

AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

The Wheat and the Tares

The Harvest

The End of the Age

The Victory of the Church



Paul Galligan
Revival Ministries Australia

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REVIVAL MINISTRIES AUSTRALIA

As In the Days Of Noah

an apostolic ministry to the nations

Making disciples Matt.28:18-20,
Training & equipping workers for the harvest Matt.9:37-10:40, Lu.10:1-20
Bringing the church to maturity by fathering sons Gal.4:19 & 1Cor.4:14-17

Who is Jesus? Messiah (Christ) and the Son of God, Matt.16:16, 1Tim.3:16
The restoration of the five-fold ministry, Eph.4:11
Receiving again grace and apostleship, Rom.1:5
Making known the revelation of the mystery, Eph.3:2-11
Understanding & entering into the Spirit of sonship, Rom.8:15
Building apostolic relationships through
the raising of sons in the ministry, 1Cor.4:17
Building the house of God, doing the work of the apostle
as a “wise master builder” 1Cor.3:10.
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All Scripture quotations are from New King James Version unless otherwise annotated. Occasionally an English word in *italics* is left out of the quotation. This is because the words in *italics* have been added by the translators and do not appear in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Sometimes I have changed **LORD** in Old Testament quotes to **YAHWEH**, which is an attempt to translate the Hebrew revealed name of God.

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is for mature believers

We are releasing this teaching manual with a warning: the teaching in **this manual is for mature believers**. It is not for new Christians but for those who have come to some level of maturity and are prepared to study the Word of God, the Bible, as it is written.

Distinct teaching

In the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple of God in the book of Nehemiah, when the walls had been rebuilt, Ezra the Scribe came with a team of Levites and taught the word of God to all the people. The Scripture says, ***“They read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense and helped them to understand the reading” (Neh.8:8).***

In the history of the Old Testament, the people of God through their teachers, continually moved away from the teaching of the Law of Moses, and believed unfounded doctrines brought to them by false prophets. True teachers, such as Ezra and the writing Prophets, were raised up by God to teach the word of God, calling the people back to the Law of Moses.

Challenging the doctrine of the Rapture

In these teaching sessions we are looking at passages of Scripture that are generally very well known but have been taught as part of a particular stream of doctrine.

This doctrine refers to end time events and presents a non-Biblical view of God's purpose in the earth and the future of the saints in Christ Jesus.

The doctrine is generally known as a belief in the ‘rapture’ of the saints [the church] out of the earth. This doctrine has changed the teaching of the Second Coming to become two comings: the first coming of Jesus from heaven to secretly take [rapture] the church out of the earth, leaving the world under the control of ‘Antichrist’; and the second part of the coming is Christ coming with the saints in judgement.

Be good Bereans (Acts 17:11)

We encourage you as you read this manual to look up every Scripture and read every passage to comprehend and understand the actual teaching that the Holy Spirit is presenting in the Bible. Be careful not to take a predetermined mindset to the Scriptures, but read the Scripture as it is written, not adding to it, nor taking away from it.

The Bereans ***“were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”***

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE

A STUDY OF JOHN 14:2 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SCRIPTURE

One of the most misinterpreted verses in the Bible is **John 14:2**: *“In my Father’s house are many dwellings [mansions KJV]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”*

- First question: what is the Father’s house?
- Second question: what are the dwellings?
- Third question: why was the word *mansion* used here?
- Fourth question: where was Jesus going?
- Fifth question: did Jesus come again?
- Sixth question: how does Jesus receive us to Himself?

The context principle

Let us refresh ourselves on the context principle. Every verse of Scripture is to be first understood in the context of the passage in which it appears. Then the verse needs to be seen in the context of the chapter; then in the context of the book; then in the context of the Testament; then in the context of the whole Bible.

WHERE WAS JESUS GOING?

A conversation

John 14:2 comes in the midst of a conversation with Peter which started in **John 13:36**. This conversation took place at the Last Supper – Jesus and His disciples celebrating the Passover meal in Jerusalem. Jesus had already washed the disciples’ feet; He had already identified His betrayer and Judas had gone out to do his awful deed. Jesus had given the disciples the New Commandment to love one another. Then Peter asked,

“Lord, where are You going?”

Jesus answered him, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward’” Jn.13:36.

Jesus was going to Jerusalem to suffer

Peter wanted to know where Jesus was going. He knew that Jesus was going somewhere. Jesus had been preparing the disciples for some time, telling them that He must go to Jerusalem and *“suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and be raised the third day”* (Matt.16:21). When Jesus told the disciples that they were to go with Jesus to Lazarus after he had died, Thomas said, *“Let us also go, that we may die with Him”* (Jn.11:15-16). The disciples knew and were concerned that Jesus was going to die in Jerusalem. This is the context in which Peter asked Jesus, *“Where are you going?”*

Peter would follow later

Jesus said that Peter could not go with him at that time but that Peter would follow Him later. After the resurrection, Jesus told Peter *“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you*

were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish” Jn.21:18. Jesus was telling Peter *“by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me’” (v.19).* Peter was destined to follow Jesus to death, but not at that time.

Peter was not ready

Back to the conversation recorded in **John 13**, *“Peter said to Him ‘Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for Your sake’” (v.37).* Peter knew that Jesus was going to His death. Peter is trying to convince Jesus that he is willing to die with Him, but Jesus knew better! *“Jesus answered him, ‘Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times’” (v.38).*

Jesus prophesies to Peter that not only is Peter not ready to die with Him but instead Peter would deny Jesus that very night.

Jesus was facing death

Can you see that the context of Peter’s question ‘Lord, where are you going?’ is in the context of the knowledge that Jesus was facing death in Jerusalem? We know clearly in hindsight that Jesus was going to the cross.

He had already been betrayed! He was at the Last Supper! He instituted the Lord’s Supper on that night – *“That the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread” (1Cor.11:23)!*

John 14

Then we come to what is called **chapter 14 of John**, but remember that the chapters and verses were added to the Bible much later and were not in the original manuscripts. This chapter division comes in the middle of **Peter’s conversation with Jesus.**

Jesus continues to speak to Peter

Having just prophesied Peter’s denial, Jesus then said to him, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me” John 14:1.*

Jesus is immediately offering Peter a way forward: *‘Peter, when you come to this place of great discouragement, realising what you have done, stir up your faith in God; but you will need more than a vague faith in God, you will need to believe in Me, Jesus!’* What marvellous advice this is!

How many people say they believe in God but they do not have a workable faith in Jesus Christ?

WHAT IS THE FATHER’S HOUSE?

Then Jesus said, *“In My Father’s house”!* What is the Father’s house? Is it heaven? Many assume it is heaven, but what does the Scripture say?

In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the house of God was the temple in Jerusalem. In the books of **Kings** and **Chronicles**, the temple in Jerusalem was literally the HOUSE of God. Even in the book of Haggai, the temple is referred to as the *“house”*, [translated ‘temple’ but literally house].

There were many chambers

Furthermore, the house that Solomon built for God had many *“chambers all around, against the walls of the temple, all around the sanctuary and the inner sanctuary. Thus he made side chambers all around it” 1Kings 6:5*. The house of God in the Old Testament had many rooms in it. They had been prepared by Solomon for the priests to use.

Jeremiah met in one of the chambers

In Jeremiah 35, God told Jeremiah to bring the Rechabites *“into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers” v2*. Jeremiah brought them into *“the chamber of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes” v4*. The princes also had a chamber or a room in which they could meet people, eat and drink, and maybe rest! God’s house had many rooms!

God’s house is a house of prayer

In Isaiah 56, God’s house is called *“a house of prayer for all nations” v7*. Foreigners who *“join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, ... even them I will ... make joyful in My house” v6-7*. Even in the Old Testament, God’s house was built so that all people could be drawn to God to find a place to dwell with Him in the earth.

What is God’s house in the New Testament?

When Jesus entered the temple in Matthew 21:12-16, He cleansed it of all commerce, *“and drove out all those who bought and sold” v12*. He declared, *“It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer” v13*. Jesus regarded the temple as the house of God, even calling it ‘My house’, as He was God in the flesh! After Jesus cleansed the temple, *“Then the blind and lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them” Matt.21:14*. There is healing in God’s house.

He who built the house

Hebrews 3:1-6 is speaking of Jesus the apostle and the building of the house of God. In verse 3, Jesus is referred to *“as He who built the house”*. In verse 6, the house belongs to Christ, *“but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are”* Not only is Christ the owner of the house but we, His people, are the house! How awesome and wonderful is that?

The house is the church

Paul wrote to Timothy so that he would *“know how to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” 1Tim.3:15*. In the New Testament, the church is the house of God, and Jesus as the apostle of God, sent from heaven, is building the church, the house of God! Jesus said to Peter, *“on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” Matt.16:18*. Peter was the first foundation stone Jesus used to begin building the church, the house of God.

The house of God which is the church of the living God is the place where **truth** is found: the truth concerning God! *“God was manifested in the flesh!” 1Tim.3:16*.

“In my Father’s house!”

There is no reason to think that the Father’s house is heaven in terms of the Biblical references to the house of God. In the Bible, the house of God always refers to the dwelling place of God in the earth.

God is intent on establishing His dwelling place in the earth with men: ***“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” Rev.21:3.*** This reference in **Revelation 21** is in the context of the Lord Jesus coming to the earth. He says, ***“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work” Rev.22:12.***

WHAT ARE ‘DWELLINGS’?

There ***“are many dwellings [mansions KJV]”***

The use of the word ‘mansion’ in the King James version has misled generations of believers to think that God is somehow building them a house in heaven, and no ordinary house, but a mansion! The Greek word used here is ‘*mone*’.

SC#3438 Greek, *mone*: from #3306 – a primary verb, *to stay* [in a given place, state, relation or expectancy]

Mone – means *a staying, residence*

Translated in KJV: *abode* [x1] *mansion* [x1]

This Greek word is only used twice in the New Testament:

in **John 14:2** *mansion*, and **Jn.14:23** *abode*. *The only other time this Greek word is used in the New Testament is in John 14:23 “Jesus answered and said to him, If any one loves Me, he will keep My word; and the Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our ‘home’ [KJV abode] with him”*

The Greek word does not mean mansion, as in a rich man’s house, at all. It simply means a place to dwell, a dwelling.

Why the word mansion?

Many believers are dreaming of their home in heaven, some even thinking Jesus is building that house for them now. Others say the angels are busy constructing their houses in heaven. Meanwhile God is planning to come back to the earth to dwell with men. God’s plan is to fill the earth with His glory; He has never veered from His plan.

We will be like the angels

When you think about being in heaven, why would you need an earthly-like house? Jesus said we will be like the angels in heaven. Angels do not have houses as they have no physical need for a house in heaven. Neither do the saints need a house in heaven as we will have no physical need for a house!

Can there be many houses in one House?

The first part of **John 14:2** reads in the King James Bible: ***“In my Father’s house are many mansions”***. In English language, this is not a sensible sentence: how can there be many mansions [big houses] in one house. A house by definition can have many rooms, even many floors in the same building, but a house cannot have many houses in the one house. Today there are large apartment blocks but we do not say that there are many houses in the apartment block; we say there are many apartments in which people live.

Mansion?

The use of the word ‘mansion’ is incorrect and misleading, not helping us to understand the Scripture. In **Nehemiah**, the priests and the Levites ***“read distinctly from the***

book, in the law of God, and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading” Nehe.8:8.

