

“ ‘May it be Thy will, O Jehovah our God and the God of our fathers, that as we have been granted the dawn of redemption, so may we be granted to hear the **trumpet** of the Messiah.’ ”¹

A Jewish prayer recited on Israel’s Independence Day following one blast of the trumpet

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the **trumpet** will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

The apostle Paul, I Corinthians 15:51-52 NASB. Bold mine

“ ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a **trumpet** speaking with me, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.’ ”

John the apostle, of the first century, speaking of his own time-warp Rapture, Revelation 3:22-4:1 NASB. Bold mine

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the **blessed hope** and the **appearing** of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ **Jesus**; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and improve with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

The apostolic teacher, Titus, reaffirms our future hope of the Rapture in the New Testament, Titus 2:11-15 NASB. Bold mine

“ ‘...the feasts of the *Jews* were typical of things to come. The Passover related to the first coming of *Christ*, and the feasts of the seventh month to his **second coming**....’ ”

Sir Isaac Newton

25

THE RAPTURE FACTOR

Where did they all go? They didn’t disappear into thin air, did they? This will be the question many non-believers will ask in the future, once we are gone. Don’t worry, we will explain everything before the end of this chapter.

The word “Rapture”³ is not in the Bible, it is a modern term describing the “catching away” of believers, as promised in the New Testament. All of a sudden, Jews and Gentiles, many of whom have accepted the Messiahship of Jesus, will disappear from the face of the

¹Arthur W. Kac, *The Rebirth of the State of Israel: Is It of God or of Men?*, p. 88. Bold mine. A Jewish prayer: “...found in the Order of Prayer compiled with the approval of the Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel...recited...on [Israel’s] Independence Day....following one blast of the trumpet....” Ibid, p. 88. [] mine.

²Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, p. 668. Bold mine.

³The word “Rapture” is a cognate of the Latin for “caught up.” Zola Levitt, *The Signs of the End*, p. 19.

earth, and a great world dictator will start raving about alien abductions. You may recall, in the movies *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and *Fire in the Sky*, that humans were stolen or kidnapped⁴ by extra-terrestrial beings and no one knew what had happened to them. Revelation 13:6 states: “And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (KJV).

This certainly sounds familiar. This beast (Antichrist) is really angry at those “in heaven.” The very suggestion that those who are in Heaven, who have been rescued by God, are not with God but in a UFO, constitutes blasphemy. The book of Revelation predicts that the excuse of extra-terrestrial kidnapping will be used by the Antichrist and those who assist him. It would certainly explain and coordinate the Bible’s statement with the modern UFO theories recently portrayed on the cinema screen, wouldn’t it?

SEPARATING THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF

True believers (in Jesus; Jew and Gentile) are separated from unbelievers at the Rapture, seven years prior to Jesus’ physical return to the earth, by being taken into the heavens. We know the period is seven years because God’s stopwatch, which counted out seventy sevens of years in Daniel 9, stopped at Jesus’ First Coming at the end of sixty-nine sevens of years, leaving one remaining seven to be fulfilled. In the New Testament, the book of Revelation speaks of a period made up of forty-two months and twelve hundred and sixty days. Of course, these two figures add up to seven years!

WHY SEVEN YEARS?

In the time of the Old Testament, prior to the First Coming of Jesus, God was, of course, using the Israelites to introduce Himself to the world (Gen. 12:1-3; Jonah 3:10; Ps. 22:28; 72:17). However, when Jesus came and was rejected, God decided to use those who believed in Him in the dispensation of grace. Thus we have Israel as the tool of God until Jesus, then an approximate 2000-year parenthesis of true believers (born-again Christians and Messianic Jews) being used as His chosen instruments of evangelism until now.

One day soon, the Bible tells us that He will remove the believers in the twinkling of an eye (I Thes. 4:13-17; I Cor. 15:50-55). Starting

⁴The number of books claiming to give the testimonies of people kidnapped by UFO’s is rising rapidly. They include: *Communion*, by Whitley Strieber; *Secret Life*, by David M. Jacobs, Ph.D.; *Intruders*, by Budd Hopkins; *Alien Contact: Top-Secret UFO Files Revealed*, by Timothy Good; *Watchers*, by Raymond E. Fowler; *Into the Fringe*, by Karla Turner, Ph.D., and some of the additional books we mentioned on page 886.

at that moment and running through the final seven years, God has promised to use Israel, primarily through the 144,000 Jews mentioned in Revelation 7:4. They will evangelize the world throughout the seven-year Tribulation period on Earth. God will give them the chance to fulfill their previously allotted time grant, while the true believers, who were removed, are consecrated to the Messiah Jesus in the heavens. These 144,000 evangelists are Jews whom you may have told about Jesus. They will keep the knowledge in their hearts, hesitating—but once the Rapture occurs, they will say, “Oh, my Christian friend was right. He just disappeared. Jesus must be the Messiah. I now accept Him. What’s next, Lord?” Tell the world for seven years!

Our point is that God uses only one program at a time. First the Jews of Israel, who were still proselytizing, though perhaps wrongly, in Jesus’ day (Matt. 23:15).⁵ Then, once Israel officially sealed the rejection of the Messiah, a new program, the Church—or rather, the true believers—became the new evangelists.

