

Is the Rapture....



of Readiness?

*Is the Rapture.... the Reward....
of Readiness?*

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INTRODUCTION

ARE YOU READY FOR THE RAPTURE?

Suppose you had never seen a copy of the Bible, but you became stranded on an island where you came upon a copy of the precious Word of God for the very first time. Would you believe as you do today?

Our belief in the Scriptures is often flavored by our past traditions--how we were taught the Bible in our youth, or in our churches and colleges, or our acceptance of the views of theologians of the past. Thus some proclaim they are Calvinists, while others say they're Armenians, or Wesleyans or Pentecostals.

We covet your interest in a study of the Word of God with an open mind and without prejudice, and believe we see evidence of all of these views expressed in the Scriptures.

Now, in the same way, we would like to approach our study of the rapture. Regardless of your belief, why not accept the verdict of Holy Scripture?

We admit the word "rapture" is not in the Bible. Webster's primary definition of the word is the "act of transporting, or fact of being transported," and relates to our Lord's return for His own.

The history of belief in a "rapture," according to some, began with a woman who stood up in Edward Irving's church in London, in 1831, claiming a special revelation that the Church would be removed before the coming awful tribulation. Although this woman was what we might call "pentecostal" in that she claimed divine revelation, her teaching was quickly adopted by J.N. Darby of the Plymouth Brethren movement, and later by C.I. Scofield who popularized the view.

To us it is strange that many evangelicals who follow the Scofield Bible will have nothing to do with "Pentecostals" although they accept the idea of a "rapture" reported to have come from a revelation given Margaret MacDonald.

It is likewise strange that some of today's Pentecostals who accept divine revelation through "tongues" and "interpretation of tongues" do not hold any longer to a belief in a pre-tribulation rapture, or any rapture.

For that reason, our only safe guide must be the Word of God. In this study we would seek to emphasize:

(1) Our belief in the rapture occurring before the tribulation;

(2) Our belief that many anticipating rapture will miss this event to go through the tribulation; and

(3) Our listing of possible errors surrounding a belief in the rapture.

There are too many evangelicals like Scofield, Ben Newton, M.R.DeHaan, Charles Fuller, and names too numerous to mention who believed and taught that all believers, carnal and spiritual, will be caught up at the rapture before the coming tribulation.

Then there are those men as Henry Frost of the China Inland Mission, William and Charles Erdman, Dr. Carl F. Henry, Harold Ockenga, and Robert McQuilken who believe that the Church will go through the tribulation.

We believe the Scriptures teach that there is an event we call the rapture. For I Thess. 4 relates the coming of the Lord, at which time, we shall be "caught up" to meet Him in the air, if we are ready.

In the second place, the promise is to those "in Christ" (I Thess. 4:16) which we know are those who are born again, that they shall participate in this glorious event. For remember, "If a man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature...." (2 Cor. 5:17). Pardon our saying so, but many who claim to be born again, according to the Scriptures, are not. Read I John 3:9 and I John 5:18 and see if you have this born-again experience and no longer practice sin.

Finally, we're convinced the rapture will reveal that those who will be ready are only a small group out of the vast majority of believers who professed to be looking for Christ's return. The call of the Lord to all of us is to "watch and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:36) We would note that this promise of escape is conditioned upon faithful watching and praying that we will escape. Perhaps in some parts of the world they are praying for release from tortures being endured for their faith in Christ, and they shall escape in answer to prayer. Although we may not be so tortured for Christ, we should ever be constantly praying, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus."

As an umpire calls the balls and strikes fairly as he sees them, so we have prepared this series of messages for you to read, study and evaluate. We do not come with dogmatic argument, but with prayerful consideration of this doctrine, which should cause all of us to want to live closer to our Lord. Like Enoch, may we be found "walking with God" and then suddenly find our communion and fellowship drawing us into the very presence of our Lord at His coming.

RAPTURE...THE REWARD...OF READINESS?

Queen Elizabeth II, on her "official birthday," honored J. S. Jones, a postman in North Wales.

In selecting Jones to receive the British Empire Medal, she noted he was a member of a family that has delivered the Welsh mail for 150 years.

And upon conferring an award upon Jones, age 60, she noted he had "not missed a day's service in 43 years." Also, he "got the mail through despite snow, storms and floods."

Is this not a reminder of the day when Christ shall REWARD ALL WHO ARE FAITHFUL IN His service?

As we read in Matt. 16:26, "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."

Now, we are not saved by works. As we're reminded in Eph. 2:8-9, we are saved "by grace, through faith...not of works, lest any man should boast."

However, being saved, we are enjoined to be "zealous of good works" and also to "be careful to maintain good works."

Dr. Wilbur Smith once related that very few books have ever been published relating to the believer's works. And yet, at least 18 times "works" is mentioned in the book of Revelation alone.

For instance, we read: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. 22:12)

Did you hear it?

Then we are told of four classifications of those to be rewarded. For we read: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (v. 11)

We usually think of a person as being saved or unsaved. But when it comes to rewarding according to our works, we find four classifications of men.

Now some may not agree - but their disagreement is with the Bible which clearly reveals these four classifications. Furthermore, each is to be rewarded at the coming of our Blessed Lord.

Let's seek to take a closer look at each group to seek to discover in which class we find ourselves.

THE UNJUST

We know this represents the unsaved - thieves, murderers, liars, gamblers, because we read: "Christ died, the just for the UNJUST!" (I Pet. 3:18)

What a message is ours to proclaim! No one need to go on in their sin. Christ died for the unjust!

If sinners do not repent and turn to the Lord for salvation, there is only the reward of punishment. As Peter declares: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, but to reserve the UNJUST unto the day of judgment to be punished." (2 Pet. 2:9)

It's awful for a child to know he's going to get a whipping. So the sinner who does not repent and receive Jesus faces the coming great day of wrath as well as eternal separation from God in hell.

THE FILTHY

While following a long string of cars on a narrow country road, I noticed a truck pulling a huge derrick up ahead. In the car in front of me the driver must have gotten awfully nervous, for it seemed every 20 seconds he would spit tobacco juice out the window, and some of it came my way.

Well, when this happened, I thought of this verse which mentions the "filthy."

Billy Sunday once said, "Tobacco might not keep a man from heaven, but he sure can't spit there."

Paul, writing to Christians, urges them, saying: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1)

James similarly urges, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness." (James 1:21)

Concerning Lot, we read he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." (2 Pet. 2:7)

I heard of a barber who told a filthy joke. A minister who sat in his shop then proceeded to tell one that was worse. God help us.

How many are similarly vexed with filthiness which may take the form of lying, cheating, hating, anger, greed, selfishness, or intemperance. Or, we think of filthy movies, trashy literature, which some who call themselves Christians patronize.

A Sioux Indian girl had qualified scholastically and as a musician in a Miss-America Contest. But she said she could not compete with the other girls aspiring to become Queen, because the tribe from which she came would not permit her to appear in a bathing suit for that would be immodest.

How far we have drifted from standards of modesty and morality so that our behavior pattern might be labelled "filthy."

PROGRESS magazine asks of modern movies: "What would you expect to happen to the teen-age boy who feasts his eyes on pictures of half-clad or unclad damsels and then goes parking with his high school sweetheart?"

My friends, while it is true that a person that is a Christian may fall victim to temptation, it is also true that on account of filthiness, many are going to be rewarded with the wrath of God at the coming of Jesus.

Some say God's wrath will never fall on the believer. Yet in Ephesians we read: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting... Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them." (Eph. 5:3-7)

In the Congo, soldiers raped the wives of white men, saying: "They wear shorts; they must be 'bad' women." Modern miniskirts and unbecoming attire surely must border on "filthiness." As one noted evangelist warned: "Women can commit immorality the way they dress!" Furthermore, he declared: "The Bible teaches that God hates immorality as much as, or more than, any other sin."