Jesus is building the house in the earth

When Jesus came the first time He brought the revelation of the glory of God to the earth manifest in a Man: *“We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” Jn.1:14.*

Now Jesus is building His church in the earth, a many-membered body through which He will reveal His glory; *“All flesh shall see it together” Isa.40:5.*

It is *“Christ in us the hope of glory”*: this is the revelation of *“the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles” (Col.1:27).*

- The church is the house of God;
- the church is made up of many members;
- the church is a spiritual house made of living stones (1Pet.2:5);
- the church is as a building, *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” Eph.2:20.*
- The church is **growing** into *“a holy temple in the Lord” v21.*
- Individually, the believer’s body is *“the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God” 1Cor.6:19.*
- Corporately we are called *“the temple of the living God” 2Cor.6:16.*

We are the dwelling place of God, individually and corporately.

GOING TO PREPARE A PLACE

“I go to prepare a place for you”

Where was Jesus going? How was He going to prepare a place for us?

What is the Place? The place is a place to dwell, to live, to abide in.

Where do we live? Where do we abide? We abide in Christ; we are born again into His kingdom; we are baptised into Christ.

When we receive Jesus Christ, we are born of God (**Jn.1:13**). We come into that place that Jesus has prepared for us in the Father’s house. Our lives are *“hidden with Christ in God” Col.3:3.*

From the time of the new birth we grow! We grow up to fill that place that Jesus prepared for us. Finally that place is a place of revelation of the glory of God; it is a place of profoundly experiencing *Christ in us, the hope of glory*. It is the place of mature sonship, having grown through childhood in Christ and having served as young men and women in the gospel, we take our place in the Father’s house; we receive the inheritance of the son and we walk in that sonship relationship with our Father.

To suffer and die

- Jesus was going to Gethsemane (**Jn.18:1**). See **Luke 22:39-46, Mark 14:32-42, Matthew 26:36-46.**
- Then Jesus was arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin [the Jewish council of leaders] (**Matt.26:57-68**).

- Then Jesus was handed over to Pilate, the Roman governor. When Pilate ***“had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified”*** (Matt.27:11-26).
- He faced Herod, the king of the Galilean province (Lu.23:6-12), and sent back to Pilate.
- He was led away to be crucified (Matt.27:31-44).
- Jesus died on the cross (Matt.27:45-56).
- Jesus was buried in Joseph’s tomb (Matt.27:57-61). Pilate set a guard on the tomb (Matt.27:62-66).

Jesus was going to the cross

Where was Jesus going? **Jesus was going to the cross**, purposefully and intentionally. He was going to prepare the place for us. He was going to the cross to make it possible for us to come to God; to make it possible for us to live with God in a particular placement in His house, which we have discovered is His church in the earth.

Jesus prepared the places for us by shedding His blood, the only way that our sin could be taken away. Jesus went to His death for us. He laid His life down for us, always knowing that He had the power to take it up again.

Jesus went into hell

While Jesus’ body was in the grave, Jesus, ***“made alive by the Spirit”***, was completing a number of things in the spirit realm, in that place generally referred to as ‘hell’. In **1Peter 3:18-20**, ***“He went and preached to the spirits in prison”***; in **Ephesians 4:8-10**, He ***“first descended into the lower parts of the earth”*** (v.9).

In **Acts 2:24** the ***“pains of death”*** that Jesus was loosed from, are literally the ‘birth pangs’; Jesus was bringing forth a new creation. This is the major work that He was accomplishing during the time that His body was in the tomb. Some have taught that the devil and demons were causing Jesus pain in hell. This is not possible as Jesus was God in the Spirit and the devil cannot ever touch God in the Spirit; he could only come against God manifest in the flesh.

Jesus went to the Father

Mary Magdalene was the first person to see Jesus alive from the dead. She did not recognise Him – He must have looked quite different! When Jesus spoke her name she realised whom she was talking to. See this wonderful story unfold in **John 20:11-16**.

Then Jesus said to her, ***“Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father, but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’”*** Jn.20:17. On that awesome resurrection morning, Jesus still had one more crucial task to do, to complete the work of redemption. He was going to the Father. He was going into heaven to complete the work; He was to take His blood into heaven and place it upon the Mercy Seat.

Into heaven itself

Hebrews tells us that Jesus, ***“entered ... into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”*** 9:24. He entered ***“not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained redemption”*** 9:12. This was the final task to be done to complete redemption, to fully overcome death by the full remission of all sin.

When Jesus appeared to His disciples gathered together in Jerusalem, He was different to when Mary saw Him. He said, ***“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have”*** Lu.24:39. He also

asked them for something to eat, ***“So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took and ate in their presence”*** v.42-43.

Jesus was able to ‘appear’ out of the GLORY!

Jesus had been to the Father; Jesus had taken His blood into heaven itself and now He manifested in a glorified body. This is hard to comprehend but it is clearly recorded for us.

The disciples were gathered behind closed doors ***“for fear of the Jews”*** and ***“Jesus came and stood in the midst”*** Jn.20:19. Acts 1:3 tells us Jesus ***“also presented Himself alive after suffering by many infallible proofs”***. The One who had manifested as the Son of Man was now manifesting as the eternal Son of the Father.

JESUS CAME AGAIN

Jesus had promised His disciples ***“I will come again”*** Jn.14:3. Because of the misinterpretation of **John 14:2**, some have even believed that this is referring to the second coming of Christ. However we must read each verse and each statement in each verse in the context of the passage. Jesus is going to the cross to die. He told His disciples that He would come again to them. He is referring to His resurrection but many of us like Jesus’ disciples are slow of understanding.

Three days later Jesus **came again!** ***“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’”*** Jn.20:19. Jesus came again as He promised. Three days later the disciples saw Him. After that ***“He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them [the disciples] during forty days”*** Acts 1:3.

HOW DOES JESUS RECEIVE US TO HIMSELF?

Jesus said ***“I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also”*** Jn.14:3b. When Jesus came again to the disciples, He ministered peace to them – they were afraid and upset! Then He told them that He was sending them out in the same way that the Father had sent Him (Jn.20:21). Then ***“He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’”*** Jn.20:22.

When Jesus came again He received His disciples to Himself; He ministered peace to them, ***“the peace of God which surpasses all understanding”*** (Phil.4:7), and He breathed the Holy Spirit into their lives. This could not have happened before the cross.

Because of sin men could not receive the Holy Spirit of God into their lives. They could only experience God by the Spirit coming upon them as an anointing to enable them to do a specific thing.

But because Jesus had been to the cross to take away all sin, the disciples could receive the supernatural peace of God; they could receive the very Spirit of God into their lives.

What about us today?

How does Jesus receive us? Jesus received me the day, the moment I was born again. He received me to Himself. In that moment I came to know Jesus personally. I have never ‘not been’ with Him since then. The Christian life is a growing up in that place that Jesus

prepared for us at the cross; growing up in that placement that God has given us in the body of Christ, His church.

After we are born again of the Spirit, we are baptised into Jesus Christ. The baptism is a completion of that which began with the new birth. If we are baptised in the name of Jesus on the basis of repentance, Peter said we would also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). The fullness of the Godhead would be dwelling in us from that time.

Where is Jesus today?

Jesus went to the Father. Jesus went beyond the veil, into the eternal realm of heaven. To enter that realm, that kingdom, we must be born again of the Spirit of God. Nicodemus wanted to understand how he could be with Jesus. He recognised that Jesus had come from God. He wanted to be with Jesus. Jesus told him that the only way was by being born again. Jesus said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” Jn.3:5.*

- The Father’s house is in simple terms, the body of Christ.
- It has pleased God to give us a place in the body (**1Cor.12:18**).
- God’s intention is for His church to be His bride, His wife
- God will dwell with His people, His church, in the earth.

**This will be the final expression of the will of God:
the Father’s house fully built, fully manifest in the earth.**

WORKERS FOR THE HARVEST

PRAY THE LORD OF THE HARVEST

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary [harassed] and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” Matt.9:35-36. In response to this experience Jesus said to His disciples, *“the harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest” v.37-38.*

The harvest is God’s people

In the context of Jesus’ experience, what is the harvest and what sort of labourers would do the work of ‘reaping’ in this harvest? Jesus was seeing the multitude of the people of Israel, God’s people, like sheep without a shepherd. This means that Jesus expects His people to grow to maturity. The people are already His people but they need labourers/workers who are really true shepherds – shepherds after God’s own heart – to bring them to maturity.

“And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” Jer.3:15.

Jesus sent out workers

In response to His own statement of the need for labourers, Jesus then named and sent out the twelve to begin to do the work of the ministry among the people of God. Jesus appointed and sent out apostles into the harvest. He gave them power *“over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” Matt.10:1.* He told them *“as you go, preach, saying ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (v.7).*

Jesus referred to the harvest again in **Luke 10:2**, making the same statement to His disciples as He had in **Matthew 9:37-38**. This time it was in the context of Jesus appointing seventy others and sending them out *“two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Lu.10:1).*

The context is that of Jesus’ ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. These seventy were to go before Jesus to prepare the way for Him to visit many more towns and cities. Jesus again is pointing to the harvest among the people of God; not a harvest of new souls coming into the kingdom of God, but a harvest of maturity and fruitfulness coming among the people of God.

The ministry gifts are to bring the church to maturity

The clear intent of God in the New Testament is to build His church. He is doing this by giving ‘gifts to men’; *“He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers” (Eph.4:8-11).* These ministry gifts are given and are to do the work of the ministry *“for the equipping of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” v.12-13.*

Notice that the evangelist is one of five gifts given by Jesus in His ascension to bring the church to maturity. The worldwide thrust for evangelism over the last decades is praiseworthy; but the church that has come into existence as a result is now largely like the people

of God whom Jesus was referring to in **Matthew 9:35-36**. Jesus saw the potential of the harvest. It is not primarily new souls, but it is bringing the people of God everywhere to maturity by doing the work of the ministry. **This is the harvest.**

Crops ripe for harvest

Driving through South East Queensland [the State where I live] in early 2010, I saw some healthy well-headed sorghum crops standing in the fields. They looked very ripe and I wondered why nobody was harvesting them. In Australia, harvesting is done by big machines and seed crops cannot be harvested unless the atmospheric conditions are dry. If bulk grain has too much moisture in it, it will sweat and rot after being harvested. In other words the conditions for harvest have to be suitable.

After that I dreamt of the harvest. Some of my brethren featured in the dream. I was having difficulty convincing my brethren that the harvest was ready; we must go to work.

It is time for maturity because maturity is the time of the harvest.

The harvest is the end of the age

Jesus said, *“The harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are the messengers [angels]”* **Matt.13:39b**. Many people believe that we are at the end of the age for many different reasons, but mostly people tend to believe that we are at the end of the age because of eschatological [end time] signs that they believe are the fulfilment of ‘prophetic’ Scriptures. Most people seem to have different views about eschatology.

It is much simpler and more straightforward to go with what Jesus said about the harvest. We cannot do much about natural disasters and political crises in the nations; we cannot understand the workings of the global economy; but we can get ready for the harvest, that is, we can do the work of the ministry to bring the church to maturity (**Eph.4:11-16**).

