:12-14 are describing the warning signs occurring before the day of the Lord, God's judgment of the world at the end of this age. Then there's Joel 2:20-31 – *"I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth… the sun will be turned into darkness… before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes*." In fact, Peter quoted from Joel when he preached his 1st gospel message. Acts 2:19-20

Matt. 24:29 is Jesus' answer to the disciples' question about the sign that would happen before the end of this age. And these are visible, can't miss signs to all people on earth at that time, Jews and Gentiles, saved and lost. Christians should be thrilled, should be jumping for joy when they see, and feel (Rev. 6:12), these signs, for it means that Jesus is "*right at the door"* (vss. 30-34)*,* and that He will immediately take them to heaven, where they will be with Him forever!

Matthew 24:30 – *"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."* A beautiful bright light suddenly breaks through the darkness that's covering the earth, and it's the Shekinah glory of Christ, and it's visible to everyone. Vs. 30, along with vs. 27, is the sign of Christ's coming, the answer to the question the disciples asked Jesus in vs. 3. This sign of Christ's coming (vs. 30) is after the sign of the end of the

age (vs. 29), and that's because this magnificent and glorious light immediately follows and dispels the darkness.

Unbelievers on earth are mourning and, as stated in the Greek, *"beating the breast in anguish."* They know the brilliant light overpowering the darkness is evidence that the Judge is coming to pour out His wrath on them. Then they see Christ! Can you imagine how they must feel? It has to be the most heart-sinking, fear-gripping, body-shaking event of their lives (Lk. 21:26). These unrepentant sinners know they will soon be judged, that they are guilty, and that they are goners.

As for the believers, relief is flooding their minds, for Christ has returned to deliver them from an evil world, the Antichrist, and great persecution. And they are overcome with joy and gladness, for what they had been praying for, waiting for, and looking for, is finally happening. Their Lord is coming any moment, for He wants to gather His beloved family, and be with them forever!

Then these believers suddenly see Christ! Can you imagine how they feel? For the first time, they see their Savior, Redeemer, and King in all His power and glory. Joy and gladness fill their hearts and praise and thanks fill their mouths. (Job 19:25-27). *"I saw One like a Son of Man, clothed in a robe... His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire... His voice was like the sound of many waters... out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword and His face was like the sun shining in its strength."* Rev. 1:14-16

Matthew 24:31 – *"He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to another."* This is the climax to the events we have been talking about in vss. 3-30. God sends forth His angels to carry out this special operation of gathering the elect. Then there's the sound of the trumpet, confirmed by 1 Th. 4:16 – *"the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God."* Christ's 2nd coming, unlike His 1st coming, is not private and quiet but public and loud. God is powerfully and unmistakably proclaiming Christ's coming, alerting everyone in the whole world that His Son has returned to earth.

The culmination of all these events (Matt. 24:3-31) is the gathering of all believers from all time, those who died and are in heaven, and those left on earth, those who survive great tribulation (Mk. 13:27). We are talking about the resurrection and rapture of believers. 1 Th. 4:17 tells us, *"We who are alive and remain* (those on earth) *will be caught up together with them* (those in heaven) *in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."* The words *"caught up"* are from the Latin *"rapere"*, from which we get the word rapture.

The resurrected and raptured believers are glorified! This is you and I and all believers. *"I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed"* (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Not all believers will physically die before Christ's coming, but we will all be changed, we will all be glorified, we will all be imperishable, we will all become like Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 3:2)! And it's at the sound of the trumpet (Matt. 24:31 that we are glorified (1 Th. 4:16) – and it happens in a split second, *"in the twinkling of an eye."*