THE RIGHTEOUS

How wonderful to be included among the righteous - those who have repented of sin to trust the Saviour.

The righteous represents the "saved." For we are made righteous as we trust in Christ, receiving forgiveness through His shed blood. We read, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21)

And, let us point out - if we are really RIGHTEOUS, we will be found living righteously when Jesus comes. Writes John: "Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." (1 John 3:7-8)

When Christ returns and we are among the righteous, shall we not be found rewarded at the rapture? Paul speaks of the "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..." (2 Tim. 4:8)

THE HOLY

We read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." (Rev. 20:6)

The Greek word for "holy" is Hagiasmos. It is sometimes translated into such words as "saint," "sanctify," "sanctification." Its primary meaning is to be "set apart to God."

Dr. M. R. DeHaan pointed out the difference between being a believer and a disciple, showing the disciple to be one willing to give up all to follow Jesus.

Similarly there is a difference between the "righteous" who are the saved, and the "holy" who represent those who are sanctified.

We're reminded of Jesus of whom it is written: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God...by the which will we are sanctified..." (Heb. 10:9-10) Not only did our Lord sanctify us by His purchase of each of us when He died on the cross, but when His will becomes our will, then we, too, are sanctified. With some this is a long, drawn-out process before they finally surrender to the total will of God. God will bear witness through the Holy Spirit when we make this unconditional surrender.

That there is scriptural progression in the Christian life is emphasized in Romans 6:19. Here we read: "...for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

Did you notice the progression?

A child steals a cookie from the cupboard and then tells a lie to cover it up. So in the Christian life there is progression from righteousness unto holiness.

It is in view of our Lord's return that we are admonished to pursue this holiness. We read, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

We might point out, too, that "holiness" is the opposite of "impurity." For we read, "God hath not called us to uncleanness but to holiness."

Thus, God's purpose for us is that we be among the righteous and the holy when Jesus comes.

Beloved, let us remember our Lord promises to reward our efforts.

A man at the Buffalo airport handled the baggage for a couple from New Zealand who had just toured the United States. Having purchased a car in Miami, they now had no more need of the vehicle, so they told the 'skycap' - "It's yours?"

What reward for such little effort! And yet the Lord promises to reward our least, little effort.

Is this not an incentive for whole-hearted service? And should we not strive for what we might consider the greatest of all rewards - that of being accepted at our Lord's Coming with the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

The Apostle Paul may have had this determination in mind when aspiring to rapture. For he wrote: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:10)

The "high" calling refers to the "upward" calling or what some consider to be "caught upward" at the coming of our Blessed Lord.

Remember, in this passage Paul had some question about attaining the resurrection. For he wrote, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (v. 11)

Would this not indicate that the resurrection at the rapture was a prize to be gained, even as the crown that would be given to those who love our Lord's appearing?

Perhaps this is where we should make reference to our Lord's mention of being accounted worthy for the resurrection. For He told His disciples, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage."

Likewise, He admonished in view of His coming, "Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man."

Doesn't this give the impression that Rapture is the reward of readiness? Is escape from coming tribulation based on being accounted worthy of escape? This is what our Lord seems to indicate, and this is what Paul seems to be saying. For in 2 Thess. he also speaks of being "accounted worthy of the kingdom of God." And again he writes, "We pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling..."

So, we would almost conclude by saying...RAPTURE is a reward to be gained...a reward to the faithful who are ready when Christ appears.

And we would urge - "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh!"

OUR LORD'S RETURN--- A BLESSED HOPE FOR THOSE WHO ARE READY!

Dr. Herbert Lockyer has declared: "The imminent return of Christ has enabled the believers of each succeeding generation to gather comfort, strength, and inspiration from such a truth. Not knowing the date fixed upon God's Calendar for His beloved Son to come back, the saints are yet upheld by such a blessed hope."

The message of our Lord's Return is meant to be a message of comfort. If we anticipated tribulation rather than rapture, there would be little to comfort us unless we evaluate suffering in the light of eternity. For we do read, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:18)

However, it is in view of Paul's marvelous explanation as to how the Lord will come to rapture the saints that we are encouraged, "wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. 4:18)

Dr. Philpott relates how one night as he left home for a speaking engagement, his wife requested that he bring a message of comfort. He chose as his text 1 Thess. 4:15-18. The words are most familiar to all those who long for the day of Christ's coming.

"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. WHEREFORE COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS!"

It must be remembered, however, that to have this hope encourages a close walk with the Lord. It likewise demands forsaking of every known sin, and obedience to the revealed will of God. Even as we read in 1 John 3:3, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

How does one purify himself? Peter replies: "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit..." (1 Pet. 1:22)

But someone asks: "Does not the blood of Jesus cleanse us from all sin and keep us ever ready for the coming of our Blessed Lord?"

The answer comes again from God's Word: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Did you hear it?

Cleansing is dependent upon our willingness to walk in the light, heeding God's Word, doing His Will, obeying His precepts!

Some wrongfully suppose this is a teaching of works for salvation. We would reply that while it is true we are saved by grace through faith and not of works, yet when our Lord returns, He will reward every man according to his works. (Rev. 22:12)

It is very much apparent that as we come to the close of this age that faith will be anemic and shallow so that God has no alternative but to allow a time of testing to come to professing Laodicean believers who are unprepared for rapture. For all such believers, the Lord's Return is not a comforting hope.

As D. M. Panton, British biblical scholar writes: "Too many are assuming that preparation for Christ's Coming is solely a matter of past experience and not at all a matter of walk, so that for all the saved, no matter how un-Christlike a life they live, it will be pure, unmixed, inevitable joy -- an instant, miraculous deliverance so wrapped up in the gift of salvation that it covers even the most unconsecrated, unholy child of God."

Observes Panton: "There is and can be, so long as this teaching is believed; no demand for sanctity beyond salvation, and the tremendous thunders of the fast-approaching tribulation leave myriads of Christians unawake. The issue is a grave one, for our Lord's outburst from heaven to catch His bride away is either a comforting opiate for disobedient disciples, or else it is one of the most rousing of all truths - IT CANNOT BE BOTH!"

While on one hand we do not want to rob anyone of the comfort of the "blessed hope," on the otherhand, we would not want to leave anyone with a "false hope." If there is any reason for the need of this message it is because of admonitions warning us to be ready for our Lord's return. Furthermore, those who hold to the promise of the blessed hope and prepare for this event will be ready for our Lord's Coming. For He hath said, "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure!" And again we read, "...his wife hath made herself ready!"

Enoch is a type of the translation saints. He was translated because he had a testimony that he pleased God. We're told the carnal mind is enmity against God. We might ask - Can we hope to please God as long as we have carnality in us?

God's will is that we forsake every known sin. We are even called upon to "lay aside every weight," that which would hinder us, hold us back, and keep us from being ready for rapture. Some things in our lives we may not call sin are nevertheless "weights" and may keep us from being ready for our Lord's coming.

Dr. R. A. Torrey, an associate of Moody, once asked: "What constitutes readiness for the coming of the Lord?" His reply: "Separation from the world's indulgence of the flesh, from the world's immersion in the affairs of this life, and intense daily earnestness in prayer." This, declared Torrey, "is the first part of preparation for the Lord's return."

There are other requirements if we would be ready for the rapture.

We are to look for His soon appearing. We read, "...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:28)

As W. Graham Scroggie writes: "Am I looking for the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

His reply: "He began His gracious work in you and in me at the cross when He redeemed us, saved with a great salvation. He has been continuing His work in our spirits ever since that glad hour, unless we have hindered Him, but He is going to perfect His work. If our souls were saved at Calvary, and if our spirits are being saved through life, He is going to save our bodies, to give us a new medium of expression."

What a glorious hope is the "blessed hope." Remember, if we really want to be ready for our Lord's coming, WE CAN BE READY. "Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do it!" (1 Thess. 5:24)

AMEN.