God’s Church program has been used for two millenia. However, once again, when the Church is removed in the Rapture, God will use Israel. This can clearly be seen in certain cryptic verses in the New Testament book of Revelation. In chapters 1-3, the Church is mentioned thirty times, but in chapter 4, John is called up⁶ into that open door in Heaven (a symbol of the Rapture). Afterwards, in chapters 6-18, we read nothing of the Church, for this is the Tribulation period. Only in chapter 19 do we again see the Church, as it returns to Earth after the Tribulation is ended by Jesus and His believers.

After the seven years are completed, Jesus’ Second Coming to Earth will reunite the Tribulation believers who came to faith under the ministry of the 144,000 Jews, with those of us who were previously caught up in the Rapture. He will defeat the Antichrist and hostile armies of the world, proceed to judge the goats from the sheep and begin the 1000-year Messianic Kingdom. Those of us who were raptured will enter the millennial kingdom as immortals; those who survived the Tribulation and were on the side of the sheep in the judgment mentioned in Matthew 25, enter as mortals. These people

⁵“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (KJV).

⁶We believe John the Revelator, who apart from other prophets, received God’s prophecies in visions, was actually catapulted by God into a time-warp. He was there in the future witnessing the Rapture in real time. Perhaps he actually saw us. The door was a time portal, through which he was physically transported. Remember, there was a rumor of him: “Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man [John] do? Jesus saith unto him, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me.’ Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that this disciple should not die....” (John 21:21-23 KJV; [] mine).

will have greatly increased longevity, and will receive their new bodies at the end of the millennium, when the New Heaven and Earth are begun! Oh, what fun!



In the Middle East, farmers separate the wheat from the chaff by throwing both into the air. The wind blows away the lighter chaff and the heavier wheat remains.

ORIGINAL HEBREW TEXT WRITTEN 712, 725 BC

בלע המות לְנֶצַח וּמָחָה אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה דְּמָעָה מֵעַל כָּל־פְּנִים וְחָרַפְתָּ עִמּוֹ יְסִיר מֵעַל
 כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי יְהִיָּה דְבָר: יִשְׁעִיה כֹּה־ח:
 מִיָּד שְׂאוּל אֲפָדִם מִמָּוֶת אֲנָאֵלִם אֱלֹו דְּבָרֶיךָ מָוֶת אֲהִי קָטְבֶךָ שְׂאוּל נָחֵם יִסְתַּחַר
 מֵעֵינַי: הוֹשֵׁעַ יגִיד:

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE TRANSLATION

“He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.” **Isaiah 25:8 NASB**

“I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death. O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.” **Hosea 13:14**

ANCIENT RABBINICAL COMMENTARY

“In the future the Holy One, blessed be He, will resurrect the dead. How will He do it? He takes the Great Shofar and blows it seven times. At the first blast, the whole world shakes and suffers pangs like a woman in childbirth. At the second, the dust is scattered and the graves open. At the third, the bones gather together. At the fourth, the limbs are stretched out. At the fifth, skin comes into being. At the sixth, spirits and souls enter the bodies. At the seventh, they live....”⁷

Pesiqta Hadta, BhM 6:58

NEW TESTAMENT RECORDED 54, 59, 90 AD

“...we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

I Thessalonians 4:13-17 NASB

“Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?’ ”

I Corinthians 15:50-55 NASB

“...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.”

John 14:2-3 NASB

⁷Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 203.

AUTHOR'S COMMENT—EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN POSITION

Modern rabbis are not aware of the event known to us believers as the Rapture. This first century Jewish teaching⁸ was lost early in the Christian era as a result of the activity of Roman Catholic subversive forces against the early believers. Thus, the early Jewish Christian teaching known as the Rapture was rediscovered and widely taught among Dispensational Evangelicals recently, for the past few hundred years or so. Grant Jeffrey sheds light on this on page 93 of his 1992 book *Apocalypse: The Coming Judgment of the Nations*, when he tells us: “Many writers ignorantly assert that the pretribulation Rapture theory was invented in 1820. While the clearest statement of the pretribulation position was articulated by N. Darby at that time, they ignore these writings of the early Christians that anticipate Christ’s coming to deliver His saints before the Tribulation period. Furthermore, many of these writers are ignorant of the other men who developed a clearer understanding of the Rapture in the centuries before 1820....Peter Jurieu was a French Calvinist preacher and was considered ‘the Goliath of the French Protestants.’ He wrote in A.D. 1687 about the Rapture and the premillennial return of Christ. Jurieu discussed the coming of Jesus to translate the saints prior to the time He returns in judgment. He preached in Rotterdam as one of the greatest of the Reformers in his day. I found his rare and fascinating book, *Approaching Deliverance of the Church*, in a small bookstore in Wales. In his book, Jurieu refuted the amillennial teaching of his day and clearly argued for the premillennial position regarding Christ’s return. He also believed that Christ would come in the air to Rapture the saints and return to heaven before the Battle of Armageddon....his book disproves the theory of the posttribulation teachers that assert that the pretribulation Rapture was first invented by Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. As my research indicates, the pretribulation Rapture was articulated in both the New Testament, the writings of some of the Ante-Nicene Fathers and Peter Jurieu, long before 1820. Over one hundred and thirty years before Darby, Jurieu spoke of a secret Rapture, ‘a kind

