

*Now Concerning Spiritual Things*  
an historical account of one man's walk with God

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**WATERS CHARTED BY FAITH  
RAPTURE PREPARATION  
PART THREE**

In my last letter I pointed out that all eight events characterizing the Rapture are enumerated concisely in consecutive verses of scripture only once as written by the apostle Paul in his first letter to the church in Thessalonica.<sup>1</sup> The seventh and eighth characteristics are (7) both those who are resurrected and those translated will rise to meet Christ in the air and (8) will thereafter always be with the Lord. This is our beginning point for **PART THREE** in this series of letters.

From Genesis through Revelation the scriptures teach that physical death does not end human existence. Life in one form or another will continue. After death the spirit-man (soul) of every human being continues its existence. Standard biblical doctrine confirms that every human being will either be resurrected or translated at several different points in time with God's judgment to follow. Accountability for what has happened in life, therefore becomes the major issue in existence after death! *That* issue, i.e., what has happened in life, becomes the focal point of the reason for the rapture of those born again into the eternal kingdom of God.

Only those who are "in Christ"<sup>2</sup> will be caught up in the Rapture. All unbelievers living at the time of the Rapture will be left on the earth to enter the seven-year tribulation period. Those raptured will include only those who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup> beginning at the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, which covers the last approximate two thousand years of human history. No one else will participate in the Rapture! Everyone who has lived and died on the earth from Adam *up to but not including* the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (about four thousand years) *will be excluded from the rapture of the*

*Church!* That is why the Rapture is so important. Those of us alive today have an opportunity to participate in what I believe will be the most important event in human history.

Premillennialism was apparently the prevalent doctrine of the Church until the fourth century when amillennialism<sup>4</sup> appears through the influence of the great church father and theologian, Augustine (354-430).<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, for much of the Church's history, amillennialism became the most widely held view. However premillennialism was revived by the Puritans and other Protestants in the seventeenth century and today is the viewpoint of many of those who are conservative in their approach to biblical interpretation.<sup>6</sup> From the historical perspectives of (1) the year 2001, and (2) everything that has occurred since the year 430, I can understand why the view of the Church turned from the premillennial to the amillennial view, since four hundred and thirty years after the resurrection of Christ, the doctrine of Immanence appeared to lose its significance. However, since the establishment of Israel as a Nation in 1948,<sup>7</sup> the doctrines of Immanence

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<sup>4</sup>The amillennial view holds that from the ascension of Christ in the first century A.D. until His Second Coming, both good and evil will increase in the world as God's kingdom parallels Satan's kingdom and that there is no Rapture of the Church nor a 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth. This view also holds that Satan is *currently* bound and when Christ returns, the end of the world will occur with a general resurrection and general judgment of all people.

<sup>5</sup>**Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy**, *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy*, Harvest house, Eugene, Oregon, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p.154.

<sup>7</sup>At midnight, May 14, 1948, Great Britain's mandate over Palestine came to an end. That date on the Hebrew calendar was the fourth day of Iyar. At 4:00 P.M. that day, while the last British forces were embarking at Haifa, the Jews held a solemn ceremony in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. They rose and sang *Hatikvah*, the National anthem. David Ben-Gurion, then the provisional prime minister, read the Israel Declaration of Independence which marked the beginning of the restoration of the throne of David at Jerusalem and the eventual establishment of the territorial boundaries of the twelve tribes of Israel given by God to Abraham. These boundaries will literally be established during the early part of the Millennial reign of Christ when He will literally, visibly and bodily return to earth and rule over all the

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<sup>1</sup> Thessalonians 4:13-17.

<sup>2</sup> Thessalonians 4:16.

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:13.

and Premillennialism have taken a giant leap forward among those of us who are conservative in biblical interpretation.

Jesus emphasized the importance of raptured saints when He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is *least* in the kingdom of heaven is *greater* than he.”<sup>8</sup> I believe that means the least of the born-again believers, during their lifetime, is *greater* than Noah, Abraham, Moses, Enoch, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, King David, all other major and minor prophets and important old testament characters including John the Baptist, *during their earthly ministries*. Please stop for a moment and ponder the impact of this statement. Every born-again believer is born into *greatness* by God’s measure. This may portend something *far greater* than any believer can today imagine and may have to do with the assignment each raptured believer will have during the millennial reign of Christ.<sup>9</sup> But here is another thought concerning the *greatness* of raptured saints which I offer for your consideration:

By His offering at the cross, Jesus has perfected forever those [of us] who are being sanctified.<sup>10</sup> That is, we as believers are *made perfect* by accepting the atonement of the cross, because He Who is Perfect then dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. The fact that God’s only Son dwells in us through the Holy Spirit<sup>11</sup> may well portend the reason for the *greatness* assigned to each of us by God Himself. I believe the reason we may be considered greater does not have to do with who we are as believers, but with Who dwells within us. If we in and of ourselves were to consider that the least of

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earth as the Jewish Messiah, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jerusalem will then become the capital of the world and Israel will be the most favored, prominent and important nation on the earth. It is my view that King David will also return to earth to literally rule and reign over the nation of Israel as a Regent under Christ. Nations, Races and organizations (those who are fortunate enough to survive the tribulation and Armageddon) who have opposed, humiliated and persecuted the Jews for many centuries will find themselves subservient to the those whom they persecuted! Hallelujah! Glory to God! Lord hasten the day!