ADMONITIONS IN VIEW OF CHRIST'S RETURN

Perhaps you are like many who ask: What does it mean to be ready for Christ's return? Knowing that we have decided for Jesus Christ--isn't this enough to be ready for His coming?

We might give the following suggestions from the Bible as to how believers can be ready for the rapture, when Jesus comes for His own.

1. PRAY ALWAYS!

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21:36.

R.A. Torrey comments: "According to this passage there is only one way in which we can be prepared for the coming of the Lord when He appears; that is, through much prayer."

Notes Dr. Torrey: "The man who spends little time in prayer, who is not steadfast and constant in prayer, will not be ready for the Lord when He comes. But we may be ready. How? Pray! Pray! Pray!"

Keith Brooks says: "It would be hard to find any passage in the New Testament containing stronger words than found in the original of Luke 21:36, our Lord's warning to HIS OWN concerning the last days. "Pray always," notes Brooks, "is a word meaning the most urgent form of supplication and this 'all the time'."

Chris Gerig comments in the GOSPEL HERALD that "Prayer demands the exercise of all our highest powers--hence the need of sobriety and vigilance....Prayer will arm the soul for the events of the future. It will make strong for any emergency the believer may have to face. It will keep us in spiritual condition to be of some practical help and blessing to the souls which we contact from day to day. Prayer will keep us ready for the Lord's coming."

2. WATCH

Jesus said: "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

"WATCH ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:33-37.

If by being saved we are automatically ready for Christ's coming, then why all of these urgent commands to watch? In fact, four different times of the day we are told to be on the alert.

Incidentally, the first time when you read, "Watch", it is the Greek word "agoupneite" meaning "Wake up." Later uses of the word "Watch" is the Greek word "gregoreite" which means, "Stay awake! Be on your guard!"

Bishop J. C. Ryle suggests the following: "Watch against the leaven of false doctrine. Watch against slothfulness about Bible study and private prayer; watch against bitterness and uncharitableness toward others. Watch against pride and self-conceit."

Vance Havner once said: "The church needs not only to wake up but to get up." John Wesley, in his journal, once expressed his concern that "Nine in ten of those once-awakened are now faster asleep than ever."

In view of the soon-coming tribulation, how we need to heed this message to WATCH.

3. BE SOBER!

In view of the soon-coming of Christ, Paul admonishes: "Let us watch and be sober!" I Thess. 5:6-8)

Likewise, the Apostle Peter warns: "But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober!" I Pet. 4:7.

We are not to go around with long faces. Surely, we should have the joy of the Lord in our hearts.

However, the Scriptures caution against foolish talking, jesting and joking which are not convenient...and admonitions in the Bible are often found calling for sobriety.

Centuries ago, when Jesus walked this earth, a man named Publius Lentullus, President of Judea, wrote concerning our Saviour: "It cannot be remembered that any have seen Him laugh, but many have seen Him weep."

We need to be sober in view of His soon coming which may find many of our friends and family left behind to endure the wrath of God poured out in the tribulation.

4. BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING!

Could it be that Satan's most effective weapon to defeat the Christian is to get him bogged down in the cares of this life?

In Phil. 4:5-6 we read... "The Lord is at hand...Be careful for nothing."

In the parable of the Sower...the seed that fell among the thorns represented those whose lives were choked with cares, and riches and pleasures. (Luke 8:14)

In referring to His return, our Lord warns: "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with....cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." Luke 21:34-35.

Common ordinary cares....raising a family, making money, building a house...legitimate duties, may find us so occupied as to be neglectful of our prayer life, Bible study, witnessing, and church attendance.

Today, many are like Martha, in the Bible, "full of cares and troubled about many things." She was active on behalf of Christ--tidying up the house and preparing a meal for the Lord. Reminds me of those who are occupied with church suppers, rummage sales and the like. However, of Mary, whose time was spent at the feet of Jesus, our Lord had said, "She hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

5. BE PATIENT!

For centuries, believers have waited for the coming of our Blessed Lord. The reason, perhaps, that our Lord still has not returned is that He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The Apostle James likens our Lord to a husbandman who waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it!

Likewise, we too are exhorted to BE PATIENT! "Be ye patient, therefore brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James 5:7-8

Without question we believe some are suffering a form of tribulation now. This tribulation may take the form of bodily affliction, trials, accidents, loss of property, and loss of loved ones. Nevertheless, tribulation is often God's way of purifying our lives and purging us that we may bring forth fruit.

Would we not rather have tribulation now than to live carelessly in worldly pleasure to find ourselves left behind at Christ's coming to go through tribulation such as the world has never seen nor ever shall see again?

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job," writes James. Job, who had the misfortune of losing his property, livestock, servants, and even his children, and suffered bodily affliction as well, did not lose patience! Said he: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

Until that day when Christ shall come, "Be patient."

6. BE LOVING!

"We hate Christians. Even the best of them must be regarded as our worst enemies. For they teach love to one's neighbor. What we want is HATE. For only as we know how to hate can we conquer the universe." So spoke Lounacharski, former Commissar of Education in the U.S.S.R.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you," said Jesus.

This kind of love whereof Jesus spoke results not from education but from conversion. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."

This kind of love will free us from racial prejudice; it will reduce frictions of dis-unity and dissention in our churches; it will alleviate many of the misunderstandings in our homes; and will help solve the problems of our community.

In view of Christ's soon coming, the Apostle John writes: "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men...to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." I Thess. 3:12-13.

7. READ AND HEED GOD'S WORD.

I John 1:7 says: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We need to read God's Word to know of His will for our lives, and how we can be ready for Christ's coming. Then we need to heed its message. We should have everything right between us and God, and between us and our fellowmen.

Thus, walking in the light of God's Word can mean that we're "paid up, prayed up, and ready to go up."

Like those "ever-ready" batteries, we can be ever ready to meet our Lord.

8. CURB YOUR APPETITE.

These should be days of fasting instead of feasting. Our Lord reminds us of the day when the Son of man would be taken away, saying: "But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." Luke 5:35.

Fasting will break the habits of life and put our faith on edge, making us conscious of the needs of others, while helping us to keep our bodies under control.

9. WARN THOSE WHO ARE UNPREPARED.

Our Lord Himself warned us that the tribulation would be a time of great trouble such as the world had never seen, no, nor ever shall see again.

Ezekiel would remind us that if we fail to warn men their blood will be upon us. (Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:3-9)

The Apostle Paul said: "I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20:31)

How much more burdened we should be for the lost and those who are living carelessly, seeing the coming of the Lord so close at hand.

There are more warnings against the judgments of the great tribulation than there are concerning eternal doom. How important to heed these loving admonitions and to be ready--"for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." We should be living every moment so that if our Lord were to appear we wouldn't be embarrassed or ashamed but ready for His appearing.

10. COMFORT THE LONELY AND BEREAVED, THE DISCOURAGED AND DOWN-HEARTED.

After relating the details of our Lord's return, the Apostle Paul adds a word of comfort. He relates: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." So we should rejoice in the fact that when our Lord appears, we will be reunited with loved ones, those who have gone before.

Then the Apostle explains: "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." I Thess. 4:14-17. This is one of the clearest passages in the Bible that explains just what will happen when Jesus comes.

Finally, we are told: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (v. 18)

How wonderful for those who are afflicted, for when Jesus comes, there will be no more sickness, no more pain, no more sorrow or tears, no more suffering or heartache. For those who are ready to meet the Lord, it will be all joy and bliss. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

11. OBEY GOD.

How important it is to heed this Scriptural admonition. Hebrews 5:9 says our Lord "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY Him." And in II Thess. 1:8 we read that our Lord comes "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that OBEY NOT the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Study these verses and they'll remind you of the importance of obedience. Even the Gospel is to be "obeyed" as well as believed. For faith without works is dead.

We need to exhibit by our lives that we are Christians if we call ourselves Christians.