THE HARVEST IS MINISTERING TO THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL

When Jesus first mentioned the harvest in **Matthew 9:37-38**, it was in the context of the lost sheep of Israel whom He was looking at and ministering to (**v.35-36**). Jesus said to *“pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest”* **v.38**. It was in the context of *“the multitudes [being] weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd”* (**v.36**), that Jesus appointed the twelve apostles and sent them out.

He said to them *“Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* **Matt.10:5-6**. Strictly speaking, the house of Israel equalled the Jews of that time.

The sending out of the seventy in **Luke 10** was also to the Jews: the house of Israel. The church of today could be said to be as ‘the house of Israel’. This is important because today the church exists in some form in every nation. [There are underground churches in nations where the death penalty is the punishment for conversion to be one of Christ’s.]

In the context of the end of the age, ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ are the countless millions of believers in Jesus who are bound in Christian religious denominations and ‘independent’ ministries and churches. They are scattered and weary and like sheep having no shepherd. Truly the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So much ministry is needed to bring the church to maturity – the time of harvest.

Ministering to the Samaritans and then to the nations

After the resurrection, when Jesus was telling the disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit, He said, ***“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and into all Judea [the Jews] and Samaria [Samaritans], and to the end of the earth [all the Gentile nations]”*** Acts 1:8.

It was first to the Jews, and the early disciples obeyed Jesus in spreading the gospel in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), but they had failed to go much further. It was because of persecution that some of the disciples [Philip] went down to Samaria to preach (Acts 8:4-5). Later some of the same disciples who left Jerusalem because of persecution, preached the gospel in Phoenicia and Cyprus, but still only preaching to Jews.

However, in Antioch they began to preach to the ***“Hellenists”*** [Gentiles] (Acts 11:19-21). Jesus had set an order: firstly the lost sheep of the house of Israel, secondly the Samaritans and thirdly to the Gentiles.

JESUS COMMISSIONED THE HARVEST AMONG SAMARITANS

The harvest was not only to come among the Jews. Workers were needed to go out into the harvest in Samaria. In John 4 Jesus was in Samaria in the city of Sychar. There in the midst of the Samaritans, Jesus again spoke of the harvest. He said, ***“Do not say, ‘there is still four months and then comes the harvest’. Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest”*** v.35. He spoke to the disciples with Him as to ones who would be doing the reaping in Samaria. Remember ***“the reapers are the messengers [angels]”***, not angels from heaven, but workers that Jesus raises and sends out.

The Samaritans had a form of the true religion of the Old Testament. They believed in God (Jn.4:20) and had some expectation that Messiah would come (v.25).

Who are the Samaritans?

Historically, the Samaritans were the people who lived in the land previously inhabited by Ephraim and other tribes who constituted the northern kingdom of Israel. This kingdom had been conquered by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC. The conquerors had taken many away captive and had resettled other peoples in the land of Israel.

The Samaritans were the descendants of mixed races. Despite their long history of being exiled from the house of Israel in terms of being God’s people, they had maintained some faith in the true God and had some Messianic expectation as demonstrated by the Samaritan woman in John 4.

Who could the Samaritans represent today?

It is possible to understand that the Samaritans represent the Christian cults. Christian cults have some form of belief in the true God and have some understanding of Jesus, the Christ. Therefore, as Jesus said in John 4, the harvest among the Samaritans is ripe and the harvest today among those who are caught in Christian cults is ready.

For example in 2009, I was taken to the headquarters of a church in Kenya which many regard to be a cult. However, for two days I shared the word of God with a group of leaders, both senior and junior leaders, and they received the word of God gladly.

There is an open door for Christian preachers, apostles and teachers to go to this cultish church in East Africa, and probably to go to many other such groups, to present to them the pure word of God and the clear message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

THERE ARE THE UNREACHED GENTILES AS WELL

It was not until after His resurrection that Jesus purposely sent the disciples to all nations: ***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” Matt.28:19a.***

There are still many in the nations who have not received a Christian witness. Our brothers in India tell us that 83% of the population of that great nation live in villages and that 500,000 villages have no Christian witness [100,000 villages do have a witness]. Obviously there are huge masses of unreached peoples.

**The work of discipleship begins with preaching the gospel,
but the work of discipleship has only begun when somebody believes.**

The Jerusalem council in Acts 15

Because so many Gentiles were coming into the faith, there was much confusion among many Jewish believers as to whether the Gentiles had to keep the Law; whether they needed to be circumcised? A council of apostles and elders was called to resolve this matter (**Acts 15:6**). After ***“much dispute”*** (v7), the council heard from Peter, Paul and Barnabas, and ***“they had become silent”*** (v.12). James brought a word from the prophet Amos that resolved the matter, giving understanding from the Scripture.

It was always God’s intention to reach the Gentiles through Messiah

“After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things” Acts 15:16-17.

The restoration of the tabernacle of David is not referring to a tent of worship in which the presence of God dwells. Rather it is referring to the royal house, the clan, the family dynasty that began with David. James is quoting from **Amos 9:11-12**. This reference to the tabernacle of David is not a reference to the Tabernacle in which the Ark of the Covenant dwelt. It is a reference to the dynasty that had ceased from the time of the Babylonian exile. This was the ‘booth’ that had fallen; that had been destroyed; and now was being restored through Messiah Jesus.

Psalms 2 speaks powerfully of Messiah being crowned King in Zion and receiving all the nations as His inheritance. Jesus Christ is that Messiah! Jesus Christ is the greater Son of David who came in the fullness of time, also being the Son of God. Through the gospel His Kingship is preached to all nations.

Harvest among the Gentiles

James understood that the harvest was now taking place among the Gentiles. The evidence was overwhelming: the Lord had poured out His Spirit upon Gentiles even before they were baptised (**Acts 10:44-47**). They had received the same gift as the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Since that time in the house of Cornelius, a large door had opened for ministry to Gentiles in many nations and cities. Many Gentiles had come to faith in Jesus Christ and were growing up in churches that were predominantly made up of Gentile believers.

HOW DO WE BRING THE CHURCH TO MATURITY?

What are the workers to do in the harvest?

Jesus’ instruction or commission was ***“Go therefore and make disciples of the nations, baptising ...”*** (**Matt.28:19a**). Why ‘therefore’? Because Jesus had just said, ***“All***

authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” v.18. The Great Commission is based on and comes out of Jesus’ absolute authority in the earth.

Jesus was speaking in His resurrection. He had already been to His Father. He had already completed the work of redemption. He had already cleansed the heavens by placing His blood on the Mercy Seat (**Heb.9:11-12 & 24**), thus guaranteeing the perfection of the saints (**Heb.10:14**).

Now the apostles that He had trained and commissioned were ready to go to the nations. He was sending them as workers into the harvest.

However, the harvest is much more than evangelism, that is, preaching the gospel to win souls. That preaching of the gospel is only the beginning.

The goal is to “*present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*” Col.1:28b.

THE WORK OF DISCIPLESHIP

There are six steps that the first apostles took and we need to follow their example.

1. **Preach the gospel, Mark 16:15.** The gospel is for every person. The gospel is for all men, (**1Tim.2:6**). It is God’s will for *“all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* **1Tim.2:4** [also **2Pet.3:9**].

We are to preach: Jesus the Christ, **Acts 5:42**, the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, **Acts 8:12& Acts 28 30**; the unsearchable riches of Messiah, **Eph.3:8**

2. **Baptise those who believe, Mark 16:16a; Matt.28:19b.** Baptism is a requirement; an essential part of salvation. Baptism is *“into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (**Matt.28:19b**). Biblical names meant the actual person and often the name was prophetically revealing an essential characteristic of that person.

The important thing here is **the name**. Baptising means immersing. A loose paraphrase could be ‘immersing them into **the person** of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit’. Who is that person? Clearly the person is JESUS, who is the manifestation of the invisible God, and His name is JESUS. **Acts 4:12** tells us *“nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”*.

The apostles baptised in the name of Jesus. [see **Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5**]

3. **Teaching them all things that Jesus taught us, Matt.28:20.** Jesus had trained the twelve for three years and He confidently commissioned them to teach all that He had taught them. We are to teach:

- the apostles doctrine, **Acts 2:42**
- that Jesus is the Christ, **Acts 5:42**
- the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, **Acts 28:31**
- sound doctrine, **Titus 2:1**
- with all wisdom, **Col.1:28**
- we are to pass on what we have received, **2Tim.2:2**

4. **Demonstrate real fellowship, Acts 2:44-45** *“Now all who believed were together and had all things in common ... divided them among all, as anyone had need.”* Fellowship includes financial contribution and so new believers need to be taught about giving from the Scripture – tithes and offerings.
5. **Breaking of Bread, Acts 2:46.** The first church broke bread *“daily ... breaking bread from house to house.”* The apostle Paul taught deeply about the significance of breaking bread in **1Corinthians 11:23-34**.
6. **Prayer, Acts 2:41-42.** *“Those who gladly received his word were baptised ... and they continued steadfastly ... in prayers.”* New disciples need to be taught concerning prayer even as Jesus taught concerning prayer. Therefore we are to teach the Lord’s prayer as the pattern of how to pray (**Matt.6:9-13 & Lu.11:1-4**). Teach the disciples to pray for all men and those in authority (**1Tim.2:1-2**), and to pray for the saints, *“with all prayer and supplication in the spirit”* (**Eph.6:18**); and to pray for the apostle and others who have the responsibility to preach and teach the word of God that they may have boldness *“to make known the mystery of the gospel”* (v.19).

Fulfilling the commission

When we went to India in early February, 2010, to teach in pastors’ and leaders’ seminars, our goal was to disciple the disciplers; in other words, to prepare pastors and leaders to be able to nurture and disciple new believers.

When we went to the Philippines in late February to teach in pastors’ and leaders’ seminars, the stated goal was ‘calling the church to maturity’.

When Bruce and Jean Manning went to India in late February to do a series of pastors and leaders seminars, again they were training the disciplers and calling the church to maturity.

When we went to Africa in May and June, 2010, to five nations, it was on our heart to call the church to maturity by preparing workers for the harvest.

The LORD of the harvest has His harvest in hand

I began this teaching on the harvest by mentioning a dream I had. In the preparation of this teaching I dreamed a second time and in the dream I was with my natural father – he passed away in 1973. My father was a broad-acre farmer, growing grain crops.

In the dream I knew it was harvest time but I was fully engaged in other activities on behalf of my father and I expressed my concern to him about the harvest that was ready. My father assured me that he had the harvest in hand and I should not be concerned.

- ❖ ***Praise God that He is the LORD of the harvest.***
- ❖ ***It is His harvest***
- ❖ ***We are to pray to Him***
- ❖ ***He will raise up workers for His harvest.***

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

The winning of souls is not the harvest

For many years, many of us have believed that the harvest refers to winning souls into the kingdom of God. I heard for years that those who had an optimistic eschatology [concerning end-times] expected a worldwide harvest of souls before the end of the age. This belief began to be challenged in recent years as I have studied and taught Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares.

The winning of souls is beginning of the Christian life

The harvest in agricultural terms refers to the time when the seed or the fruit is ripe for picking or harvesting. When the seed is first planted in the field, we call that 'planting time' and we wait for the new shoots to appear out of the earth. When the new shoots appear, the farmer rejoices because the crop has begun to grow, but it is still four months to harvest time.

Therefore, the winning of souls into the kingdom of God is actually the beginning of new Christian lives and there is a time of growth in which the Christian grows to maturity. It is only at the time of maturity that the fruit begins to ripen. That is the harvest time.