<sup>8</sup>Matthew 11:11, italics added for emphasis.

<sup>9</sup>See Revelation 20:6.

<sup>10</sup>See Hebrews 10:14, explanatory brackets inserted.

<sup>11</sup>See Romans 8:10, 11.

us is *greater* than all of the Old Testament greats, it might do nothing but give the spirit of pride opportunity to wreak havoc in our lives.

The first prophecy of Christ occurred in the garden of Eden.<sup>12</sup> Since then God’s prophets have pointed to a future time when He would send a Savior to redeem mankind from the Adamic mark of death assigned to each of us as we become accountable to God for our own destiny. There are many such prophecies. The Jews looked for their Messiah before Christ came because of God’s revelation of Him through His prophets. The Book of Isaiah, written more than seven hundred years before Christ, is sometimes called the fifth gospel because so much of that prophet’s writing is of salvation comprehensively revealed. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, verses four and five reveal a composite of exactly what was purchased for every believer *at the cross of Christ*.

From the prophecy of Christ in the garden of Eden to the birth of Jesus in a Bethlehem manger, God was working His plan for man’s salvation within the laws of creation which were spoken into existence when the universe was created by the power of His spoken word. Abraham and other Old Testament *greats* by faith *looked forward* to the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, the birthday of the Church. We *have* that blessing today. Since Christ dwells in our physical bodies through the Holy Spirit, and since in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,<sup>13</sup> *the fulness of the Godhead* therefore indwells believers today. Abraham did not have access to that indwelling except through the eye of faith. As born-again believers *we experience the reality of that indwelling now*. God’s indwelling is designed to bring forth praise to Him which brings out the best in us. And the greater the surrender to Him as a servant, the greater the bestowed capacity to honor Him as Lord. *And that is what makes us great*. Believers today have what all of the old testament *greats* looked forward to. And that’s why I believe such greatness is attributable to the “least in the kingdom.” How precious that is. A person may have religion, morality, culture, education, refinement, hold a prestigious position, have the adulation of the world,

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<sup>12</sup>Genesis 3:15.

<sup>13</sup>See Colossians 2:9. This means that all the fulness of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit dwells in Christ bodily.

be “successful” socially, economically and/or politically and still be lost. If we are saved, we are saved because we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ<sup>14</sup> at which time (1) He *becomes* our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption<sup>15</sup> and (2) we become prime candidates for the Rapture. “While many prophetic truths are of great importance, the *Rapture* is the most important for believers in Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

#### Church Activity Following The Rapture

##### (1) The Judgment Seat of Christ

On this subject, the apostle Paul wrote: “For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”<sup>17</sup>

The Apostle explained this event in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15. The words “judgment seat” are translated from the Greek word *bema*. This word denotes a raised place or platform, reached by steps, originally in the Pnyx Hill at Athens which was a place of assembly from which orations were made. The word became used for a tribunal, two of which were provided for in the law-courts of Greece, one for the accuser and one for the defendant. It was also applied to the tribunal of a Roman magistrate or ruler.<sup>18</sup> The connotation appears to be a seat placed on a raised platform on which Christ will be seated from which His judgments will be pronounced for every raptured saint. In Grecian games in Athens, the old arena contained a raised platform on which the president or umpire of the arena sat. From here he rewarded all the contestants; and here he rewarded all winners. At the bema-seat of Christ each of us will give an account of everything we have done while on earth as a believer, whether good or bad.<sup>19</sup>

The bema-seat judgment of Christ takes place immediately following the translation of the Church from the earth. This judgment is based on rewards

gained or rewards lost (See 1 Corinthians 3:9-15). About this the apostle John writes, “And to her [the Church] it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”<sup>20</sup> Here it appears the Apostle is saying that our clothing will be an indication or measure of our righteous deeds done on the earth.

The judgment seat of Christ will not be an evaluation of our sins since, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the purpose of this judgment will not be to determine the extent of believer’s sins, but instead the quality of service to God while on earth. The deeds that are good in God’s sight will be rewarded and the deeds that are bad or worthless will be discarded or lost.

New Testament scripture records five areas of bema-seat rewards bestowed for works proven to be indestructible by the “fire test” (See 1 Corinthians 3:15).