12. REMEMBER, GOD'S WRATH IS UPON THE DISOBEDIENT.

It is true that the believer is not appointed to wrath. As we read in the following verses: "We wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." (I Thess. 1:10; 5:9-10)

On the other hand, we believe to live in wilful sin or open disobedience to the revealed will of God as found in His Word, places us in a dangerous position of being left behind when Jesus comes.

For instance, the Lord in speaking to believers says: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting which are not convenient....Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them." (Eph. 5:3,4,6,7)

Thus, while God's wrath is not appointed for believers, we see where His wrath cometh upon the children of disobedience. May we "flee the wrath to come!"

13. BE WARNED OF SINNING WILFULLY.

As Hebrews 10:26 reminds us: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment...."

Did you hear it?

You can't sin wilfully and get away with it. Christ cannot go back and be a sacrifice once again for sin. Rather, unless you get the victory over sin through the help of the Holy Spirit you may suffer the judgment of God's chastening wrath for your sin.

Some wrongfully suppose that when you're saved, you are forgiven of sins of the past, present and future. Romans 3:25 however, speaks of "the remission of sins that are past" so that after you are saved it is wrong to suppose you can sin wilfully and not be chastened. The tribulation, we believe, will be chastening for Laodicean Christians. For does not our Lord say: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Rev. 3:19.

14. ABIDE IN CHRIST

In I John 2:28 we read: "And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Will we be ashamed when Jesus comes? Not if we abide in Him. What does it mean to abide in Him? John reminds us: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." (I John 3:6)

Ah, hear me, Our Lord would remind us there is coming a day when many will say, "Lord, Lord," and they will relate all of their achievements--how they did many wonderful works in His name, even cast out devils. But our Lord is heard saying: "Depart from me, ye that sin...that work iniquity." (See Matt. 7:21-23)

How important to be found abiding in Christ. Indeed, if we are found walking in the light God sheds on our pathway, living for Christ, His blood ever cleanses us from all sin. Thus we are kept ever ready for our Lord's coming.

15. INVEST IN SOULS

There is much more that could be said as to how to be ready for our Lord's return, or how best to occupy until He come.

We must not forget the need of investing in the Lord's work. In many places the work of the Lord suffers for a lack of funds. Believing our Lord's coming is verily close at hand, we would be reminded of the parable in Matthew 25 where those who invested their talents were rewarded with other talents, and our Lord commended them, saying: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

However, to the unfaithful servant of whom it was said he "hid his lord's money," (He was cast into the outer darkness of tribulation, I believe, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,) our Lord said: "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury."

How sad for many in that day when our Lord comes back and finds us hoarding needlessly, storing up that which could be used for bringing the gospel to precious souls around the world who need to hear this message.

16. SANCTIFY YOURSELVES.

There is something the Lord asks us to do and that is to yield ourselves fully to God. (Rom. 12:1-2) He has a perfect plan, a pleasing blueprint for us to follow.

Of Jesus it was said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" How wonderful to surrender wholly to the will of God. We read further: "By which will we are sanctified." (Heb. 10:9)

Sanctification seems to be such a hard word to explain. But it simply means "surrender to all of the revealed will of God!" As we give ourselves fully to God, then His Spirit comes to dwell in fulness within us. This is what it means to be filled (or controlled) by the Spirit.

If we will invite the Lord to take over as the master of our lives, He will sanctify us, set us apart for Himself, and keep us ready for His coming.

Let me read it to you: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And notice--"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (I Thess. 5:23-24)

If you want to be sanctified, and made ready for His coming, He will do it.

17. PURIFY YOURSELVES.

John writes: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And then we read: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." I John 3:2-3

I'm convinced that if you want to be ready for our Lord's return you can be ready. In Revelation, speaking of the bride of Christ, the true church, we read: "His wife hath made herself ready!" Rev. 19:7.

18. SEEK OUT THE FELLOWSHIP OF OTHER LIKE-MINDED CHRISTIANS.

Attend services where the Word of God is preached, and the second coming of Christ is emphasized.

In Hebrews 10:25 we read: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

Did you hear it?

These are days when you can get good gospel programs on radio and television. But the Bible reminds us that we need the warm, meaningful association of fellow-Christians. More than ever before we need to show love one to the other. Be friendly, be courteous, smile! Exhibit the fruit of the Spirit... love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, kindness.

19. SEEK THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In I Cor. 1:7, we read: "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Through the indwelling Holy Spirit we are given gifts which will enable us to walk worthy of our calling, and will help us to be ready for Christ's coming.

Not only are we told about these gifts, but encouraged to "covet earnestly the best gifts." I Cor. 12:31.

20. BE READY.

"Be ye therefore ready!" Matt. 24:44. The Scriptures indicate that if you want to be ready, you can be ready. God looks upon your heart. And He knows if you will allow the Holy Spirit to occupy the throne of your life He will allow Jesus to be so real and precious that you'll want to live constantly in view of His coming.

As one writer declares: "The matter of being ready is of such supreme importance that our Lord has not left us without kindly admonition; and as willingness to serve naturally leads to preparedness for service, how vitally important it is that we consider what He has to say about being ready."

So, may we accept the verdict of God's Word and "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Second Coming Expected; Church Alters By-Laws

New York Times Service (c)

NORTH HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — Believing that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ may well be in this generation, members of the First Assembly of God have changed the church's by-laws to provide continued leadership if its officers are suddenly taken to Heaven.

The denomination, now claiming more than 1-million members in the United States and several million more throughout the world, believes in a literal return of Christ and "rapturing" of the "true church," or those who have made commitment to Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

A KEY passage in the New Testament cited by Rev. D. Leroy Sanders, pastor of the 2,000-member congregation, is I Thessalonians, 17, which reads:

"Then we who are alive who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the cloud to meet the Lord."

"No other congregation has taken steps to guide those left behind, as far as we know," Sanders said.

The amended by-laws provide for corporate officials to be named to carry on the worship and ministry of the church "following the rapture."

ONE ARTICLE states: "The blessed hope . . . clearly speaks of an instantaneous and general translation of the members of the assembly. All pastors, deacons, elders and other . . . leaders and officers are expected to be caught up alive in a moment of time, thus depriving the church of duly constituted legal representation. In such an event the remaining members . . . shall meet in an emergency church council the following Sunday morning at 11 a.m. and elect . . . a temporary chairman."

Sanders said the chairman was empowered to call for a new church council to oversee operations of the \$1.5-million property.

Assemblies of God colleges generally teach that those "raptured" will go to Heaven for seven years and then return at the millennium to rule on Earth with Christ for a thousand years.

ELEVEN REASONS... WHY WE BELIEVE MANY WILL MISS THE RAPTURE!

In North Hollywood, California, the 2000-member First Assembly of God church has gone on record as changing the church by-laws to allow for the continued operation of the ministry following the event we call the Rapture.

Noted Dr. D. Leroy Sanders, the congregation's pastor: "The blessed hope....clearly speaks of an instantaneous and general translation of the Assembly members. All pastors, deacons, elders, and other....leaders and officers are expected to be caught up alive in a moment of time, thus depriving the church of duly constituted legal representation."

The church ruled that in the event of the rapture having taken place, "the remaining members...shall meet in an emergency church council the following Sunday morning at 11 o'clock and elect...a temporary chairman." Dr. Sanders said the chairman would be empowered to call for a new church council to oversee operations of the 1.5 million dollar property.

Some think it preposterous that there should be a rapture of the Church, while others who believe in the event of the Rapture see every professing believer "caught up" at the return of Christ.

What does the Scripture say?

The Bible does teach that there's a day coming when "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." (I Thess. 4:16-17)

This is the event many Bible evangelicals call the Rapture.

Today we would like to list ten reasons why we believe there will be those looking for the Rapture who will miss this event, and hence will remain behind to go through the tragic period known as the Great Tribulation.