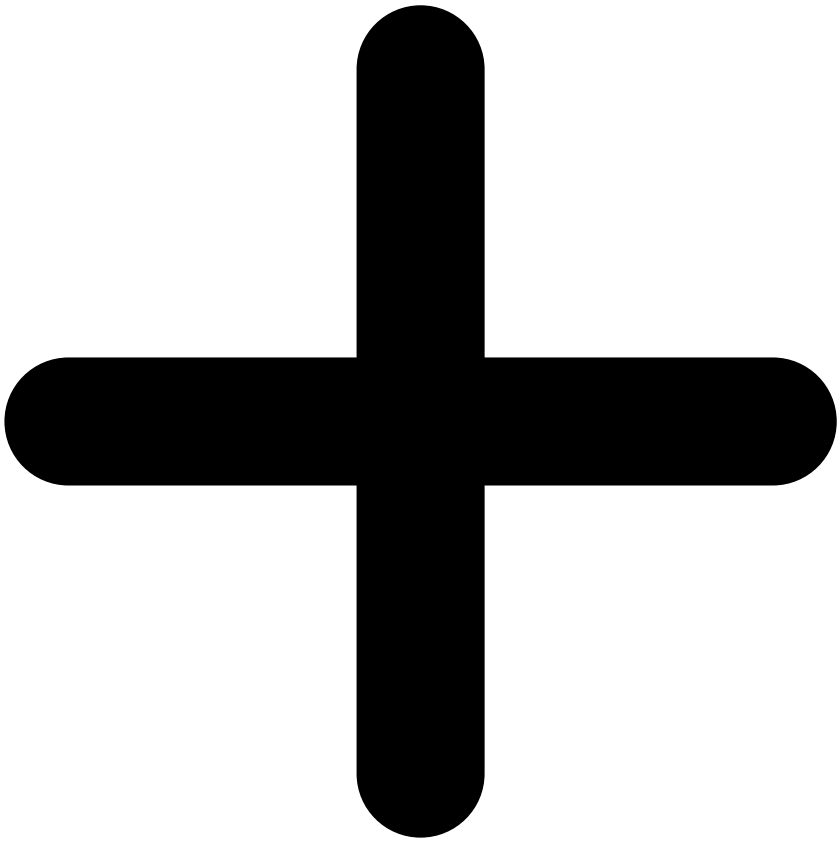
Here are several more essential truths about Christ's coming and the rapture:
1. There are many other Christ coming / rapture passages: Mark 13:27, Lk. 21:28, Jn. 13:1-3, 1 Cor. 15:50-57, 2 Th. 2:1, Rev. 7:9-14. And it's implied in Matt. 24:13, 40, 42.
2. At Christ's coming, we are relieved from tribulation (2 Th. 1:9), rescued from wrath (1 Th. 1:10), redeemed from the earth (Lk. 21:28), resurrected into glory (1 Cor. 15:35-44), resting from our labors (Rev. 14:13), reunited with believers (1 Th. 4:14), rewarded by Christ (Rev. 22:12), rejoicing in Christ (1 Th. 5:16), and we will reign with Christ (Rev. 5:20) and forever remain with Him. 1 Th. 4:18

3. The rapture does not take place at a different time than Christ's coming, but it's the initial event, the first thing to occur at His coming. Matt. 24:30-31; 1 Th. 4:15, 17; 2 Th. 2:1
4. For Christians living on earth, seeing Christ in the clouds and instantly being with Him will be the most dramatic, awesome, incredible event to ever happen! Being saved from your sins is great and glorious, but to suddenly see Him and be fully saved, to be immortal, to have a perfect mind, soul, and body, and to be with Christ and your believing friends and loved ones, will be the most amazing and spectacular event to ever occur in your life up until that time!

I am telling you the truth, and it's what you must know and tell others, that Christ is coming soon to rapture and resurrect all believers, and to bring you to Himself, to Him who loves you far more, infinitely more than anyone else. Be encouraged, be excited, and be looking forward to what God has planned out for you! *"Behold, I am coming soon… Behold, I am coming soon… Behold, I am coming soon. 'Amen. Come, Lord*

Jesus.’” Rev. 22:7, 12, 21

P.S. What an important subject – the rapture of the church at the coming of Christ!!! That’s why I have written so much about it. Here are several other posts on this topic: *#5*, *#6*, *#13*, *#53*, *#64*, *#65*, *#76*, *#86*, *#103*, *#118*, *#121*, *#153*, *#155*, *#156,* *#190*, *#316*.





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