Therefore we have to question whether evangelism, that is, the bringing in of new souls into the kingdom through faith and baptism, is really the end-time harvest that the Scripture speaks of.

Let us be clear: **any definition of harvest must fundamentally tell us that it is the time of maturity and fruit bearing.** The seed that was sown has sprouted, has grown up, has produced a head of seed and the seed has ripened, being ready for harvest.

THE CHURCH IS TO COME TO MATURITY

New souls are actually indicative of 'sowing time' not of reaping. Therefore the winning of new souls is not the harvest. The harvest refers to that time when the sons of the kingdom, having been planted into the world, have grown to maturity. That is the harvest that Jesus is speaking of. Even as the crop in the field is not harvested until the grain is ripe, so the end-time harvest that Jesus is referring to, is the time when the church, the many-membered body, has come to maturity in the world, showing forth the fruits of righteousness.

God's goal is for His church to come to maturity, even perfection. In His ascension, Jesus gave the five-fold ministry gifts for the *"perfecting of the saints"*; He gave the ministry gifts to function until the church comes to full maturity, *"unto a perfect man"* (Eph.4:11-13).

In **Hebrews 6:1-3**, the apostle is again exhorting the church to grow up. He refers to the laying of the foundations of the faith, but the purpose is for the church to grow to perfection: *"Let us go on to perfection."*

We must heed Jesus' own interpretation of His parable

In **Matthew 13** Jesus relates seven parables, two of them more complex than the others and these two He interprets. It is important for all of us to take heed of Jesus' own interpretation of His parables.

For example, some preachers have publicly said that the parable of the sower and the seed is about sowing ‘seeds of finance’. Such an interpretation is extremely unsound when Jesus Himself told us that the ‘seed’ is the word of God.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES – Matt.13:24-30

Jesus said *“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.*

But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’

He said to them ‘An enemy has done this’. The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

Let them both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’

The Interpretation, Matt.13:37-43, Jesus said:

<u>He who sows</u> the good seed	is	the <u>Son of Man</u> .
The <u>field</u>	is	<u>the world</u> ,
the <u>good seeds</u>	are	the <u>sons of the kingdom</u> ,
but the <u>tares</u>	are	the <u>sons of the wicked one</u>
The <u>enemy</u> who sowed the tares	is	the <u>devil</u>
The <u>harvest</u>	is	the <u>end of the age</u>
The <u>reapers</u>	are	the <u>angels</u> [lit. <u>messengers</u>]
Tares are <u>gathered</u>	so it will be the Son of Man will send out His angels they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness.	
<u>& burned with fire</u>	cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.	

*Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.
He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

Harvest is the time of maturity

From the interpretation that Jesus gave of this parable, it is clear that the harvest is the end of the age, and that at the time of harvest, that which was sown has come to maturity. The sons of God have grown to maturity and are manifesting a harvest of righteousness in the earth.

Lessons learned from Jesus' interpretation

The interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares that Jesus gave, seriously challenges many eschatological views.

- Firstly it corrects our misunderstanding of what harvest is.
- Secondly it clearly teaches us that harvest equals maturity.
- Thirdly the kingdom of heaven is in the world and in fact the sons of the kingdom are sown in the world where they must grow up to maturity, ready for harvest.
- Fourthly, it is the sons of the wicked one who are taken out of the world and destroyed – this is very different to the rapture teaching that tells us that the righteous are taken out of the world. It has been taught that the righteous will be taken [raptured] out of the world and the wicked will rule the world through some anti-Christ government. This is in contradiction to Jesus' own words.
- Fifthly it is the reapers who are commissioned by Jesus to remove the wicked and lawless ones from the world; the result being that righteousness rules in the world.
- Finally when the wicked have been removed from the world and the kingdom of heaven has been manifest in the world, the world will then be filled with the righteousness of God.

THE ANGELS ARE THE REAPERS

Angels in the Bible refer to heavenly messengers sent by God. But there are evil angels as well, representing Satan, and there are human messengers. In the Hebrew and Greek, angel and messenger translate the same words.

Dictionary meanings

Some of the following definitions are taken from Strong's Concordance and Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary.

SC Hebrew # 4397 'malak' from an unused root meaning to dispatch as a deputy, means a messenger, specifically of God, i.e., an angel but also a prophet, priest or teacher. Translated in the Old Testament as: angel (111 times), messenger (98x), ambassadors (4x). The use of the word varies from an angel sent by God, to a messenger sent by man or a human messenger sent by God.

SC Greek # 32 'aggelos' pronounced as 'angelos'. Similar to Old Testament word in use and application in New Testament; comes from root words meaning to 'bring tidings'; means a messenger, especially an angel of God but also by implication, a pastor [but probably more correctly an apostle]. The angels of God are spirits, not having material bodies as men do, but the angels generally appear in human form. God's angels are holy.

Translator's choice

From the Hebrew and Greek understanding and use of the words translated 'angel', we realise that it is the translator's decision whether to use the word 'angel' meaning a 'heavenly messenger' or to use the word 'messenger' meaning a 'human messenger'.

In the New Testament there are two places, if not three, where the use of the word 'angel' does not fit in with the context and the witness of the rest of Scripture.

Example one: the angels to the seven churches in Revelation 1-3 do not refer to heavenly beings without a body. There is no other witness in the Scripture that angels have been appointed by God to bring the word of God to churches. Some therefore have said that Jesus is referring to pastors, but that does not fit scripturally either, as pastors are only referred to once (**Eph.4:11**) in the New Testament.

Who did Jesus appoint to bring the word of God to the churches? Answer: apostles. Paul said, ***"He was appointed a preacher and an apostle – I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying – a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth"*** **1Tim.2:7**. All the writers of the Epistles are apostles and they wrote to the churches. The point is that the ones that Jesus appointed to bring the word of God to the church of a region or a city were apostles. Therefore the better translation in **Revelation 1-3** would be 'messengers'.

Example two: "the Son of Man will send out His angels/messengers" (Matt.13:41). In the interpretation Jesus gave of the parable of the wheat and the tares, He said that the reapers will have huge responsibility in the end time to rid the world of unrighteousness and ungodliness.

When Jesus was on the earth, who was He training to be His messengers? If it was heavenly beings He did not need to come to the earth to train them. He could have trained them in heaven. However we know that Jesus' primary task as the Apostle of God was to train and equip apostles whom He could send out in His name, with His authority, to build the church and to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, that is, to bring the kingdom of God/heaven into manifestation in the earth.

Example three: "and He will send His angels [messengers] with a great sound of a trumpet, and He will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" Mt.24:31. Most of us have always assumed this refers to a great cosmic work of angels in the earth at the end of the age.

- ❖ But who did Jesus raise up to preach the gospel?
- ❖ Did He raise up angels to preach the gospel?
- ❖ Is it the work of angels to gather the elect?
- ❖ Whom did He send to preach to those who ***"had been appointed to eternal life"*** (**Acts 13:48**)?

Jesus raised and sent apostles!

Who are the messengers that Jesus is sending out?

In the New Testament Jesus sent the apostles. He said to the Father, ***"As You sent [apostello – sent as an apostle] Me into the world, I also have sent [apostello] them [the apostles] into the world"*** **Jn.17:18**. The only reasonable conclusion as to 'who are the messengers', is that the messengers are the apostles.

At the end of the age, Jesus is again raising a generation of apostles through whom He is speaking His word to the church worldwide and through whom He is calling forth all His ministers to do the work of the ministry to bring the church to maturity and perfection.

What about the judgement

Jesus said that His messengers ***“will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness?”*** Matt.13:41.

Most have assumed that the judgements at the end of the age are going to be cataclysmic events orchestrated by cosmic heavenly beings on behalf of God.

However, Jesus said that He will send out His messengers and ***“they will gather out of His kingdom”*** all those who do wickedness. Most do not have a vision for a righteous, spirit-filled, fruit-bearing body of mature believers, called the church, to actually bring forth the victory of the gospel in the earth and see the kingdom of God established.

But Jesus is seated ***“for He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet”*** (1Cor.15:25). Who is to bring the enemies of Christ to His feet? It is the church. The judgement on wickedness and lawlessness comes through the word of God.

**As the church in maturity speaks the word in reality,
the kingdom of God will be manifest in the earth.**

Paul tells us that God’s goal for us is to walk in such obedience that we are ***“ready to punish all disobedience”*** (2Cor.10:6). This is only possible when we have pulled down the **strongholds**, when we have cast down the **arguments** and ***“every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God”*** (v4-5). This is only possible by the power of God and the result will be that ***“every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”***.

The judgement of Ananias and Sapphira in **Acts 5**, by the word of the apostle Peter, is surely a frightening example of God’s judgement coming upon something that offended the Holy Spirit. This was in the midst of the church and judgement is ***“to begin at the house of God”*** but ***“what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*** (1Pet.4:17; 2Thess.1:8-9).

A CHANGE OF THINKING

It is necessary for us to take seriously the interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares given to us by Jesus. It is important for us to submit our thinking and our understanding of God’s purpose at the end of the age to the very words of Jesus.

Planted in the world

Jesus gives us a very amazing picture of the sons of God, having been planted in the world, coming to maturity in the world. The fruit of the sons of the kingdom growing up to maturity in the world has not been foreseen by most in the church because the church has believed wrong doctrine concerning the end of the age. Believers have not been encouraged to grow up into sonship and to be planted into the world as sons of the kingdom. The church has become a citadel in the society and Christians withdraw into that citadel for their experience of church life.

Believing the whole gospel

In these days of restoration, Jesus is restoring apostles and all five-fold ministers in His church for the very purpose of bringing the church to maturity. More and more of God's saints are beginning to hear the gospel of the kingdom of God; they are beginning to realise that there is much more to the salvation that God has called us into than being saved to go to heaven.

Making disciples

As we faithfully do the work of the ministry, which is primarily to make disciples who are able to be trained to do the work of the ministry and sent out into the world, we are experiencing the very results that the Scriptures speak of.

At SHILOH, we are committed to making disciples and training workers to go out into the harvest. We are committed to equipping every member and we are seeing tangible results as more and more of the brethren go forth to teach others; go forth on mission both within Australia and overseas.

THE REALITY OF THE RAPTURE?

PART ONE

WHERE DID THE RAPTURE DOCTRINE COME FROM?

The idea of the church being 'raptured' is recent in church history

For over a century many have preached and taught the rapture of the church to heaven for a period of seven years [some say three and a half years]. Belief in the rapture would appear to be universal in some circles. For example, some Christian leaders from India who attended a recent training school at SHILOH here in Australia, said they had never heard anything different than the rapture being the future of the church.

However there is a growing body of believers, preachers and teachers, who do not believe in a 'rapture'. Some have grown up in churches where the doctrine of the rapture is unheard of; others have changed their mind after deliberate and careful Bible reading and study.

The rapture first preached in the 1820s

The idea of a 'rapture' was virtually unknown in the church historically. The following quote is from Iain Murray's book, *The Puritan Hope*, written 1971 and published by Banner of Truth Trust;

'a curious belief, practically unknown in earlier Church history, had arisen,, namely, that Christ's appearing before the millennium is to be in two stages, the first, a secret rapture removing the Church before a Great Tribulation smites the earth, the second his coming with his saints to set up his kingdom.' (page 200)

The expectation that there would be a rapture of the church before a 'Great Tribulation', fitting into a dispensational{i} pre-millennial{ii} framework of teaching and belief system, was practically unknown in church history before the 1820's.