Scriptural admonitions warn of those whose salvation is not questioned, but because of unfaithfulness, worldliness, spiritual lukewarmness, immorality...they are unprepared to meet the Lord. So they are left behind at the Rapture to pass through the trying period of awful affliction, to come through this fiery trial "purged and purified."

While some agree that "wilful sin" must be punished by "fiery indignation" (Heb. 10:26-27), and that "chastening" follows disobedience (Heb. 12:6-8), they are not willing to concede that the tribulation may be that form of chastening that befalls a lukewarm Church at the coming of Christ. Yet, the Scripture clearly teaches concerning the Laodiceans of our church age, that they will be spued out if neither hot nor cold. And they will be chastened if they are Christ's own-- "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. 12:6)

That the Rapture is the reward of readiness seems clearly taught from the Scriptures. And the fact that many will miss this glorious event is taught as evidenced in the following Biblical passages.

1. Jesus taught that some who looked for His coming will miss it. He said, "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." (Luke 17:22)

There are, in reality, two days of our Lord's Return referred to in 2 Timothy 4:1 as "his appearing" and "his kingdom."

When our Lord appears the saints will be caught up to meet Him. And when our Lord returns to this earth, He comes to establish His millennial kingdom. The implication of Scripture would seem to be that some who anticipate the day of rapture will miss it.

2. Rev. 7:7-14 indicates that "a great multitude" will be left behind at the coming of Christ to go through the Great Tribulation.

It is said of these tribulation saints that they "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The evidence is that their robes were defiled, spotted and dirty at the coming of the Lord and amidst tribulation they repented, although many may have died for their faith.

On the basis of this Scripture, the late G. Campbell Morgan stated: "Personally, I am convinced that not all Christian people will be taken to be with Christ on His return, but only those who by the attitude of their lives are ready for His appearing."

3. The Parable of the Ten Virgins found only half of those looking for the coming bridegroom ready for His appearance. (Matt. 25:1-13)

Whatever interpretations are made of this parable, it is plainly shown that five were ready and went into the marriage at the coming of the Bridegroom while the remaining five missed the event.

Scofield writes: "That the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven is clear from Rev. 19:1 with verses 7-10 where we read in part, 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

Thus, there is special blessing to those who are raptured. As evidenced in Revelation 5:9-10, the raptured saints, we believe, represent those who are "kings and priests" unto God who will reign upon the earth, whereas those left behind to go through the tribulation are classified as "servants." (Rev. 7: 15). So, which would we sooner be--a servant or a king or priest? Should we not seek to make our calling and election sure?

Incidentally, the promise of reigning with Christ is for the Overcomers. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." (Rev. 3:21) "But the Church has refused as a whole to overcome self, the world, and the devil," writes Sarah Foulkes Moore, editor of HERALD OF HIS COMING. "On the contrary," she notes, "The church is overcome by them. Hence her royal estate as the Bride of Christ is given to those who will overcome as individuals, and it is they who will inherit the promise given to overcomers, and will sit with Christ as His consort on His throne and rule with Him. Having ruled over the world, the flesh, and the devil in this life, they will be accounted worthy to sit with Him on His throne."

4. A parallel parable in Luke 12:35-40 would indicate some will not be ready until our Lord returns from the wedding.

The Scripture reads as follows:

*Parable and warnings connected
with the second coming (Mt.
24. 37-25. 30).*

35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

This passage in Luke 12:35-48, although seldom preached on, teaches that:

A. Some won't be ready until our Lord returns from the wedding. (Luke 12:35)

B. That the possibility exists that our Lord may come at two different times, described as the second watch or third watch. (Luke 12:38)

C. That if the one in charge would have watched the house had not been broken through. (Luke 12:39)

D. That the servant who looked for His Lord's coming but who lived carelessly shall be left behind with "unbelievers." (Luke 12:46)

E. That depending on the servant's knowledge of the Lord's will, he will be beaten with few stripes or many stripes.

Notice: It's apparent this judgment will be confined to earth, and specifically to the Great Tribulation. There are no beatings in heaven as far as can be seen, but a joyous reunion of fellowship and bliss in the presence of the Bridegroom.

5. The Apostle Paul spoke of the "resurrection from among the dead" as a prize to be gained, saying: "I press toward the mark (the goal) for the prize of the high calling (upward calling) of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:14.

Again Sarah Foulkes Moore notes: "Many Christians today are taking for granted they are ready. How different is their slothful attitude from that of the great apostle, Paul.

At the time he was writing the Philippians (Phil. 3:10) he was not sure he had met the requirements of readiness for the first resurrection. He said, "Not as though I had already attained...but I press toward the mark." He lived his daily Christian experience as a man running a race with the purpose in view of winning a prize. The prize Paul desired to win was Christ, the Bridegroom. He already knew Christ as Lord and Saviour. Later he admitted to having attained that goal saying, "I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. 4:7-8.

6. That "crowns" may be lost is stressed by John in Rev. 3:11, indicating the possibility of losing the reward of being raptured. We read: "Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

While salvation is a gift, it is clearly taught that there are rewards to be gained in running the Christian life. While there is no evidence that the "rapture" is included in salvation, it behooves us to examine the Scriptures to see if it may be one of the "crowns" or "rewards" given to the faithful.

D.M. Panton writes: "Too many are assuming that preparation for Christ's coming is solely a matter of past experience and not at all a matter of walk, so that for all the saved, no matter how unChristlike a life they live, it will be pure, unmixed, inevitable joy--an instant, miraculous deliverance so wrapt up in the gift of salvation that it covers even the most unconsecrated child of God." Declares Panton: "There is and can be, so long as this teaching is believed, no demand for sanctity beyond salvation, and the tremendous thunders of the fast-approaching tribulation leaves myriads of Christians unawake. The issue is a grave one, for our Lord's outburst from heaven to catch His bride away is either a comforting opiate for disobedient disciples, or else it is one of the most rousing of all truths -- IT CAN-NOT BE BOTH."

7. The history of the Laodicean Church is that it would be "spued out" at the coming of the Lord.

McCrossan gives the following proof that the Laodicean Church will go through the tribulation:

(1) Because the Lord says so: "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

(2) The Laodiceans are counseled to "buy of Christ" ...white raiment and be clothed--white raiment signifying the righteousness of saints mentioned in Rev. 19:8, assuring us of a place at the wedding supper. By accepting Christ he is made unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification (holiness) and redemption." I Cor. 1:30.

(3) Christ made no provision for escape of the tribulation as in the case of the Philadelphia Church.

(4) Because of the name "Laodicean" which would indicate the "people will assert their rights, and refuse to have their lives and conduct regulated by Christ and His Word. They will claim the right to criticize Christ's teachings.

Notice: The most obvious characteristic about this church is its "lukewarmness."

Some doubt that these Laodiceans were actual believers. The Scriptures would indicate that they were true believers of a sort but that their faith was shallow, and their testimony was "lukewarm." And our Lord goes on to assert, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent."

That the tribulation is a time of chastening is clear for all to see. God does not chasten the wicked but punishes them. He chastens His own.

One writer expresses the belief shared by many that Christ's death on the cross atoned for sins of the past, present and future and regardless of the life we live we are automatically ready for His coming. Christ's shed blood is thus efficacious regardless of the life we may be found living at the time of rapture.

On the other hand, this writer says I Cor. 3:11-15 and I Cor. 11:30-32 plainly teach that believers who may be disobedient are chastened in this life, but not lost even if they die in that state; however, they will lose their reward and be ashamed.

This is exactly what we are trying to say. The tribulation, we believe, will serve as chastening for disobedient disciples.

8. The history of the Philadelphia Church, on the other hand, gives promise to those who keep God's Word that they will also be kept from the "hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. 3:10.

As McCrossan points out--God is going to send a time of trial upon the whole inhabited earth but that he will keep the Philadelphia Church out of this trial.