(1) An incorruptible [imperishable] crown for those temperate in all things over the flesh.<sup>22</sup>

(2) A crown of life for those enduring trials and temptations.<sup>23</sup>

(3) A crown of rejoicing for soul winners.<sup>24</sup>

(4) A crown of righteousness for those loving His [Christ’s] appearing.<sup>25</sup>

(5) A crown of glory for elders or under-shepherds who oversee the “flock of God.”<sup>26</sup>

The words Paul chooses to describe these rewards are those of honor and dignity bestowed on us as overcomers. Although we will reign with Christ, the kingly crown is His alone. The victors crowns are ours. The apostle John writes of this in Revelation, “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives

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<sup>14</sup>See 1 Corinthians 12:13.

<sup>15</sup>See 1 Corinthians 1:30.

<sup>16</sup>**John F. Walvoord**, *END TIMES*, Word Publishing, Nashville, TN, p.36.

<sup>17</sup>2 Corinthians 5:10. See also Romans 2:16; 14:10.

<sup>18</sup>**W. E. Vine**, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Fleming H. Revel Company, Westwood, N.J., p.282.

<sup>19</sup>See Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

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<sup>20</sup>Revelation 19:8.

<sup>21</sup>Romans 8:1, 2.

<sup>22</sup>See 1 Corinthians 9:25, KJV in brackets.

<sup>23</sup>See James 1:12.

<sup>24</sup>See 1 Thessalonians 2:19.

<sup>25</sup>See 2 Timothy 4:8.

<sup>26</sup>See 1 Peter 5:1-4.

forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.’”<sup>27</sup> Notice that the elders are seen casting their crowns before the throne of God in an act of worship, honor and adoration. The crowns therefore are not for our glory, but for the Glory of the Giver. All of His gifts to us are to bring glory and honor to Him. For example in Paul’s writing to the church in Corinth, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”<sup>28</sup> Here the Apostle is saying that believers were redeemed to give glory to God and the greater the reward, the greater the bestowed capacity to bring glory to Him. Thus it will be Christ, not the believer, who is glorified by the rewards given.

## (2) The Marriage of The Lamb

The relationship of Christ to the Church is revealed by the use of figures of the bridegroom and the bride.<sup>29</sup> The time of this marriage is following the bema judgment. About this John writes, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb *has come* [“is come” in the NKJV], and His wife has made herself ready.”<sup>30</sup> The words “has come” or “is come” are translated from the Greek word *eschomai*. Strong’s Concordance states that this word is the middle voice of a primary verb used only in the *present and imperfect tense*, meaning that the marriage has already occurred following the bema of Christ.

To further fix the time of the marriage, twice in Revelation John reports that heaven is opened. The first time in these words in chapter four, “After these things I looked, and behold, a *door standing open in heaven*. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will

show you things which must take place after this.’”<sup>31</sup> (Notice how this “fits” Paul’s writing about the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 & 17). The obvious conclusion is that the *door standing open* is the rapture of the Church. Now observe what John writes again in Revelation, chapter nineteen, “Now *I saw heaven opened*, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, the opening of heaven this second time is for Christ’s triumphal return to earth with His bride! Hallelujah! Obviously the marriage has occurred in heaven since Christ returns with His bride.

In the first three chapters of Revelation the Church is mentioned sixteen times whereas it is not mentioned in chapters six through eighteen, the Tribulation period. For this reason, it appears that this is additional evidence that the church will not go through the Tribulation and that the marriage of Christ to His bride takes place during the seven-year tribulation period.

If you think that the Rapture is going to be a *real trip* (and it is), wait until we return with Him as King of Kings and Lords of Lords to establish His rule as absolute Monarch of the earth. Get ready. It’s coming! And it’s exciting to anticipate and look forward to, knowing that we as born-again believers are going to be very active participants!

There appears to be a distinction between the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper. The marriage takes place in heaven.<sup>33</sup> The marriage supper apparently is an event that involves Israel and takes place on the earth. This view is supported by Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24 and Matthew 25:1-13. In these verses Israel appears to be awaiting the return of the bridegroom and the bride to participate in the wedding feast. This fits the resurrection of tribulation saints, Israel and the Old Testament saints at the Second Coming.

. . . . more later, the Lord willing.

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<sup>27</sup>Revelation 4:9-11.

<sup>28</sup>1 Corinthians 6:20, 21.

<sup>29</sup>See John 3:29; Romans 7:4; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-33; Revelation 19:7, 8; 21:1-22:7.

<sup>30</sup>Revelation 19:7.

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<sup>31</sup>Revelation 4:1, italics added.

<sup>32</sup>Revelation 19:11.

<sup>33</sup>See Philippians 3:20.