⁸ A modern Christian teacher, Ms. Relfe, said: “ ‘The recent pre-trib doctrine teaches that this ‘he’ is the Holy Spirit. There are many blatant inconsistencies which render this untrue.’ ” Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture: Truth or Consequences*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., © 1983, p.133. However, the learned and copious prophecy author, Hal Lindsey, quotes Gundry, an opponent of our pre-Trib Rapture faith, as noting: “...‘Far from being novel, the view just might reflect apostolic teaching...the charge of novelty against this view, as we have seen, does not survive investigation...’ ” Ibid, pp. 133-134. Thus this view supports our belief in the pre-Trib Rapture, which stretches back to the New Testament time of Jesus, Himself. The point about the Spirit being the restrainer of the Antichrist (II Thes. 2:7-9) is very important. There are many believers in Jesus today, all of whom receive the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation (Rom. 8:9). Our point is, if God’s Spirit in us is restraining the evil of the coming of the Antichrist as the Bible teaches (II Thes. 2:7), the Spirit would have to be momentarily absent for him (the Anti-Messiah) to step upon his seven-year Tribulation stage. Thus the only way to remove the Spirit is to remove the receptacles in which the Holy Spirit dwells, and that is the believers. Once we are gone, just prior to the 144,000 Jewish believers being sealed with the Spirit, the Antichrist (in the absence of the Spirit on Earth) will quickly make his entry! Soon after, as the Spirit of God is reinstated through the 144,000 Jews (Rev. 7:4) and their converts, the Antichrist will persecute the Tribulation saints as Christians have never been persecuted before (Dan. 7:25), until the Raptured believers are reunited with the Tribulation saints at the end of the seven years. Thus it goes without saying that we should share with as many of our friends as possible that Jesus is the only one who can rescue us, before the Rapture, so that they can believe and come with us, too!

of a clandestine coming of Christ' prior to His coming in glory and judgment at Armageddon.' ”⁹ In Grant's 1995 book *FINAL WARNING* (p. 306), he quotes the Christian writer Ephram of AD 373, who wrote of the pre-trib. rapture! Death brings the soul face-to-face with Jesus (I Cor. 13:12).¹⁰ The resurrection reunites the body, once again, with the soul and Spirit in order that it may experience eternal blissful existence. The Rapture of the living occurs a split second after the resurrection and Rapture of the dead believers in Messiah (I Cor. 15:51-52). It serves the purpose of a “resurrection” for the living believers who have not had their spirit separated from them by death. Their bodies are changed from mortal to immortal. Thus, we who are alive, receive our new eternal resurrected bodies (I Thes. 4:17), just as the dead bodies are transformed from “corruption to incorruption.” Corruption means dead, as mortal refers to a body “subject to death.” Jesus was referring to this event when He said: “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die....” (John 11:25-26 KJV). Those who will never die are those of us alive at the moment of His Coming for us, and those who are dead at the Rapture (the first part of the Second Advent of Messiah) will be raised to spend that seven-year period with Him, before His return to the earth with us, to destroy Antichrist and institute the 1000-year kingdom (Zech. 14:4, 5; Rev. 19-20).

Philip Moore

SOME DENY AND RIDICULE THE RAPTURE—THEY SHOULD STUDY!

There are those who claim to be Christian and who, I guess because they have a spiritual chip on their shoulder, like to ridicule the Rapture. By this I mean they outright deny it. Gary DeMar, who is called “one of the [Christian Reconstructionist] movement's most popular and prolific apologists,”¹¹ wrote a book, *Last Days Madness*, about which the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* article entitled, “A ‘World View’ Based on the Bible,” says: “...describes as ‘folly’ the fear of the imminent end of the world.” The article mentions that this view of end time events “has pitted him against such popular writers as Hal Lindsey, Dave Hunt and John Walvoord.” I might add that these three authors' books far surpass the writings of Mr. DeMar in

⁹Grant R. Jeffrey, *Apocalypse: The Coming Judgment of the Nations*. Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, © 1992, p. 93, used by permission.

¹⁰I Corinthians 13:12 reads: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (KJV). A precious hope for all who now draw breath!

¹¹Gayle White, “A ‘World View’ Based on the Bible,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, Sat. Sept. 26, 1992, p. E6, © 1992, reprinted by permission. [] mine. Reproduction does not imply endorsement. Hal Lindsey exposes this movement and its leaders' deceptions and false doctrine, with emphasis on their anti-Israel stance in relation to our biblical prophetic beliefs. If you are interested in researching this subject, Hal Lindsey has a great book entitled, *The Road To Holocaust*.

the depth of their understanding of eschatology (study of the end times).

The article went on to say that DeMar “credits the belief in Armageddon, soon with what he calls a ‘general malaise’ in the Christian church.”¹² These words bring to mind the apostle Peter’s warning to us regarding liberal preachers who deny truth: “This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles. Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation’ ” (II Pet. 3:1-4 NASB). Where is the promise of His Coming? DeMar says: “ ‘They think they’re going to be raptured out of here and there’s nothing they can do....’ ”¹³

THE CRM’S MISDIAGNOSIS—JESUS CLEANS UP THE HEART, NOT CRM

Here we should mention that many within the Christian Reform Movement (CRM) feels it is their duty to clean up the world by enforcing biblical justice on all who live. We, as true believers, know it is impossible to legislate morality and “perfect human behavior.” Only Jesus can change the heart. That is why true Christians are interested in introducing their friends to Jesus, who, once received, transforms the human heart! True believers in Jesus do not “think they can do nothing” because they are going to “be raptured,” rather they follow Jesus’ biblical command: “...**Occupy till I come**” (Luke 19:13 KJV). They are instrumental in placing responsible people in office who will enact laws protecting the right of the unborn to be born.