{i} *Dispensational: refers to a system of understanding the dealings of God in human history. This system was devised by one of the originators of the Rapture teaching, J N Darby, and strongly taught in the Scofield Reference Bible published in the early 20th Century. This dispensational systemised understanding of the Scriptures is a gross imposition of man's ideas and interpretations upon the word of God as it is written.*

{ii} *Pre-millennial: refers to an understanding that Jesus will return to the earth before an 'expected 1000 year reign' of Christ on the earth; derived from the references to 1000 years in the Book of Revelation (Rev.20:2,3,4,5,6,7). The historical view of the 1000 year references, is that it is not a literal time, especially since the only references to the 1000 year time span are in the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is written in prophetic, visionary and apocalyptic language because it is a book of revelation, generally to be interpreted, not taken exactly literally, and to be understood by the Spirit, not by man's intellect.*

History of the Rapture Theory

Mr Edmund Shackleton opened his book with the statement, *"All who held the pre-millennial Coming of Christ were...of one mind on the subject"* (until about 1830). At that time a new view was promulgated that the Coming of Christ was **not one event**, but that it was **divided into stages**. It began to be taught that Christ comes twice from heaven to earth, but the first time only as far as the air.

This first descent, it is said, will be for the purpose of removing the Church from the world, and will occur before the Great Tribulation under anti-Christ. This is called 'The coming for His Saints' or 'Secret Rapture'.

The second part of the Coming is said to take place when Christ appears in glory and destroys the anti-Christ. This is called, 'The coming with His saints'."

Mr. H.A. Baker wrote, *"For eighteen centuries the fundamental principle of tribulation to glory was the universal belief of the truly born again members of the Church."* H.A. Baker said, *"Beginning with the Irvingite woman, then propagated by John N. Darby about 1830, this new "doctrine" has come down to us until it has become popular. GEORGE MULLER opposed it; so did Benjamin Wills Newton; so did Dr. S.P. Tregelles and other Brethren."*

Dr. Oswald J. Smith said, *"The new pre-tribulation Rapture teaching was first proclaimed as a direct revelation by a woman in Edward Irving's church, and then taken up by John Nelson Darby (and the Scofield Reference Bible) in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Church for eighteen hundred years."*

RAPTURE IN THE BIBLE

The word 'rapture'

The word rapture does **not appear** in the English Bible. It is an amazing thing to realise that some of the major doctrines held dearly by many Christians, including Bible scholars, do not appear by name in the Holy Scripture. What preachers and teachers tend to do is to accept a doctrine and then go to the Scriptures to prove the doctrine. This is the exact opposite of true Biblical theology. All true and important doctrine must arise from clear statement in the Scriptures, and be able to be proven easily from the Scripture.

The Oxford dictionary says: **rapture** means *mental transport, ecstatic delight; theologically, act of transporting a person from one place to another [esp. heaven]*. This word comes from the Latin '**raptura**' and the word used in Christian circles comes from the Latin Bible.

The verse of Scripture that all who believe in the rapture use as the primary proof of such a doctrine [such an event taking place] is **1 Thessalonians 4:17**.

"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."

The word for caught up is **harpadzo** Strong's Concordance [SC]

Greek [gr.] #726 meaning: *to seize, snatch away, catch up, take by force.*

The word describes the Holy Spirit's action in transferring Philip from one location to another (**Acts 8:39**) and Paul's being caught up to paradise (**2Cor.12:2,4**). It suggests the exercise of sudden force and is used in **Matt.11:12**.

[*Word Wealth in New Spirit Filled Life Bible*, page 1687, 1Thess.4:17].

The meaning of the word *harpadzo* sheds light on our understanding of what happens when the Lord Jesus descends from heaven. The Greek word gives no indication that we will be caught up to heaven, but rather that we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, as He comes, just as the Scripture says.

Because of the various applications of this word, we can understand that we will be supernaturally drawn up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. We will not be able to resist Him.

The word for 'taken up'

It is interesting that the word for *taken up* [into heaven] which is used in **Acts 1:2, 11, 22**, in **Mark 16:19**, **Acts 10:16** and in **1Tim.3:16** [*received up* NKJV], is the word *analambano* SC Gr.353, which means: *to take up*.

This is a very different word to the word *harpadzo* which means *caught up* in **1Thess.4:17**. The catching up in this verse is to meet Jesus in the air. There is no sense at all that this word means to be taken up into heaven.

The word 'coming'

The word for *coming* is *parousia* SC Gr. #3952 meaning:

- *a being near, that is, advent* [often return; specifically of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked.]

This word comes from Gr. #3918 meaning: *to be near, that is, at hand*.

The technical term signifying the second advent of Jesus, was never used to describe His first coming, but was used to describe '*the presence of Christ with His disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration*' **2Pet.1:16**.

Parousia originally was the official term for a visit by a person of high rank, especially a king. **It was an arrival that included a permanent presence from that coming onward.** The glorified Messiah's arrival will be followed by a permanent residence with His glorified people.

[*Word Wealth in New Spirit Filled Life Bible*, page 1603, **1Cor.15:23**; and from SC Greek dictionary]

THE CHURCH IS TO FACE TRIBULATION

Pre-tribulation coming?

The New Testament church did not teach the rapture, nor did they teach a pre-millennial pre-tribulation coming of Jesus Christ. In **Matthew 24:15-16**, Jesus is warning the disciples that "*when you see the 'abomination of desolation', spoken of by Daniel the prophet ... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*" Luke puts it more simply, "*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its destruction is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee ...*" **Lu.21:20-21**. The desolation was actually the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem^{iii} and eventually ransacking the city, including the destruction of the temple.

{iii} *It is good for us to have some understanding of the historical destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 as Jesus prophesied to the apostles in **Matthew 24**, **Luke 21** and **Mark 13**. From the time of Jesus' death the Jewish people, especially those living in the Roman province of Judea, were in constant conflict with their Roman overlords. There were many uprisings; false messiahs arose and*

gathered armed gangs to resist the Romans, and it was a very troubled time. The Roman Emperor ordered his armies to deal with the rebellious Jews. This led to the siege of Jerusalem by Roman armies.

This is exactly what Jesus warned His disciples about, and He said ‘when you see this happening you should flee’. The Christians heeded the warning and were able to escape Jerusalem and they fled to a place called Pella. They were able to flee because in the midst of the siege, the siege was lifted for a season, as the general in charge of the siege was called back to Rome. The siege was reinstated and finally the whole city was overrun and destroyed. Historians suggest that over 1,000,000 Jews died during that terrible time.

A Jewish historian, Josephus, was caught in the siege but was allowed to escape with his life by the Romans and he has chronicled his experience in his writings.

In the same passage in **Matthew**, Jesus then warns **“there will be a great tribulation” (24:21)**. He says **“unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” v.22**. It is clear from this passage that the elect are to survive the great tribulation, not by being taken away to heaven in a divine rescue mission, but by the Lord preserving them during the tribulation. Jesus said that God would watch over His elect and shorten the **days of tribulation**.

Jesus had already said **“But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt.24:13)**. The church is called to **“endure to the end”**! The church is called and commissioned to be making disciples until **“the end of the age” (Matt.28:20)**. Jesus said **“I am with you always, to the end of the age”**, as you go and make disciples (**Matt.28:19-20**).

Preserved through tribulation

In writing to the church in Thessalonica the second time, Paul is writing to a church which was suffering persecutions and tribulations at that time; **“for your patience and faith in all your persecution and tribulation that you endure” 2Thess.1:4**. Paul uses this opportunity to encourage the church, by telling them that God will preserve them through the tribulation and finally to give the church rest **“when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Thess.1:7-8)**.

Paul does not tell the church that Jesus will intervene and take the church away to heaven to avoid the persecution and tribulation. Rather he tells the church that their patience and faith in the midst of suffering is **“manifest evidence of the righteous judgement of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer” (2Thess.1:5)**.

Persecution and Tribulation

In **2 Thessalonians 1:4-5**, the church was experiencing persecution and tribulations [afflictions] and the word of God promises that the persecutors of the church will be repaid by God **“with tribulation” (v6)**. The obvious reading of these verses is that the church was experiencing tribulation; they were being persecuted. **The contemporary church needs to be prepared for persecution and tribulation**, if it has not already done so, [as in China where the church has experienced much tribulation and persecution over the last 55 years].

The church is delivered from that tribulation *“when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven”*. He is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels *“in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* v8. This is after tribulation, not before!

We enter the kingdom through tribulations

After founding the churches in Lystra and Iconium, Paul and Barnabas were returning from their first apostolic trip, revisiting the churches, and they were *“strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’”* (Acts 14:21-22). Unfortunately, not many today are strengthening **‘the souls of the disciples’**; not many are preparing the church for inevitable tribulation, that is, times of suffering and persecution.

Pastors and ministers who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture do not believe in nor understand the victory of the gospel and the triumph of the church of Jesus Christ in the earth. Victory and triumph are put off until some future ‘millennial’ time. Such preachers see the only purpose of the church on the earth today is to get ready for the rapture.

Remember the rapture does not appear in Scripture, but many Scriptures are quoted from here and there to support such an idea. In so doing, Scriptures are taken out of context and the main import of the gospel and God’s purpose in the earth is either not understood, or it is even ignored.

THE REALITY OF THE RAPTURE?

PART TWO

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The resurrection of the dead: a major doctrine

A major doctrine of the New Testament and a foundational doctrine of our faith is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Worldwide, the Lord's church has been negligent in teaching the foundations of the faith [read carefully **Hebrews 5:12 – 6:3**]. But even more serious than this, much of the church has replaced the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead with a man-made doctrine: 'the rapture of the church'.

The real hope of the resurrection has been replaced by the fantastic idea that we are going to be transported to heaven for seven years in a secret rapture. This doctrine has no concrete basis in the Scripture, but has been popularised so much that many believers embrace this doctrine and deny the all-important reality of the resurrection of the dead.

Rapture: where did it come from?

The word *rapture* does not appear in the English Bible. Apparently the word was developed from the Catholic Latin Bible. However the context of **1Thessalonians 4:13-18** is concerning the resurrection from the dead. Therefore it is quite deceiving for writers and teachers to insert the word 'rapture' into these verses when these verses clearly are explaining the resurrection of the dead.

This is what happens when we pursue the doctrines of men: we forsake the important foundational teachings of the gospel and the Bible and twist the Scriptures to support a novel theory such as the rapture doctrine. The resurrection of the dead is an important and foundational doctrine of the faith.

This passage in **1 Thessalonians** says nothing about going back to heaven with Jesus, but it clearly says that we will ***"be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."*** This is referring to the **resurrection of the body!**

THE COMING

The coming according to 1 Thessalonians

Let us look closely now at the passage in **1 Thessalonians 4**. The key verse for the rapture eschatology{iv} is verse **17**: ***"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."*** This verse is worthy of study in its own right but must also be studied in the context of the passage in which it appears.