Incidentally, Peter writes: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation..." 2 Pet. 2:4. The word "Temptation" used here is the same Greek word PEIRASMOS for "temptation" found in Rev. 3:10.

That the godly will be spared this awful judgment seen coming upon the world is evident from this Scripture.

9. Promises concerning the Wrath of God would indicate the possibility of escape from coming awful tribulation providing certain conditions are met.

I Thess. 5:9 reminds us: "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

On the other hand, we read: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness..." Rom. 1:19; (See also Rom. 2:5-10)

And writing to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul warns of many corrupt practices concerning which many Christians are guilty; such as fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, foolish talking--saying: "Let no man deceive you with vain words for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." (Eph. 5:6)

10. Several Old Testament passages collaborate the teaching that many will succumb to a period of trial that serves as a purging and purifying test that is linked to the Endtime.

Daniel writes: "And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the TIME of the End; (Dan. 11:35)

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand."

Malachi writes: "Who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Mal. 3:2-3

Note: Regardless as to how you read these passages, they teach God's purpose to refine and purify through trial and affliction.

Did not our Lord speak of the coming great tribulation as a time of "affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be." Mark 13:19.

Peter writes of one of the purposes of affliction, saying: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (I Pet. 4:1)

So one of God's purposes may be to allow tribulation and affliction to come to purify those who are not ready for entrance into His holy presence. For does our Lord not say, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12:14.

Just as many of our Prisoners of War had their faith perfected as a result of tortures and imprisonment, so Peter would remind us of how it will be with believers, saying: "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:7)

Notice, it is in view of our blessed hope of Christ's appearing that we are told: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (I John 3:3)

We would ask--What if a believer who is living in known sin does not purify himself, does not come clean from filthy practices and unclean habits which the Scriptures condemn? Is there any choice but for God to allow the purifying judgment of the Great Tribulation to serve as a furnace of affliction upon the sinful and disobedient?

Thus, the Apostle John writes: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (I John 2:28)

The Apostle goes on to explain: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." So to abide in Christ means to be ready by the attitude of our lives, not living in wilful known sin, lest as the Greek rendering of this previous verse reads, "in shame we shrink back from him at his coming."

How many will not be ready for the coming of the Lord? Did not Jesus again remind us: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23)

Did you hear it?

What a high standard of profession to be doing all that. Yet because of sin in the lives of those who performed these acts, and on account of iniquity our Lord says: "I never knew you." It is therefore obvious that we can believe, and yet if we never truly repent, our Lord doesn't know us, and does not accept our faith. For faith without works is dead.

11. Finally, (but not last) the evidence of many missing the rapture to go through the tribulation is illustrated in the flood.

As Noah rode over the flood, so the raptured saints will be raised by being "caught up" into the presence of our wonderful Lord at His coming. And as many during the flood called upon the Lord, amid the choking, screaming cries of repentance, our Lord heard, and when He died He went to these spirits in their captivity and preached unto them.

Peter writes: "For Christ...went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." (I Pet. 3:19-20)

And why did our Lord preach to those who died in the flood? We read: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (I Pet. 4:6)

It is difficult for us to understand the workings of God's grace, as well as His chastenings. But concerning the Corinthian fornicator you'll recall Paul committed him "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 5:5)

So, it is our conviction that the great tribulation will be God's judgment upon the disobedient, whose fate may be the destruction of their flesh by cruel tortures ending in death, although God's grace will permit their prayers to be heard as they cry unto him in the agony of repentance.

Think of what it would be like for Jesus to come today and you were left behind. Would you not search your heart to discover the reason why? And as God reveals in your own conscience the disobedience in following the fleshly lusts and worldly pursuits instead of living in holy anticipation for the heavenly bridegroom, would you not determine to die for your faith in Jesus Christ rather than surrender to the Antichrist? It will be terrible, for you cannot buy or sell unless you accept an identifying mark. Many will succumb to the temptation to satisfy their stomach's desire rather than starve to death.

On the other hand, a great multitude which no man can number will face the tribulation knowing they did not heed our message, "Be ye therefore ready." Like foolish virgins they chose to go on their merry way, ridiculing the message of "holy living" in view of Christ's coming, thinking all was right so long as they made a profession of faith in Christ.

What anguish! What disappointment! What unparalleled trouble ahead! What great awful tribulation which Jesus said was like no other period in the world's history--"not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." And he added, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

While some think only the Jews are referred to here as the "elect" we are ever more convinced that many who looked for the rapture will miss this glorious event, and will constitute the elect of the Endtime. The reference to "saints" in the tribulation is often mentioned in the book of the Revelation in reference to believers enduring the wrath of the Antichrist, and there is no other explanation than that many will miss the rapture.

Thus, we would conclude in the words of Jesus who warned us saying: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."

Did you hear it?

Our Lord warned, saying: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:34-36)

What does it mean to be "accounted worthy?" Sarah Foulkes Moore observes: "It means the perfection of spiritual character attained in an overcoming life. It means devotion to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It means a daily walk like that of Enoch who is a type of the translation saints and who had 'this testimony, that he pleased God.'"

May we ask you, are you praying to escape the coming great tribulation as Jesus warned? Or do you accept the idea that trusting Christ as Saviour automatically secures our position at the rapture?

Oh, may we heed the admonitions and warnings of God's Word that remind us "to make our calling and election sure." Not only are we called upon to heed the grace of God in salvation; but the grace of God also teaches us "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Do you think you can live as you please and excuse your sin as covered by the grace of God?

This Scripture teaches otherwise. Rather, the grace of God calls us to holy living, and urges us to forsake worldly lusts for purity reflected in our behaviour and pattern of living. The church of Jesus Christ is the bride of our Lord and Saviour. And God's purpose is to present to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Are you a part of this Bride?

If so, God's message to you may be summed up as follows: "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What an assignment! Is it possible for God to preserve us blameless until His coming?

The next verse reads: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (I Thess. 5:20-24)

Yes, we believe you can be ready if you want to be for our Lord's return.

For our Lord hath said, "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (Luke 12:40)

POSSIBLE ERRORS CONCERNING THE RAPTURE

As many were mistaken concerning Christ's first coming, so we believe there will be many unprepared for His Return.

Our Lord appeared as a lowly babe while he was expected to come as a reigning monarch.

Christ was born in a stable, when it was expected He would be born in a palatial mansion.

It was expected that men would crown Him king. Instead He was crucified.

No, our Lord did not come as King but as Saviour, and was unrecognized by the vast majority of mankind, even though He came through the lineage of David and fulfilled all of the prophecies spoken of Him.

Similarly, we can be sure our Lord's second coming will find many unprepared for events which surround the Rapture and His glorious return to earth.

For instance, here might be some of the errors surrounding His second coming:

ERROR No. 1...That all believers, regardless of carnality or sin in the life, will be raptured when Jesus comes.

Accordingly, if this is believed, then all of the admonitions and warnings given to believers to be ready for Christ's coming are unnecessary. What about those Scriptures urging us to be sober (I Peter 4:7); to watch and pray always (Luke 21:38); to be patient (James 5:7-8); to be faithful (Matt. 25:33); to be holy (Heb. 12:14) and to be ready (Matt. 24:44) in view of our Lord's unannounced return?

Dr. V. Raymond Edman once said: "The imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ is a powerful scriptural incentive to watchfulness and preparation for His return...a powerful incentive to holiness and consistency of life."

Do you agree?

One well-known Bible teacher stated that when our Lord returns, He will rapture some from the theatre and the tavern. Of course, it is asserted that at the judgment seat of Christ all will be forgiven and the consequences may be a loss of rewards.

We believe the Bible teaches that the Rapture may be a reward. It is the crown to those who love Christ's appearing. (2 Tim. 4:8)

To say our readiness depends to some degree on our own preparation is labeled by some as "works", whereas, we are saved by "grace."