Jay Sekulow and Pat Robertson have been most active and successful in securing our right to continue evangelism in certain public areas, an activity for which the ACLU and similar organizations have taken us to court!¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴The Supreme Court ruled that *Jews for Jesus* had the legal right to distribute literature in airports and other public places. The ACLU had challenged the right of believers to this form of free speech! It seems to me that they should call themselves anti-ACLU instead of the American Civil Liberties Union, if they want to remove the Christians’ civil liberty of free speech.

While we share the Gospel without trying to clean up the fish pond, we fish like Peter. Jesus told Peter and Andrew: "...I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19 KJV).

Many people will believe in Jesus if told the truth about Him, but the pond of the world cannot be cleansed, because there will always be unbelievers. Until Jesus returns, we share the Gospel, catch a few fish out of the corrupt pond and await the Messiah, who is coming soon, as the end times indicate.

DeMar, by calling the true believers "Eschatological couch potatoes," is of course, irresponsible and slanderous. I, for one, have spent twelve years in libraries and universities, working long hours researching and writing this book, to help educate both the Christian and non-Christian about biblical history and prophecies. Who can call me a couch potato? No one. Not DeMar and not the CRM, which borders on being a "cult" in the minds of many evangelical authorities!

The Rapture will come soon, we believe hopefully, while we are being examples to our, as of yet, unwon loved ones! We do not legislate morality, we live it, though we may sometimes fail. We are in the world but not of the world (John 15:19). Substitute "pond" for "world" and you see where the true believer parts from the CRM activist and his theological error.

BACK TO OUR POINT ABOUT THE RAPTURE—WHAT DOES HAL SAY?

Hal Lindsey commented on this momentous event we know as the Rapture: "We have been examining the push of world events which the prophets foretold would lead the way to the seven-year countdown before the return of Jesus Christ to earth. The big question is, will you be here during this seven-year countdown? Will you be here during the time of the Tribulation when the Antichrist and the False Prophet are in charge for a time? Will you be here when the world is plagued by mankind's darkest days?"

It may come as a surprise to you, but the decision concerning your presence during this last seven-year period in history is entirely up to you.

God's Word tells us that there will be one generation of believers who will never know death. These believers will be removed from the earth before the Great Tribulation—before that period of the most ghastly pestilence, bloodshed, and starvation the world has ever known.

Examine the prophecies of this mysterious happening—of the ‘Rapture.’ Here is the real hope for the Christian, the ‘blessed hope’ for true believers (Titus 2:13-15).

As we see the circumstances which are coming on the world, this hope gets more blessed all the time. This is the reason we are optimistic about the future. This is the reason that in spite of the headlines, in spite of crisis after crisis in America and throughout the world, in spite of the dark days which will strike terror into the hearts of many, every Christian has the right to be optimistic!

You may be thinking now, ‘Count me out. I like it right here and I have a lot of plans for my future.’

Exactly. This is what we are talking about—your plans for the future....According to all the Scriptures we are told that the place He is preparing for us will be utterly fantastic. Eternal life will surpass the greatest pleasures we have known on earth.”¹⁵

Paul tells us in the New Testament: “...We shall not all sleep....” (I Cor. 15:51 KJV). “Sleep” here indicates a Christian’s death. While his spirit becomes instantly united with the Lord (II Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:21-23), his body sleeps until resurrection.

Hal answers the question this way: “So what does sleep? Your body. The body that disintegrates, Christ will raise into a body which can never see corruption again. ‘For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself’ (Philippians 3:20, 21 NASB).

What about the mystery? The mystery has to do with the believers who will be *alive* when Christ comes for them. ‘In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed’ (I Corinthians 15:52 NASB).”¹⁶

THE RAPTURE, ACCORDING TO THE JEWISH CHRISTIAN ZOLA LEVITT

Zola Levitt, the author of a number of famous books¹⁷ on prophecy, has commented on the pre-Tribulation Rapture and the wonderful things in store for believers. Levitt, who shows that the ancient Jewish wedding feast is a prophetic preview of this wonderful

¹⁵Hal Lindsey with C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, pp. 137-138.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 140.

¹⁷His books are available through Zola Levitt, POB 12268, Dallas, TX, USA 75225. His book, *The Rapture*, can be obtained through Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, USA 97402. John F. Walvoord, president of Dallas Theologian Seminary, wrote *The Rapture Question*, which is clear and to the point on our pre-Trib view of the Rapture.

event, tells us: “We have been invited, every one of us believers, to the most thrilling and mystical seven-year sojourn this side of eternity. We are to be the house guests of Almighty God!....Jesus’ overwhelming promise of John 14:1-3 separates the true Biblical faith from all religions man has concocted. It is not some wishful thinking on our part that provides us a visit to heaven but God’s own pronouncement.