{iv} *Eschatology: the study of end time prophecies and events. This study is very controversial and there is general disagreement about many aspects of what is taught as eschatology. As someone once said, 'if you invited 12 eschatology teachers from 12 different Bible Schools to all come to a seminar and present a paper each, there would be 12 different views presented.'*

Those who have fallen asleep

The passage is introduced in **verse 13**, where Paul is addressing the issue of believers [loved ones] who have *“fallen asleep”*, that is, those have died in the faith. Paul does not want us to be ignorant. He says *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” v.14*. We learn from this verse that those who have died in Christ will come with Jesus – God will bring them with Him when He comes! It is clear: when Jesus comes, the **dead in Christ** will come with Him.

The dead shall be raised

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the central point or mainstay of our faith and, because Christ has been raised from the dead, we look forward to the resurrection of the dead. *“But Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [have died]” 1Cor.15:20*. This means that the resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of a most wonderful thing: because He rose from the dead, our resurrection from the dead is assured.

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen” 1Cor.15:13. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the guarantee that the dead will rise again. *“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen” v.16*.

Our faith is rooted and grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” v.17*. There is no hope for believers who have died if there is no resurrection of the dead. *“Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” v.18*.

THE RESURRECTION

A foundational doctrine

The resurrection of the dead is a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. It is one of the six basic principles listed in **Hebrews 6:1-2**. Nowhere in the Scripture is the rapture doctrine clearly mentioned. It is certainly not a foundational doctrine, and should not be confused with the well-taught Biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

Every believer is to be taught *“the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb.5:12)*. There are six foundational principles listed in **Hebrews 6:1-2**. We are not to remain babies, nor to remain children *“tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph.4:14)*. Many have been taught the rapture doctrine but have not been able to see it for themselves in the Scripture. As a result they have doubted their ability to read the Scripture because they assume that the ones who have taught them the rapture teaching are qualified to be *“rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Tim.2:15)*.

The hope

The resurrection of the dead is the hope of the church, not a short-term ‘rapture’ to heaven. The resurrection of the body is for eternity. Without the hope of the resurrection, which is firmly based on the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, our faith is in vain. *[Please read again the full passage of 1Cor.15:12-19.]*

Those who do not understand the resurrection of the dead just leave it aside and seek to replace the hope of the resurrection with the hope of a short-term rapture, deceiving the church to have a false hope.

Many ask questions about the future after the Lord has come. Such questions are very difficult to answer. John says, *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been*

revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we know we shall see Him as He is” 1Jn.3:2.

When does the resurrection take place?

The resurrection of the body takes place when the Lord Jesus descends from heaven and we will meet Him in the air! This is important:

the resurrection of the dead takes place when Jesus comes.

The Bible says that *“since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” 1Cor.15:21-23.*

Not only do the dead in Christ rise, but *“we who are alive and remain”* will also rise (1Thess.4:17). We are to comfort one another in this hope (v.18).

It is when Jesus comes and we are ‘caught up’ together with the dead in Christ, who come with Christ from heaven to receive their new bodies, that we who are alive receive our new ‘resurrection’ bodies. The resurrection body lives forever: it can see death no more, *“Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him” Rom.6:9.*

Attaining to the resurrection

Paul longed to *“attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil.3:11)*. He was willing to do anything, pay any price to attain. Again there is no mention of the rapture being his hope or his destiny, but to know Christ *“and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” Phil.3:10*. This is a very different Christianity to the trendy, success-orientated, contemporary fashion that has gripped much of church life in the western nations.

THE DEAD IN CHRIST

Where are the dead in Christ now?

Therefore we ask the question: Where are the dead in Christ now? If they are coming with Jesus when He comes, then they must be in heaven in their spirit bodies. This is clearly referred to in **verse 14 (1Thess.4)**.

This is confirmed in **2 Corinthians 5:6&8**, *“While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord ... to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*

*When a Christian dies in the faith, they go to be with Jesus in heaven,
They are awaiting His coming, for they will be coming with Him.*

By the Word of the Lord

In **1 Thessalonians 4:15**, Paul is emphatic, *“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord.”* Paul is adamant! He wants us to know that the mystery he is about to unfold is a revelation brought to him by the **‘word of the Lord’**. It is not Paul’s opinion; he did not learn this doctrine from somebody else.

- Something is going to happen at *“the coming of the Lord”*;
- it will involve the dead in Christ;

- it will involve those believers on the earth who are looking for His coming.
- There is going to be a generation of believers [saints] who will be alive when the Lord Jesus comes.
- But His coming includes the coming *“with Him of those who sleep in Jesus”* (v14). God will bring with Jesus all those Christians who have died and have been with Him in the heavenly realm.

The resurrection of the body

The dead in Christ are not sleeping in the graves as some erroneously teach; they are already with Christ in heaven in their spirit bodies. We have a physical body and a spiritual body and our soul is attached to, or part of, our spirit body. When a person dies it is only the physical body that dies.

The soul of man which is attached to the spiritual part of man is created for eternity. Paul makes it clear in these verses in **1Thessalonians 4:13-14** and **2Corinthians 5:6-8** that the dead in Christ are with the Lord now and that there is a future resurrection of their bodies, but the body that rises will be a glorious body.

Future resurrection

Some verses from **1Corinthians 15:35-49** help us to understand the future resurrection of the body:

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ v.35

Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.” v.36

“But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body” v.38

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” v.42-44.

“And as we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” v.49.

THE REALITY OF THE RAPTURE?

PART THREE

JESUS WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN

- *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven” 1Thess.4:16;*
- Jesus is coming down from heaven – descend means *to come down*.
- Jesus is retained in heaven *“until the times of restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21)*
- Jesus spoke prophetically of His coming saying He would be *“coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt.26:64,Mk.14:62,Matt.24:30).*

He will come the same way as He left

The angels told the disciples *“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” Acts 1:11.*

“He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” v 9. Therefore He is coming back to the earth in a cloud.

Jesus is coming back to the earth in the same way that He left. He is not coming back twice more. There is no reference in the Scripture to support a secret coming to rapture the church away and then a coming with the saints to exercise judgement in the earth.

The descent of the Lord from heaven will be announced

- a) “with a shout,*
- b) with the voice of an archangel, and*
- c) with the trumpet of God” (1Thess.4:16).*

The Shout

In the Old Testament the people of God were told to *“Shout to God with a voice of triumph” (Ps.47:1).* The shout was a powerful expression of praise.

In the taking of Jericho both the sound of the trumpet and a *“great shout”* were instrumental in bringing down the walls (**Josh.6:20**).

“God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet” Ps.47:5. Some say that this is a prophetic reference to the ascension of Jesus in **Acts 1:9-11**. Certainly it is a reference to the shout of God! One can only wonder at the power and authority of that shout.

And yet God has restored the **shout** in the midst of His people in recent times. There is a shout in the midst of the saints; it is Holy Spirit empowered; it is not a natural shout but an exclamation by the Holy Spirit, giving glory and honour to God!

The Voice of the Archangel

The *“voice of the archangel”* is an unknown reality. In the Bible only Michael is referred to as an archangel (**Jude 9**). Michael is also referred to as a *“prince”* (**Dan.10:21**) and the *“great prince”* (**Dan.12:1**). Michael came to help the one who was speaking with Daniel (**Dan.10:13**). These references in **Daniel** are in the context of spiritual warfare in the heavenlies between God’s angelic beings and the principalities and powers of Satan.

As In the Days Of Noah

So the voice of the archangel can be understood to be the voice of Michael! Michael as the archangel obviously has enormous authority and power.

There are various references to angels in **Revelation**, for example:

- ➔ ***“The angel standing on the sea and the land ..” (10:5);***
- ➔ ***“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice” (19:17).***

We do not know in our current experience the stature and awesomeness of God’s mighty angels but we can begin to imagine **the voice of the archangel**.

The Trumpet of God

“Behold I tell you a mystery we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed – in a moment [Greek ‘atomos’ from which we get the word atom; this moment is like an atomic second], in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet of God will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” 1Cor.15:51-52.

This mystery tells us that there will be some who **remain alive** and who are changed instantaneously when Jesus comes.

“The blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder” when God descended on the Mount of Horeb to meet with Moses and speak to him face to face (**Ex.19:19**).

There is another reference to the ‘trumpet’ in **Matthew 24:31**, which tells us that ***“His angels [messengers] will gather together His elect from the four winds”*** with ***“the sound of a great trumpet.”*** This trumpet refers to the heralding of the gospel, calling God’s people, the elect, to assemble.

The trumpet was used for this purpose in the wilderness and in the land of Israel.

The Shophar

In recent years the biblical *shophar* [pronounced *shoh-fahr* SC#7782 – a trumpet made from a curved animal horn] has been given to the church to make the church aware of the trumpet.

The trumpet sounded at Mt Sinai, heralding the Lord’s descent (**Ex.19:16,19-20**). This is significant because the trumpet will be heard again when the Lord descends from heaven.

The trumpet was also blown in **Joshua 6:1-20** as a necessary weapon in the coming down of the walls of Jericho.

The trumpet was used to sound a warning (**Ezek.33:2-9**).

The trumpet heralded the Day of Atonement, the Year of Jubilee (**Lev.25:9**) and the return of the Ark (**2Sam.6:15**).

An atomic moment

The Scripture says that the descent of Jesus from heaven will be heralded by the **shout**, the **voice**, and the **trumpet**. We cannot imagine the awesomeness of this ‘nuclear moment’ when the Lord descends from heaven, accompanied by the spirits of all the dead in Christ and probably by many angels. Enoch prophesied ***“Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints” Jude 14.***

THE REALITY OF THE RAPTURE?

PART FOUR

MEETING THE LORD IN THE AIR

“And the dead in Christ will rise first” 1Thess.4:16.

“The spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb.12:23) are the saints already in heaven, but they are coming back to the earth with Jesus to receive their resurrection [glorified] bodies. In some indescribable way their bodies will rise out of the earth!

“Then we who are alive and remain [the saints on the earth at the time of His coming] shall be caught up together with them [the dead in Christ] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (v17). This is the moment when *“the corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal body puts on immortality” 1Cor.15:53.*

Jesus is coming from heaven ONCE

There is only one coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to the earth: **He will descend!** Jesus is coming into the earth realm.

We are to meet Him in *“the air”*:

- **when** we are caught up to meet Him, it will be in the air
- **where** we are caught up to meet Him, will be in the air.
- **what** is the air? It is the atmosphere, that which surrounds the earth!

The Greek word used for *air* is ‘aer’ and means: air, that which surrounds the whole globe. We breathe the air. The word signifies the atmosphere and that is the only way that it is used in the New Testament. Where are we meeting Jesus? In the air!

Jesus is coming, not to take the church away but to be with His people, the church, in the earth. It is very difficult to comprehend what the earth will be like when Jesus returns, but one thing is for sure: we are not to impose our earthly concepts on that glorious future.

In the clouds

We are actually caught up *“in the clouds”*. What is meant by ‘the clouds’?

Hebrews 12:1 refers to the people of faith from the Old Testament who are in heaven with Jesus as *“so great a cloud of witnesses”*. We can assume that the New Testament saints are now part of that great cloud of witnesses also.

Maybe the ‘clouds of power’ that Jesus is coming on as prophesied in **Daniel** and by Jesus Himself in the Gospels are actually *“the ten thousands of His saints” (Jude v.14).*

In the Old Testament, God often came in a cloud, (**Ex.19:16-17; Ex.40:34-38; 1Kin.8:10-11**). The cloud signifies the very awesome glory and presence of God, even as it did on the Mount of Transfiguration (**Matt.17:2-5**). God manifested in the earth in the cloud and those He was meeting with, met God in the cloud!