While we admit it is by grace we are saved, yet we point out that when the Lord comes He will take our works into consideration. Listen to Rev. 22:12 where our Lord says: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Did you hear it?

Then there are those who say that were the Lord to take some believers and leave the rest behind, it would rend the House of God--the Church. Yet, this is exactly what our Lord warned against, saying: "This know, that if the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (Luke 12:39-40)

Again, the accusation is made that the "last generation" would be penalized if Christ at that time raptures only those who are ready. Actually, the last generation is the Laodicean Church age which finds many neither hot nor cold but "lukewarm." So our Lord is seen having no choice but to allow the chastening fires of tribulation to try the faith of those living at that time that they may come forth as gold. (I Pet. 1:7)

Also, it is said that for some believers to be left behind to go through the tribulation would serve as a sort of purging time. With this idea the Scriptures agree, for in Dan. 11:35 we read: "And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them and to PURGE, and to make them white, even to the time of the end." Again in Dan. 12:10 we read: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly."

W. H. Hubbard writes: "The great tribulation is the chastening fires, over which the Lord sits as the refiner of silver, watching, guarding, these imperfect, unfit, unworthy, but loved ones, until the dross has been purged and they are ready to reign with Him and to 'offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.'" (Mal. 3:3)

While many agree that God chastens His own that go astray, yet they cannot see the tribulation as a time of chastening. Our Lord says concerning the Laodiceans, "As many as I love I chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent."

How much plainer can the Scriptures get?

The tribulation will serve as a time of trial for the endtime church that is plagued by worldliness, characterized by lukewarmness, beset with apostasy, and stained with uncleanness. Divorce and remarriage among professing Christians in opposition to God's Holy Word, along with immoral practices and immodest dress and behaviour must surely be dealt with as our Lord comes for a church that is "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." (Eph. 5:27)

God's promise is to keep the Philadelphia Church from this hour of trial because they have heeded God's Word and patiently kept it. (Rev 3:10)

As Dr. Joseph Hoffman Cohn observes: "Apparently, the Philadelphian and Laodicean churches are to exist contemporaneously during the closing days of the age; the church of Philadelphia being the faithful believers to whom is promised deliverance, and that of Laodicea, the apostate professors finally to be spued out."

Finally, evidence of one looking for His Lord's coming but left behind with unbelievers is clearly taught by Jesus. Concerning the servant that prepared not himself, our Lord taught that His coming will be at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the UNBELIEVERS. (Luke 12:46)

This Scripture clearly teaches that if we don't prepare adequately we will be left behind with unbelievers.

How careful we should be to heed these Scriptures. The Bible admonishes: "If we judge ourselves we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (I Cor. 11:31-32)

Today let us come to Christ and seek His forgiveness by repenting from all known sin. Let us renounce all the hidden things of dishonesty in our lives and with the power of the Holy Spirit, seek to be overcomers.

ERROR No. 2...That millions will be missing at the rapture.

Jude declares, quoting Enoch: "Behold the Lord cometh with TEN THOUSANDS of his saints..." (Jude 14)

The amount of saints to be raptured may be so minimal so as not to be missed. If Enoch was a type of the rapture, and he was the only one taken, what right have we to expect to see "millions" raptured?

Yes, we admit it will be wonderful if millions will be raptured, but Enoch's reference to "TEN THOUSANDS" puts a limit to the number who will be caught up for that marriage supper, and later will reign with Christ.

On the other hand, the number of those left behind to go through the tribulation is expressed as a "great multitude which no man could number."

So we might question whether there will be millions missing!

ERROR No. 3...That all babies will be raptured.

C.M. Ward of REVIVALTIME writes: "Suddenly, 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye' (I Cor. 15:52) there will be a planet without an infant." Says Dr. Ward, "It is inconceivable that 'little children' judged innocent - should be left behind to face the Great Tribulation..."

We would hope Dr. Ward is correct.

Our Lord, in referring to the days of vengeance, declared: "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days!" Luke 21:22.

We are not dogmatic to declare that little children will be left behind at the rapture, but we do see the time of intense suffering coming upon the world as applicable to all except those found worthy to escape as judged by God's standards.

We are reminded in I Cor. 7:14, that children are protected in the event one of the parents is a believer, and are thus considered "holy." For we read: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."

Thus, we see where children of a saved parent may be protected in the time of rapture. Otherwise, we offer little hope for unsaved infants who may share this endtime judgment along with their parents.

ERROR No. 4...That all believers are destined to be kings and priests.

While it is true that our Lord taught that faithfulness would be rewarded and depending upon the use of our "talents" we would reign over certain cities; yet it is understandable that surely there must be subjects to be ruled over, as well as kings and priests. (See Luke 19:16-19)

Reminds me of the time when as children we played cowboys and Indians. If all wanted to be cowboys, then the game could not be played for some had to be the Indians.

So, the right to reign with Christ may depend upon certain accomplishments or attainments. As we read in 2 Tim. 2:12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

Now concerning the raptured group, in Rev. 5:9-10, it is specifically stated concerning these redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation that they are "made unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."

However, concerning those who apparently missed the rapture, and who are seen going through the great tribulation, it is said they "are before the throne of God, and SERVE Him day and night in His temple." (Rev. 7:15)

Which would you sooner be--a KING and PRIEST, or a SERVANT?

This, we believe, is what the Scripture means when it says we're to make our calling and election sure. We can remain a believer, or we can give up all to follow Christ and choose to be one of His disciples. In a sense we realize all will ultimately reign with Christ (Rev. 22:5) but see a difference between being a king and a servant.

ERROR No. 5....That the 144,000 sealed Israelites will win the "great multitude" in Rev. 7:14 to Christ during the tribulation period.

Even Dr. Howard C. Estep admits there are many Scriptural snags if you try to believe this theory. He calls such a belief a "traditional assumption, and it's not based wholly and completely upon the Word of God."

We agree. The Jews will be hunted down, persecuted and killed during this "time of Jacob's trouble." The Jews which escape will no doubt be shut away in a place God has prepared for them which many believe to be the ancient stone city of Petra. We cannot visualize Jews on street corners of the world winning converts as did the Apostle Paul, which is a current theory.

As Dr. Estep concludes: "Therefore, logically and Scripturally, if the remnant of Israel, (the 144,000)....are shut away during the last half of the 70th week of Daniel, how would they preach the Gospel during the Tribulation period?"

ERROR No. 6....That we need not be Holy to meet the Lord as Hebrews 12:14 declares.

Again, there are those who assume that the grace of God in salvation sees us justified and ready for the coming of the Lord.

While we rejoice in the grace of God and full salvation yet we are reminded of Paul's letter to Titus wherein he writes: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity..." Tit. 2:11-14

Did you hear it?

Jude also warns of those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (or loose, careless living). (Jude 4)

Jesus related how many will say in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then (says Jesus) will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

So you see our iniquity (sin) can keep us from being ready for the coming of the Lord.

For this reason the Scriptures emphasize: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12:14

Again, concerning those who meet the Lord, we read: "Blessed and HOLY is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Rev. 20:6

We might add that when our Lord comes He will not divide men into "saved" and "unsaved" as we might think. Rather, He makes four separate distinctions according to Rev. 22:11-12. There are the unjust, the filthy, the righteous and the holy.

To be ready for the rapture it would seem we must be among the righteous and the holy. What do you think?

ERROR No. 7...That God's Spirit will be withdrawn from the earth following the rapture and no one can be saved.

We don't want to convey the idea of a second chance, for if anyone rejects Christ now, it is doubtful that he will accept Him during the tribulation knowing the consequences that he may have to die for his faith.

However, the Scriptures do indicate that Joel's prophecy concerning the outpouring of the Spirit is related to the time when "the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." And it is stated: "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:20-21.

Thus, while we see the Holy Spirit withdrawn in those believers who are caught up at the time of the Rapture, we likewise see where God's Spirit is active upon the earth during the awful tribulation period. It is a case of "where sin abounds, grace doth also abound."