On that particularly tense Passover night when our Lord was to face arrest, trial and conviction, and finally crucifixion, he uttered the promise that makes Christianity what it is: Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3)....There are plenty of churches that are teaching that Jesus is not going to return and that what we see is what we get. The liberal Protestant churches—if they really believe that Jesus existed as characterized in the gospels at all—are really not expecting His return or preaching it....The Roman Catholics have a vague idea of some Kingdom to come or some general trip to heaven, but no appreciation of the details of the Rapture, the Second Coming, etc....He told them [his disciples] plainly: ‘I go to prepare a place for you.’

Every religious leader has died and left a group of devout followers on earth, but one has announced that He died for a purpose; one has promised that He was merely departing to do work on behalf of His disciples. The leaders of the various cults will not be making return trips and are not able to promise that reassurance to their followers, but Jesus asserted just that. He went further: He said, ‘I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am ye may be also.’ He has not only gone to prepare us a place in His Father’s house but He will come personally to escort us there. This is very much in keeping with what the bridegroom did on behalf of his bride. After he proposed he left to prepare the bridal chamber, or mansion, and then later returned to take her there personally. We are so very literally the Bride of Christ, as Paul described us. We are being treated as the best of all brides by that one-of-a-kind Bridegroom, who came to us from an unearthly place and who will one day come to take us there....The verses about the Rapture of the Church are most clear in the New Testament. They are objective and decisive—not given in the language of poetry or parables so they may be ‘spiritualized’ away by those who have difficulty believing in the Lord’s return. If a person does not believe that Jesus Christ will come back from heaven to take

His church to His Father's house, that person does not believe in Christianity. He may believe in the moral messages of Jesus and in the principles of Christian behavior and the like, but he is not believing in the principle that makes the biblical faith what it is. We count on—we live for—the Lord's return. That visit to His Father's house, and the Kingdom and eternity beyond, are our very basis for being believers in Him.

But we are concerned in this book with the details of what will happen in Jesus' Father's house when we go there. We are not going to heaven merely to luxuriate in that mystical place but to accomplish two things necessary to our own perfection as the Bride of Christ. In His Father's house we will each enter the Judgment Seat of Christ, and then we will celebrate our wedding to the Lord at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."¹⁸

THE ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING FEAST FITS THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

Levitt continues his analogy of the wedding feast by telling us: "...to understand this magnificent idea more completely we need to review the custom...basically the wedding breaks down into seven parts: The contract; The cup; The price; The departure of the bridegroom; The stealing of the bride; The bridal chamber; The marriage supper." The first part is the contract which Levitt¹⁹ describes as follows: "Israeli marriages were by contract...The bridegroom would see the girl he wanted (she could be a perfect stranger) and simply go to her house with a contract of marriage. It would have in it the rules of the waiting period before the bridegroom would come back for his bride....typically the marriages were arranged and the contracts drawn by the parents long before the youngsters got the news. As Tevye sings to his wife in *Fiddler on the Roof*, 'The first time I saw you was on our wedding day...' Rebecca married a man she never met."²⁰

LET'S TALK PRICE

We emphasize that there was a price a man had to pay in dollars, or rather shekels (ancient Israeli money), for his wife. The bridal

¹⁸Zola Levitt, *In My Father's House*. Dallas: Zola Levitt, © 1981, pp. 1, 4, 8, used by permission. [] mine.

¹⁹See our *Vol. II*, chapter 35, "The Secrets of Jesus in Passover Versus the Errors of Easter," for lengthy quotes from Levitt illustrating how the development of a baby prophetically parallels the Jewish feasts, advocating the pre-Trib Rapture—obstetrically!

²⁰Zola Levitt, *In My Father's House*, p. 12.

price varied. Sometimes the bridegroom-to-be would ask his father, “Is she worth it?” If the price was a high one, Levitt says: “Many a bridegroom probably returned to his father after learning the price for a particular bride and asked his advice on whether he should pay it. ‘Do you realize how much they want for her?’ must have been a question repeated often in the old tradition. The Jewish bridegroom was wise enough to know that his father’s judgments in these matters were trustworthy....”²¹ However, once the price was decided, it was final.

Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, asked that judgment (this cup) be lifted if it were possible, but then said, “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42 KJV), thus deciding to pay the price of His life for the sins of all mankind.

THE CUP OF THE NEW COVENANT ANSWERS THE PROPOSAL

With regard to the cup, Zola Levitt notes: “The cup was a formality establishing the bride’s answer to the proposal. When the contract and the price had both been presented, the bridegroom would pour a cup of wine for his intended and propose a toast to her. She could pick up the cup or she could withdraw, and this was her way of saying yes or no to the proposal.”²²

Levitt continues: “We see Him [Jesus] drinking the cup with His bride in Matthew 26:27. It was at the Passover table that the Lord did this so appropriately. He was to die that day (the next morning actually, but the Jewish day begins at sundown). He took this last opportunity to drink the cup with His bride and seal the New Covenant: And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:27-28).

Looking at verse 27, we might ask, ‘What did the Lord say when He gave thanks?’ Any Jew can tell you—there is just one Jewish blessing over the wine and it has been said for all time: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

The fruit of the vine, ultimately, is the Church. Jesus said that He was the true vine, and the disciples were the branches. Finally, we become the fruit in this figure, and this brings out the toast aspect of this cup. Jesus praised the Creator for bringing forth this bride and He

²¹Zola Levitt, *A Christian Love Story*. Dallas: Zola Levitt, © 1978, p. 15, used by permission.