There is no evidence in **1Thessalonians 4** and the cross references we have given, that Jesus is coming twice more to the earth, firstly to take a church away somewhere and then later to come to the earth to judge the ungodly.

And we shall always be with the Lord

The apostle then says *“And thus we shall always be with the Lord”* (1Thess.4:17). We will enter the cloud of His glory and everything will be different from that moment.

Whatever understanding we have of the coming of the Lord, the most important thing is to be ready to be caught up to meet Him in the air so that we can be always with the Lord, in His glory.

COMING IN JUDGMENT

The coming of the Lord is firstly manifest to the saints on the earth. The dead in Christ are coming with Jesus from heaven, sent by God, and their glorious bodies are going to be resurrected from the earth and we are going to be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Many teach that the church, made up of the saints who are alive at His coming and the dead in Christ who have come with Him, are taken away into heavenly places for a period of time. However such teaching does not fit into the clear Scriptural record.

The Scripture is clear: Jesus is **coming**; not coming and turning around in the air and going back to heaven! This is not taught in the Scriptures.

With His saints

We mentioned the prophecy of Enoch in **Jude 14** as referring to the dead in Christ accompanying Jesus from heaven. However when we look at this prophecy in the context of the passage, the Lord is coming with His saints *“to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”* **Jude 15**.

To execute judgement

The saints are coming with Jesus to execute judgment. They are not going to heaven for an extended holiday while the devil rules the earth through some dreaded anti-Christ figure.

The saints include the dead in Christ who have received their resurrected bodies and the saints who are alive on the earth, who rise to meet the Lord in the air also receiving their glorified bodies.

Jesus Christ is coming in judgment to the world. His true, believing, sanctified saints who have been glorified in Him and joined together with Him in the air, come with Him to rule and reign in the earth for ‘a thousand years’ [a thousand years is an unspecified period of time].

The judgement happens *“in that Day”* that Jesus comes *“to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among those who believe”* 2Thess.1:10.

When will the unbelieving and disobedient be judged?

“When He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among those who believe” 2Thess.1:10.

The coming of the Lord brings about two important things

1. the glorification of the saints
2. the judgment of the wicked.

When do these things happen?

- His coming in judgment is on the same Day as when He is glorified in His saints.
- He is glorified in His saints when they receive their glorified bodies
- that happens when *“we see Him as He is, when He is revealed, we shall be like Him” (1Jn.3:2);*
- when we *“shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1Thess.4:17).*

It is time to rethink our understanding of the coming of the Lord

In this four part series dealing with the reality of the rapture, we have sought to conclusively prove from the clear presentation of Scripture, without adding to or subtracting from, that the rapture is a man-made doctrine that entered into Christian thinking and preaching from the 1820's. This doctrine began with a private 'revelation' that did not come from the Scripture but came in a prophetic utterance. All prophecy must be judged and tested according to the Scripture (**1 Thess.5:20-21**).

The teaching of the rapture has superseded the all-important Biblical teaching of the resurrection of the dead and has weakened the church to be unable to stand against the anti-Christ tide that is currently sweeping the earth. Instead of strengthening the believers to stand and rebuke the anti-Christ spirit, the Christians are waiting to be secretly whisked away to heaven to avoid persecution and tribulation. This is an unreal hope and the church must be disciplined and taught the word of God in the same way that the first apostles taught us.

There will be false teachers

Peter warns us that *“no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” (2Pet.1:20)*. He goes on to warn us:

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.
[The rapture teaching is a destructive heresy and it denies the victory of Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection.]

And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgement has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber” 2 Peter 2:1-3

AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” Matthew 24:36-44. [Please read Luke 17:26-36].

IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

“The wickedness of man was great in the earth; ... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” Genesis 6:5.

“The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth” v.6a

He said, “I will destroy man ... from the face of the earth” v.7a

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” v.8

“And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth’” v.13

“And behold, I Myself am bringing flood waters on the earth to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life” v.17a

“But I will establish My covenant with you” v.18a

“Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did” v.22.

There was great wickedness, evil and violence

In the days of Noah there was great wickedness on the earth; men's hearts were devoted to evil; the earth was filled with violence. This was very disappointing and disturbing for God because He had made man originally in His own image and likeness and He had good plans in mind for all people. But the people of the earth had turned away from God and the vast majority of them were living totally for themselves, devoid of goodness and true godliness.

Paul prophesied such a time

Paul describes such a time as coming on the earth again. He said, *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than of lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” 2Tim.3:1-5.* Are we living in that time?!

God found one man

God purposed to judge the earth and all the wickedness in it. He found one man, Noah, who was walking in grace, believing in God and being willing to obey God. We know the story: only Noah's close family actually came to the same saving faith as Noah. God promised to make a covenant with Noah and save him from the judgement of the flood, preserving Noah and his family from destruction, because they were in covenant with God.

God preserved Noah

God preserved Noah and his family and a pair of every kind of bird and animal in the earth, so that they would inherit the earth. God repeated to Noah his creational mandate to Adam and Eve, ***“So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’”*** Gen.9:1. God's intention was to have a covenantal people in the earth who would be righteous, walking in His grace. The promise was to Noah and his descendants (v.9).

“Then the LORD said to Noah, ‘Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation’” Gen.7:1.
“It came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth” v10
“And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds ..., and every man” v.21
“Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive” v.23b
“Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing and all the animals that were with him in the ark” Gen.8:1.

THE COMING OF JESUS

Jesus' coming: a time of judgement

Jesus said that the conditions that would exist at the time of His coming would be ***“as in the days of Noah”***. This suggests that the vast majority of the human race will not be inclined toward God, to seek His ways and live according to His plan. It also clearly points to a time of terrible judgement coming upon the earth which will destroy the wicked, evil thinking and violent inhabitants of the earth. ***“The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein”*** Ps.24:1.

The wicked will be destroyed

God did not create the earth for the wicked; nor did he create hell for human beings. He created hell for the devil and for the fallen angels, but those who insist on opposing the LORD and mistreating His people, will face judgement in ***“the everlasting fire”*** (Matt.25:41).

Paul confirms this in **2 Thessalonians 1:7b-10a**, ***“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes.”***

Daily life continues until ...

Jesus said that we do not know the hour, but He gave us instruction so that we can understand what it will be like. Life was going on as normal in the days of Noah, until the day that Noah entered the ark. The flood came and took them all away. If the days of the coming of the Son of Man are like the days of Noah, then there is the expectation of a world-wide judgement that finally separates the wicked from the righteous.

Who was taken away?

This is a very important question. We know clearly from the book of **Genesis** that the wicked were taken away by the flood. The flood was catastrophic in proportion, covering the whole earth, submerging even the highest mountains. The flood removed the wicked from the earth – they were no more!

What took them away?

They were taken away by the flood. The flood was the judgement of God on the wickedness that was in the earth because of mankind's behaviour, thoughts and actions. The wicked in the earth were taken away by judgement. They were not left in the earth and they certainly were not taken into heaven. [please read **1 Pet.3:18-20**]

Who was left in the days of Noah?

Only Noah and his family were left in the earth. Notice **they were left in the earth!** They survived the judgement! In reality they were preserved by the grace of God in the ark of salvation provided by God.

They were not taken out of, or away from the earth. They were preserved in the earth and the earth was their inheritance, given to them by God after the judgement had cleansed the earth of all wickedness.

The earth was not literally destroyed

God said that He would ***“destroy them [the wicked] with the earth”*** **Gen.6:13**. But God did not literally destroy the earth. God will never destroy the earth, because it is His creation. [See **Eccle.1:4, Ps.104:5, Ps.119:90**]

When God finished creating the earth and all that is in the earth, He said ***“indeed it was very good”*** (**Gen.1:31**). It is not the created earth that offends God but it is the behaviour of human beings who not only destroy themselves and others, but also are destroying the earth. The twenty-four elders said that God ***“should destroy those who destroy the earth”*** (**Rev.11:18**).

The righteous will inherit the earth

The earth is not going to be handed over to wickedness, but rather the righteous will inherit the earth. ***“The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not inhabit the earth”*** **Prov.10:30**.

For whatever reasons, many believers do not appreciate the earth in God's creational purposes and we have been taught that we are saved to go to heaven. Such teaching is not actually Scriptural. We are saved to be made whole and to be restored into the image and likeness of God. We are saved into His kingdom, ***“The kingdom of the Son of His love”*** (**Col.1:13**).

Creation will be restored

We are saved to bring restoration to the earth: ***“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ... The creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”*** **Rom.8:19:21**. That liberty is still not manifest in the lives of God's children in the earth, but this Scripture is clear: the children of God will enjoy a glorious liberty in the earth; so much so, that all of creation will be brought into that liberty and God's glory will permeate everything.

TWO WILL BE IN THE FIELD

In the context of telling us that His coming would be as in the days of Noah, Jesus then spoke of people carrying on life as normal: some working in the field; some grinding at the mill; some asleep at night. He then says in each scenario that ***“one will be taken and the other left”*** [read these Scriptures carefully: **Matt.24:40-41**; **Lu.17:34-36**].

Which one will be taken?

Remember Jesus said, ***“as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man”*** (**Lu.17:26**). Who was taken in the days of Noah? The wicked were taken by the flood: ***“The flood came and destroyed them”*** on the day that Noah entered the ark (**Lu.17:27**). The judgement takes away the wicked. The wicked are taken away by judgement: they are destroyed!

Jesus also said, ***“likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all”*** **Lu.17:28-29**. In that terrible judgement, Lot and his daughters were saved and preserved in the earth; the wicked inhabitants of Sodom were taken away by the judgement; they were destroyed.

Which one will be left?

Who was left in the days of Noah? Only Noah and his family were left! Only the righteous were preserved in the earth in the time of judgement. This was the same in the days of Lot.

Who will be left in the days of the Son of Man, in that time of terrible judgement, ***“when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (**2Thess.1:7b-8**). The wicked will be destroyed, but the righteous will be given ***“rest”*** (**v.7a**) ***“in that Day when He comes”*** (**v.10**).

The saints will be in the earth

The saints who are in the earth when Jesus comes, are to be glorified in Him (**2Thess.1:10**); the wicked will be destroyed by His coming. They will be consumed ***“with the breath of His mouth”*** and destroyed ***“with the brightness of His coming”*** (**2Thess.2:8**). This verse is referring specifically to the ‘lawless one’, but also can refer to the destruction of the wicked and all lawless ones [read carefully **Matt.13:41-42** to see that all lawlessness will be removed from the earth].

COMMON RAPTURE TEACHING

Many have been taught that the **‘one taken’** in the above verses is raptured to heaven and that the wicked are left in control of the earth. That is not what happened in the days of Noah and that is not what happened in the days of Lot. There is no Scriptural reason or evidence to read ‘rapture’ in these verses when they are Jesus’ own words concerning His coming.

I realise that this exposition, which is really quite straightforward, is in contradiction to popular teaching, not only in pulpits but also in Bible Colleges. I appeal to you to learn to read the Scripture in context. Many Scriptures do not need interpretation; they simply need to be read in context openly and honestly. If people will do this, the present and the future will become assured to us by faith in the word of God, and we will inherit the fullness of God’s glory in the earth.