In fact, God sends His two witnesses that from them will flow the golden oil. (Zech. 4:6, 14) (Rev. 11:3-4)

ERROR No. 8...That believers need not pray for Christ to return.

How wrong! Our Lord said: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21:36.

We're told Sam Rutherford knew how to pray for our Lord's coming. Here are several of his prayers:

"Oh, when will we meet? Oh, how long is it to the dawning of the marriage day? O sweet Jesus, take wide steps! O my Lord, come over mountains at one stride! O my Blessed, flee as a roe or young hart upon the mountains of separation! Oh, if He would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make ready in haste the Lamb's wife for her Husband!

"O fairest among the sons of men, why stayest Thou so long away? O heavens, move fast! O time, run, run, and hasten the marriage day, for love is tormented with delays! O angels, O seraphim who stand before Him, O blessed spirits who now see His face, set Him on high; for when ye have worn your harps in His praise, all is too little, and is nothing, to cast the smell of the praise of that fair flower, that fragrant Rose of Sharon, through many worlds!"

ERROR No. 9....That no preparation is needed to be ready for the rapture.

Again, this is a false assumption. After reminding us of the time when our Lord shall appear, John testifies: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (I John 3:2-3)

John further conveys the idea that some believers will shrink back at our Lord's coming, unprepared to meet Him. He writes: "And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (I John 2:28) Vincent, referring to this passage, says: "The fundamental thought is that of separation and shrinking from God through the shame of conscious guilt." Dr. Wuest similarly comments this translation might be rendered: "...whenever He is made visible, we may...not be made to shrink away from Him in shame at His coming and personal appearance." Dr. Wuest further maintains that this passage refers to the day when our Lord "comes from heaven into the atmosphere of this earth to catch out His Bride, the church."

When R.A. Torrey was asked, what constitutes readiness for the coming of the Lord, he replied: "Separation from the world's indulgence of the flesh, from the world's immersion in the affairs of this life, and intense daily earnestness in prayer."

Commenting on the need of readiness for Christ's coming, Dr. M. R. DeHaan wrote: "There is no greater incentive to holiness than the constant expectation of our Lord's return at any time."

ERROR No. 10....That the rapture is a gift included in our salvation and not a "crown" or "reward" for those who are ready.

From the previous Scriptures given, we can't help but wonder whether the "rapture is the reward of readiness!"

As Ira E. David notes: "We believe that the frequent exhortations in the Scriptures to watch, to be faithful, to be ready for Christ's coming, to live Spirit-filled lives, all suggest that translation is a reward."

The Apostle Paul said: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The margin says "upward calling." Again Paul wrote: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. 3:11,14)

What did he mean?

G. M. Pember comments: "Paul unmistakably affirms that these high privileges are a prize and not a gift, and are accessible only by the gate of the first resurrection-- a gate through which, after all his sacrifices and labours and sufferings for Christ, he was not yet absolutely sure that he would be permitted to pass. Just before his death, however, it was graciously revealed to him that he was one of the approved...But, at the time when he was writing to the Philippians, he could not speak with such confidence."

Our Lord urged us saying: "Watch and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man." (Luke 21:36) We're quick to reply that our worthiness will never save us, and this is true.

However, other Scriptures similarly sound a same call. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of "being counted worthy of the kingdom of God." (II Thess. 1:5) Again, he declares concerning our Lord's coming--"We pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling..." 2 Thess. 1:11.

So, as W. H. Hubbard observes: "To escape the great tribulation and be able to stand before the Son of man, are not unconditioned gifts of love or grace, but rewards and privileges for those who are accounted worthy of them."

CONCLUSION:

Now we know many will refuse to accept this message. They will claim the standard is too high, that no one can attain unto it.

However, Peter speaks of an "abundant entrance" into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why consider getting to heaven by the skin of our teeth, or as by fire! Rather, if we are truly a part of the Bride of Christ we will be ready!

As we read, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and HIS WIFE HATH MADE HERSELF READY. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Rev. 19:7-8)

Incidentally, the Williams Translation says: "The linen signifies the upright deeds of God's people." Phillips says: "Such living is the righteous living of the saints."

So it is important how we live in view of Christ's coming.

May we make sure we know Christ as Saviour and Lord, and that we're found living for His soon coming. For He hath said: "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh!"

Be Ye Also Ready

Testimony

MINISTER'S WIFE CONVERTED TO A BELIEF IN THE RAPTURE THROUGH READING BIBLE-BASED BOOKLETS FROM THE RADIO BROADCAST.....

Gordon Wood writes from New Zealand: "My dear wife and I have never quite agreed over prophecy. I have a Plymouth Brethren background who teach the rapture (of all believers) but Olive couldn't see the Rapture of any kind in Scripture. She is at the hospital and has been reading your papers at leisure. One of them must have mentioned a specific Scripture about this because last night she said: "I am converted at last!" I said, "Not the rapture?" and she said: "Yes, she had never read it so clear before - for those who are waiting and ready!" So, praise the Lord. So I said, "Well, we will both be caught up together after all."

MINISTER APOLOGIZES FOR SAYING "PARTIAL-RAPTURE THEORY" WAS BEING PREACHED, WHEN HE NOW UNDERSTANDS THE MESSAGE BEING PROCLAIMED IS SIMPLY "BE YE THEREFORE READY...!"

A minister writes....

"I am sorry for saying I shall not listen to you and do not want your material because I may think you believe in a partial-rapture when the truth of the matter is that you believe in separation from sin and a consecration to God of our bodies and minds to His service.

"Forgive me as I understand you in every detail. Holy living is what God wants but in my life is a besetting sin which should not be. My name is in the Lamb's Book of Life but as a child of God I must face Him on unconfessed sin. I tell Him I am sorry and so I am, but in my weakness I go into this weakness. Pray for me.

"Send your material. I shall never again say anything against God's anointed person. Of all the ones I hear on Radio, you tell of the separated life and the end times more than anyone. I feel you are one of my best friends. Yours in Jesus."

This may be the day!

Am I Ready?

An editorial in CHRISTIANITY TODAY relates how there is not the interest in our Lord's Coming as there should be. The magazine states: "Prior to World War I, many pulpits sounded forth the note of the possible imminent return of Jesus Christ to earth." Notes this magazine: "Since that time, eschatology has taken a back seat, and as a pulpit topic in the church the end time has given way to more mundane matters, such as feeding the hungry, preventing war, and binding up the wounds of the sick."

While we need to be concerned about the needs of the world about us, our interest in our Lord's Return should not wane but increase with each passing hour.

The editorial continues: "Paul wrote to Titus about 'awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity.' (2:13,14) Somehow the Church does not seem to be alight with this hope," notes this periodical.

Indeed, how sadly true!

Dr. Claude A. Ries has cautioned: "The truth of the Second Coming of our Lord constantly reminds us that this earth is not our permanent dwelling place, that we are pilgrims here, and that we 'look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' Therefore, we must hold lightly the things of this world, and all of earth's activities should be carried on with the eternal viewpoint ever in mind."

It is in view of this Blessed Hope of our Lord's soon appearing that we should realize that He who has called us to "be ready" will also keep us ready for that all-glorious day of rapture.

For example, in 1 Thess. 5:23 we read, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What an assignment - for "spirit and soul and body" to be preserved blameless unto the coming of Jesus!

But notice the next verse: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it!" Hallelujah!

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.
(Matthew 24:44.)

Dave Hunt expressed himself saying at the rapture as many as 200 million will be removed from off the earth.

Lehman Strauss: "It is sad, but true, that all saints will not be ready to meet Christ when He comes for His Church."

Dr DeHaan, "Let me sincerely warn you that God wants His people clean. The Lord will not tolerate a defiled bride. God help us to examine ourselves and make ourselves ready."

DeHaan taught it was one thing to be a believer and another to be a disciple