²²Zola Levitt, *In My Father’s House*, pp. 12-13.

toasted the bride for becoming the true fruit. Then He told all the believers to drink this cup so that they would answer His proposal affirmatively and become His promised bride.

In verse 28, He announced that the cup was His blood of the New Covenant ('testament' and 'covenant' are the same word), and that it is shed for the remission of sins. Obviously, this fulfilled Jeremiah's announcement of the New Covenant—the covenant which would forgive sins. It's interesting to consider that the New Testament itself is our copy of the contract. Should anyone accuse you of sin, you need only show him your copy of the contract to prove that your sins are forgiven....Jesus made it very clear that this one sacrifice—this one cup—would be sufficient to forgive everyone's sins, all the way up to the Kingdom of God: But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom (v. 29).'²³

JESUS FULFILLED THE JEWISH FEAST OF PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD BY COMING DOWN FROM THE CROSS AT THE RIGHT TIME

When Jesus went to the cross and paid for all of our shortcomings, it was on Passover. Levitt elaborates: "The symbol of Passover is the sacrifice of the lamb, and Jesus fulfilled it on the cross. The symbol of Unleavened Bread is the body of the Lord buried in the earth ('if a kernel of wheat fall into the ground...', 'This bread is My body'). Thus, to fulfill the second feast, the Lord had to be buried at the beginning of Unleavened Bread, or at sundown on the day of Passover. He was placed on the cross at 9:00 in the morning and taken down at 3:00. Sundown in April in Israel is about 4:30 or 5:00, and thus the Lord was buried exactly in time to commemorate the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And so the fulfillments progress through the rest of the feasts. First Fruits, which we now call ('Easter'), came on the following Sunday (Lev. 23:10-12), and indeed the Lord rose as the first fruits of those to be resurrected (I Cor. 15:22-23). The fourth feast is Pentecost, 50 days later (Lev. 23:15-16), and the Lord sent the Holy Spirit in a great harvest. Three thousand people were saved that day, just as 3,000 people were killed on the day the Law came. They had made a golden calf and the Lord was infuriated: And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men (Exodus 32:28).

²³Zola Levitt, *A Christian Love Story*, pp. 12-13.

But when the Lord sent the Holy Spirit, He returned to Israel exactly 3,000 souls. The Lord is a good bookkeeper, and indeed, the letter kills, the Spirit gives life (II Cor. 3:6).

Thus the Lord performed exactly in accordance with the first four feasts of Israel. He will do the same in the future, it is clear. We expect the Rapture of the church on the fifth feast, the Feast of Trumpets (I Thess. 4:16-17). We expect the return of the Lord to the earth for the start of the Kingdom on the Day of Atonement, when 'all Israel will be saved' (Zech. 12:10; 13:1; Rom. 11:26). And finally, the Lord will set up His Tabernacle in Jerusalem appropriately enough on the final feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. The tabernacles hark back to the shelters the Lord gave the children of Israel in the wilderness, and indeed the Lord's Tabernacle will shelter us on this earth for the duration of the Kingdom. These final three feasts are explained in Leviticus 23:24, 27 and 34, respectively.

We say all of that above to show that the Lord, who never omitted a Jewish feast, fulfilled each one even in His crucifixion and burial, as well as in His resurrection, His sending of the Holy Spirit, His return at the sound of the trumpet, His second coming on the day when Israel atones, and His establishment of His Kingdom on Tabernacles. Thus, it is valid that the Lord had to come off the cross in six hours for the simple reason that He was a law abiding Jew and He had a feast to keep."²⁴

THEN, MANSIONS WERE PREPARED FOR THE BRIDE, AND NOW THEY ARE PREPARED FOR BELIEVERS

Regarding the departure, Levitt notes: "As soon as the bride drank the cup the bridegroom would make a little speech on the order of, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' He then returned to his father's house to build her a bridal chamber—a little mansion—for their honeymoon. The bride would spend her time (up to two years!) gathering her trousseau, getting her oil lamp ready to travel at night (Matt. 25:1-13) and keeping her veil on whenever she went out (in effect, keeping her faith in good order and not mixing with the world). She waited at home every night for her bridegroom as the contract normally specified. 'Ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price,' Paul admonishes us (I Corinthians 6:19-20). She did not know her wedding day. At the bridegroom's father's house the young man would build a beautiful bridal chamber as fast as he could. His father would be the judge of when it was properly finished (to prevent the excited youngster from throwing up some sort of lean-to and going to get the girl)! So the bridegroom did not know the wedding day either.

²⁴Ibid, pp. 16-18.

If one came along and asked him he would say, ‘I don’t know, only my father knows’ (Acts 1:7).²⁵

Levitt continues: “[Jesus says of His Second Coming] We saw in the Jewish wedding custom that the bridegroom would depart to his father’s house after he made the covenant, drank the cup and paid the price. Likewise, our Lord went on to His Father’s house with an announcement to His disciples virtually in the same words as the Israeli bridegroom must have used: Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3)...In our case, we have been waiting a long time. But we must continue to wait in a manner that would gratify our Bridegroom. The veil worn by the bride is simply our good testimony before the world. Our consecrated, set-apart ways speak to the unbelievers around of our loyalty to God and our agreement to marry His Son. Paul put it very strongly when he said simply, ‘You are not your own.’