“But truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD” **Num.14:21**

THE VICTORIOUS GOSPEL

By Nicholas Jackson

When the article, 'As in the Days of Noah', was sent out as a newsletter in September 2010, there came a reply with challenging questions over the teaching. The following response was then sent out as our newsletter in October, 2010. We understand that this teaching does go against a trend of modern day church teaching that seeks to paint a view of eschatology [end time events] centred on an event titled the "rapture". This has taught the church to look for a way of escape rather than to stand in the victory of Messiah Jesus in the earth.

The unfolding Revelation of God's Word

God continues to unfold the revelation of His Word to us as we walk with Him and with each other. It is time for all of us who are members of the Body of Christ to humble down and allow the word of God to speak to us, not assuming we know what it says before we read it.

God will reveal all things

Paul writes to the Philippians, and to us, that we are to have a mind to *"press towards the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you"* (Phil.3:14-15). God wants us all to walk together in a **mature mind**, that is, in an attitude of being willing to give up everything for the sake of Jesus and the gospel. When we do, even where we do not see things the same way, we can trust that **God will reveal** areas of uncertainty to us.

Let us not go beyond what is written

It is so important to enter into the *"spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him [Jesus Christ]"* (Eph.1:17). Otherwise we become *"wise in our own opinion"* (Rom.11:25) and become *"puffed up on behalf of one against the other"* (1Cor.4:6c). The apostle Paul warns us to *"not think beyond what is written"* (1Cor.4:6b).

Let us commit ourselves to the unfolding revelation of God's word, admitting that we do not have the full knowledge and understanding, but we do have the Scriptures *"which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ"* (2Tim.3:15b).

GOD IS RESTORING TO US THE VICTORIOUS GOSPEL!

Since the introduction of the rapture teaching in the early 1800's, there has been a decline, in the church, of believing in the victory of the gospel and the messiahship of Jesus. Jesus is already King. He has already been exalted to the throne of God and is ruling and reigning in heaven and earth now (Acts 2:33-36; Matt.28:18).

Many have been looking for a way out of the world situation which they see as only getting worse in terms of the apostasy of the church, anti-Christ government in the nations and lawlessness throughout the generations. They are waiting for a rapture to take them to heaven while leaving the world to be overrun by the devil.

Preaching and teaching Jesus as the Christ

The early apostles came preaching a very simple but profound gospel: *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the*

Christ” (Acts5:42). The apostle Paul’s last years were spent *“preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence” (Acts28:31).*

The apostle Paul suffered many things for this gospel but was able to declare, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom.8:35, 37).*

He must reign

To preach Jesus as the Christ is to preach that Jesus is King. To preach the kingdom of God is to declare God’s rulership in the earth through the Messiah, that *“He must reign till all His enemies are made a footstool for His feet” (1Cor.15:25).* Through preaching the *“manifold wisdom of God to principalities and powers” (Eph.3:10),* all His enemies will bow before Him!

We may suffer for preaching this, but we have a promise that it is *“a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven” (2Thess.1:6-7).* Even Nebuchadnezzar had to learn through serious anguish of soul that *“Heaven rules!” (Dan.4:26b).* We are not in a losing battle: our King has won and we are not to rest until *“He makes Jerusalem [a picture of the Bride Church] a praise in the earth” (Is.62:7).*

OUR INHERITANCE - HEAVEN OR EARTH?

The testimony of Scripture is that God preserves and safeguards the righteous in His judgement of the wicked. He preserved Noah in the earth while the wicked were judged. As much as some people may want to argue that Noah was “taken up” above the flood, and that is pointing to us going to a heavenly location in the time of judgement, the fact remains that Noah remained in the earthly sphere. God did not take him out of the destruction but kept him safe in the midst of it.

It is also interesting that when Jesus comes, we will meet Him in the air, that is, in the earthly realm (1Thess.4:17).

It is the wicked who will be destroyed

When Jesus comes, it is written that *“These [ungodly and disobedient people] shall be punished with everlasting destruction...when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints” (2Thess.1:9-10a).* Notice that two things happen at the same time and no one goes anywhere. The destruction of the wicked happens at the same time the saints are glorified and the only person who has ventured from one place to another is the Lord Jesus Himself as He is *“revealed from heaven”* into the earthly realm. 1Thessalonians 4:16 says, *“for the Lord Himself will descend from heaven.”*

Will the earth literally be destroyed?

God said in Noah’s day *“I will destroy them [the wicked] with the earth” (Gen.6:13b);* the earth was not literally destroyed as such.

Peter says, *“the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water” (2Pet.3:6).*

It was the wickedness in the earth and the world system of evil that was destroyed: its way of life perished.

As In the Days Of Noah

Noah, in a sense, inherited a new earth – a place where the wickedness had been cleansed and where Noah, who was ***“righteous before Me [God] in this generation”*** (Gen.7:1), could dwell in peace.

Likewise Peter says that ***“we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”*** (2Peter3:13). Notice the new heavens and new earth is characterised as a dwelling place of righteousness, that is, where people walk by faith in Jesus Christ receiving His grace.

Jesus said that ***“the meek shall inherit the earth”*** (Matt.5:5) and He also taught us to pray ***“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*** (Matt.6:10).

God’s plan is for the earth to be inherited by humble people who will receive His kingdom rulership and pray to see the reality of Heaven’s life here on the earth.

The kingdom of heaven is revealed in the earth

The parable of the wheat and the tares in **Matthew 13** is a parable concerning the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus interprets the parable He says that the ***“field is the world”*** (Matt.13:38). Where does Jesus say the kingdom of heaven is? It is in the world! The kingdom of heaven is to be found in the earth and we are born again to enter it (John3:5-6).

The sons are planted in the world

He plants the sons of the kingdom in the world and they grow up together with the tares which are the sons of the devil. When both are in maturity, then comes harvest time when ***“The Son of Man will send out His angels [messengers], and they will gather out of His kingdom [which is in the world] all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire”*** (Matt.13:41-42a).

“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt.13:43). The kingdom of heaven is revealed in the world with no more wickedness; the fire has burnt it all up (2Pet.3:10-12).

THE ELEMENTS WILL MELT WITH FERVENT HEAT

It is interesting to note that the word used for ‘elements’ in **2 Peter 3:10 & 12** is the same Greek word used in **Colossians 2:8**, and translated ***“basic principles”***; in **Colossians 2:20**, it is again ***“basic principles”***. In **Galatians 4:3**, the NKJV translates the word as ‘elements’: ***“in bondage to the elements of the world”***.

The same word is used in **Galatians 4:9** ***“how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements”, to which you desire to be in bondage”***. It is also used in **Hebrews 5:12** in a positive context and translated as **principles**, ***“the first principles of the oracles of God”***.

Elements translates the Greek word *“stoicheion”* and is found in Strong’s Concordance Greek #4747. This word means: something orderly in arrangement. It literally means: ‘constituent’ and figuratively ‘a proposition’. It can be used positively or negatively, and in the Bible it is mostly used in the negative context of the rudimentary principles of this world that we are to be delivered from by the grace of the gospel. We are to live by the principles of the oracles of God.

As In the Days Of Noah

In these contexts, the word is actually used to describe basic teachings of the world system. They are worldly doctrines, false teachings and doctrines of demons that bring bondage rather than the freedom, which is found in the truth of God's word (**John8:32**).

The word is like fire

God said through Jeremiah, *"Is not My word like a fire"* (**Jer.23:29**). It is the fire of God's word that burns up the weak and beggarly elements, the false doctrines of the world, so that there is only righteousness left: a new heavens and a new earth.

Jesus said, *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"* (**Lu.12:49**). He had just been talking about judging the wicked servant who abused his authority (**Lu.12:42-48**) and was about to begin to share how He did not come to bring peace, but a sword that would even divide natural families (**v.51-53**). He came to bring judgement! The fire of His word is what He sends on the earth!

Establishing the kingdom; the mystery revealed

God is at work to establish His kingdom in the earth. Daniel said that it will be as a *"stone that ... became a great mountain and filled the whole earth"* (**Dan.2:35**). He also said that this kingdom will *"break in pieces and consume"* all other kingdoms (**Dan.2:44**). This kingdom however will *"never be destroyed"* [see **Revelation 11:15**].

The gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached, was a gospel that reveals the glory and power of Jesus the Messiah, the King, who is the *"Ruler of the kings of the earth"* (**Rev.1:5**).

It is a gospel that will reign victorious in every generation until His glory is revealed in all the earth – the glory which is seen in the face of Jesus Christ (**2Cor.4:6**) as He *"manifests His word through preaching"* (**Tit.1:3**).

The mystery is that in Christ, God is bringing all things in heaven and on earth together in Him (**Eph1:10**).

Heaven will be seen to rule in the earth!

WHO WAS TAKEN AWAY?

Some people seem quite sure that in **Matthew24:39** Jesus was talking of Noah and his family being taken away in the flood. Please re-read that passage carefully and honestly.

In **verse 39** it says that **they** *"did not know until the flood came and took them all away"*. Noah and his family knew the flood was coming; that is why Noah built the ark!

It is true that Jesus said that the Son of Man will come at an hour that we do not expect. However, Paul says in **1Thessalonians 5:2-5**, *"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them ... and they shall not escape. But you brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of the Light and sons of the Day. We are not of the night or of darkness."*

Paul is saying that if we are in the light, we will be ready for the Day and it will not overtake us, or be sudden and unexpected.

The wicked on the earth in Noah's day **did not know until the flood came and took them all away**. Noah knew perfectly well what was happening – he had prepared for it for quite some time. He was a son of the Day!

KEY WORDS IN MATTHEW 24:39-41

Matthew 24:39 “*the flood came and took them all away*”

Took SC# 142 Gr. *airo*, primitive verb, *to lift*;
by implication, *to take away* or *take up*.
Figuratively it can mean *to raise the voice*; also *to sail away*;
in the Hebrew context, it means *to expiate sin*.

Translated in KJV:- take up [32x], take away [25x], take [25x], away with [5x], lift up [4x], bear [3x], and 8 others.

Matthew 24:40 “*two in the field, one will be taken*”

Taken SC# 3880 Gr. *paralambano*
From # 3844 *para*, near, from beside, in vicinity of.
2982 *lambano*, to take [in very many applications],
translated: receive [133x], taken [106x].
3880 meaning: *to receive near*, ie., *to associate with oneself*; *to assume an office*; (figuratively) *to learn*.
Translated in KJV:- take [30x], receive [15x], take unto [2x], take up [2x], take away [1x].

“Vines Expository Dictionary” gives similar meanings: *to receive* or *to take to oneself* or *with oneself*.

Vines’ comment on **Matthew 24:40** – “*Of the removal of persons from the earth in judgement, when the Son of Man is revealed*”.

Vines’ comment on **Luke 17:34-35** and the same word ‘taken’ - “*the means of removal of corruption*”.

This word *taken* is used in **Matthew 27:27** when Christ is taken by the soldiers for scourging; and in **John 19:16**, Christ is taken to crucifixion.

Matthew 24:40-41 “*one will be taken, and the other left*”

Left SC# 863 Gr. *aphiemi*, to send forth, in various applications [including follow]
Translated in KJV: leave [52x], forgive [47x], suffer [14x], let [8x], forsake [6x], let alone [6x], and 13 others.
Vines Expository Dictionary, gives the meaning as: *to send away* or *to send forth*.