We must all fully realize, as we wait, that the Lord *is coming*. The bridegroom always returned. We hear many a sermon on the Lord’s return but we falter in our walk, reasoning that if He didn’t come last year or last week, He probably won’t come tonight. But there *will* be a night when the Lord will come, and He requires that we be ready and waiting. We can believe that that Jewish bride waited at home every night and trusted constantly in that marvelous night when she would at last hear the shout.²⁶

THE SECRET, SWIFT STEALING OF THE ANCIENT JEWISH BRIDE WAS A PROPHECY OF OUR RAPTURE!

With regard to the stealing of the bride, Levitt tell us: “The bride was ‘stolen’ in the sense that the groom would come completely unannounced in the middle of the night and seize her out of her bed. She did not know where she was going, and with lamp in hand could only be led along over hill and dale to her bridal chamber. Now it’s getting romantic! All the Jewish brides were stolen out of their beds in the middle of the night by young strangers they may have seen once, two years before, and that is the way they did things back then!

²⁵Zola Levitt, *In My Father’s House*, p. 13.

²⁶Zola Levitt, *A Christian Love Story*, pp. 18-20. [] mine.

Their divorce rate was nil, by the way. The bridegroom comes therefore ‘like a thief in the night.’²⁷

Zola also says: “The return of the Lord for His bride, the church, is most clear in the Scriptures: 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. 4:16-17)...Now when the Lord comes for us, we are to have oil lamps ready and waiting. Oil in the Bible is the Holy Spirit, and we are to have the oil and be ready to travel even in the dark of night. The parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) is correctly applied to the Kingdom, but has marvelous application to this wedding story. In that parable, there were ten virgins ‘which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom’: And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps (Matt. 25:2-4).

The bridegroom in this parable acted in accordance with the Jewish tradition of totally surprising the bride and catching her asleep: While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept (v. 5).

But then he comes with a shout: And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him (v. 6)...only those virgins with their lamps trimmed with oil were able to go with the bridegroom. The others, suddenly realizing that they were not properly prepared, went out to purchase oil, but they were too late: And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not (vs. 10-12).

The message is very clear: We must have the Holy Spirit—we must be true believers in the Lord Jesus—to go with Him when He comes.

The oil was established as a very essential ingredient as far back as the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness: And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always (Exodus 27:20).

We can learn a great deal from the above Scripture. We are just like the lampstand in the Tabernacle. We are set aflame once when we believe in the Messiah, but as we walk, we must constantly take in the oil—the Holy Spirit—in order to keep our flame burning brightly.

²⁷Zola Levitt, *In My Father's House*, pp. 13-14.

The flame is a beautiful symbol of the Christian faith. With one flame I can light all the candles in the world and mine will not be diminished.

Understanding the symbol of the oil and the symbol of the trumpet as well, we are in a position to see how powerful we really are in this world. Gideon went forward with only 300 men and attacked a force of Midianites totaling over 100,000! Gideon, like the U.S. Marines, came forward with ‘a few good men’, but the Lord had armed these soldiers in a special way. They carried trumpets in their right hands and oil lamps in their left hands. Remarkably, they won that battle with their peculiar attack: And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon (Judges 7:20).

Armed with God’s symbol of deliverance, the trumpet, and the symbol of the Holy Spirit, the oil in the lamps, Gideon’s army prevailed over the pagans. God had chosen to have Gideon attack with such a small force so that the glory would certainly go to Him. And likewise, we carry the Holy Spirit in the same sort of pottery jars used by Gideon’s men: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (II Cor. 4:7).

When we break the earthen vessels that are our earthly bodies, the light pours out of us and the oil within convicts the unbeliever. We are a small army, like Gideon’s, but outfitted with God’s special weaponry, we are invincible in this spiritual battle.”²⁸

**IN THE BRIDAL CHAMBER, WE GAIN OR LOSE
REWARDS OF PRECIOUS STONES AND MORE,
IN OUR SEVEN YEARS OF FUN**

Regarding the bridal chamber, Zola emphasizes that we will be going to the “judgment seat of Christ” (I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10), which is a judgment for believers only. There we receive or lose rewards for serving the Lord based on our motives. If the motive was genuine and carried out by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, we get rewards for our works of “precious metals and stones.” If it was not,²⁹ they (the works) are burned up, being made of wood, hay and stubble.

²⁸Zola Levitt, *A Christian Love Story*, pp. 20, 22-24.

²⁹An example of this would be sharing the Gospel with someone to impress them, with no thought for that person’s needs or feelings regarding an understanding of Jesus; telling someone about Jesus without relying on God’s Holy Spirit. Impious pride is an example. Piety and pride were also the worst among the Pharisees, as you can see from Jesus’ rebuke of them for it in the Gospels (Matt. 23:15).

The parallel with the Jewish wedding is informative here. While the bridegroom learned physical secrets in this chamber, where he stayed with his bride for seven days, Jesus reviews our spiritual strengths and weaknesses in an intimate manner. That is, we remain with the Lord seven years, having been caught up seven years before He returns to Earth. Zola mentions this detail of the feast: “The bride and groom would remain in the chamber for seven days, at last emerging for the marriage supper.”³⁰

THE ROYAL RECEPTION, WITH ALL OF OUR BROTHERS AND THE PROPHETS

Levitt says with respect to the marriage supper: “This is what we would call the reception, in effect, a banquet for the new couple. In heaven presumably all the Old Testament saints will be at that magnificent celebration and we as the wife of Christ will be the guests of honor: 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).

After the meal the bride and groom would typically leave his father’s house and go to the housing that the groom had arranged for them. And thus it will be that after seven years (the seven days of the wedding) we will return to earth with our Bridegroom. We will not stay in heaven, as some preach, but instead return to the Kingdom that has been prepared for us on earth. And so at last ‘the meek shall inherit the earth,’ and ‘God’s will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven’....we are now in that lengthy waiting period while He prepares our bridal chamber. We can see clearly that the stealing away of the bride is the Rapture of the Church. As a matter of fact, in order to prevent the young man from literally snatching the girl out of her bed and to give her just a moment or two to prepare herself, the rules were that when he got close enough to her house to be heard, someone in the wedding party had to shout. And it is clear from Scripture that the Lord will play the part of the bridegroom, even at the time of the Rapture; ‘For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, (I Thess. 4:16)...’³¹

Zola beautifully concludes the pre-Trib wedding feast analogy by enlightening us: “The real purpose, as we said above, is to take care of our last vestiges of imperfection, our bad works. Our sins were forgiven long ago at the cross but we carry the memory of our bad works with us to heaven. Those will be taken care of in the Judgment

³⁰Zola Levitt, *In My Father’s House*, p. 14.

³¹*Ibid*, pp. 14-15.

Seat so that at the point when we marry the Lord at that marriage supper we will be simply perfect; as perfect as He is.

He would marry nothing less....the marriage supper of the Lamb is the very last activity of the Church in heaven because it is immediately followed by the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 19:11). We go with our Husband when He returns to the earth (vs. 14). We put a stop to Armageddon before it puts a stop to the entire human race and we begin at long last the Kingdom of God. We will happily undertake our best 1,000 years to that point. Clearly the Scriptures indicate nothing further for the Church but only chronicle the battle of Armageddon, the doom of the Antichrist, Satan bound and the final judgment. We then go on to eternity. The final judgment, the 'Great White Throne' judgment, does not concern the Church at all but those who were unbelievers in their earthly lives. It will follow the Kingdom Age and it is the judgment we are exempted from when we receive Christ.

But to go back to our subject of what will happen to us in Jesus' Father's house, we will be married and that will end our visit. Therefore the events in heaven, climactic as they are, are only two in number—the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Both will be enormous in size since both will concern every believer of the Church Age, every soul who ever believed in Jesus from the cross to the Rapture, will have to be dealt with individually, at least in the Judgment Seat. Can God do this in seven years and still save time for a wedding? Can He create the universe in six days and save the seventh for a rest?"³² Yes!

LEVITT'S TIME IS ON THE DIME

As mentioned, Zola's analogy based on the Jewish tradition, settles conclusively the question of when the Rapture will occur. He reminds us: "A knowledge of the Jewish wedding as outlined above contributes a great deal to the understanding of prophecy. Currently, for example, there is quite a discussion about whether the Rapture will come before or after the Tribulation Period. Instantly, however, we can see by consulting the wedding that it must be before. To have it afterward would put the stealing of the bride after the honeymoon and ruin the entire analogy....The seven years in heaven so neatly fit the events on earth below and, after all, the Church has to be somewhere. If it were on earth then where would the Judgment Seat and the wedding happen? Those who place the Rapture after the Tribulation Period or the midpoint seldom go into such fine detail but these particular events seem heavenly in nature, supernatural as they are,

³²Ibid, pp. 16-17.

and have no place in the earthly Biblical reportage....Paul made it so clear that we are to have individual interviews with our King. Again, that vital admonition: ‘For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (II Cor. 5:10).

Another important prophetic conclusion that is borne out by this splendid analogy is that of the Rapture itself. Some believers question whether it will really happen just the way it is spelled out in the Scriptures, but after all it wouldn’t be much of a wedding if the groom did not come back to take the bride away. Again we are urged by the accuracy of the thing toward the inevitable conclusion that it will all happen in orderly fashion with the Rapture first, then the Judgment Seat, then the marriage supper, then the return to earth and the Kingdom. Any change, even in the order of these events, would ruin the whole picture.”³³

REVEREND CHARLES RYRIE’S DIARY

Reverend Charles Ryrie, who compiled the *Ryrie Study Bible*, also uses the Jewish wedding model to make the same point in his book, *What You Should Know About the Rapture*.³⁴ Hal Lindsey makes an interesting comment on Ryrie’s work in his book, *The Rapture: Truth or Consequences*. Hal states: “All of the symbols and imagery used in the New Testament were based upon the common Hebrew culture of the day. Otherwise there would be no hope of understanding the rich use of parable, allegory and illustrations. Therefore, the standard Hebrew marriage tradition of that time gives insight into the Church as the bride of Christ, particularly in Revelation chapters 19 and 21.

I believe that these passages we have examined contribute significantly toward the case for a pre-Tribulation Rapture. The promise of being kept from the hour; the identity of those who dwell in heaven; the Church’s absence from earth in chapters 4 through 19; the bride’s presence in heaven before the second coming, all fit into the pattern of a pre-Tribulation Rapture scenario.”³⁵

³³Ibid, pp. 17-18.

³⁴Rev. Charles Ryrie, *What You Should Know About the Rapture*. Chicago: Moody Press, © 1981, pp. 60-61.

³⁵Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture: Truth or Consequences*, p. 111.