

**Ready
for the
Rapture**

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Ready for the Rapture

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All scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Other Abbreviations Used
in This Publication:

WEB = World English Bible
(www.ebible.org/web)

Gk. = Greek text

Hb. = Hebrew text

AT = The author's translation
from the Greek text

Jesus is Coming!

Jesus is Coming!

“Behold, I come quickly” (Rev. 22:7).

These words were uttered by the Lord Jesus to the aged apostle John: nearly 2,000 years ago.

However, if they were true then, they are true now. And they are nearer fulfillment today than they were when John first heard them from the lips of the Master on the lonely isle of Patmos.

Jesus is coming.

Someone has said there are about 300 hundred references to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Another has stated it is impossible to read in the New Testament for more than

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10 minutes without coming across a reference to Christ's return.

Jesus is coming: of that there can be no doubt. The question is when?

Every honest believer has a desire to know the specifics regarding the return of Jesus Christ.

Every Spirit-filled believer has a zeal to see Him face to face.

Can we know—conclusively—when Jesus will return?

Dangerous Date-setting

In September of 1975, I was attending graduate school, studying for the ministry. I had only been saved about three years, Spirit-filled for two. There was a very popular book available in all of the Christian bookstores that purported to correlate the Coming of Christ (the Rapture) with the yearly feasts of the nation of Israel.

According to this particular scholar, the Rapture would occur during that month. I remember that many of us were afraid to go to sleep when the final

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day came. What would it feel like to receive a glorified body? Would it hurt?

As God's grace would have it, the night passed and Jesus didn't return. Disappointment abounded within the ranks of evangelical (Bible-believing) Christendom. Many prophecy buffs were scratching their heads in dismay.

A Double-dip

It seems some erroneous practices die slow deaths; if they die at all, they are sometimes resurrected by well-meaning, though ill informed zealots.

In 1988, another book hit the stores declaring Christ would return that year.

When the Master failed to arrive according to the book's specifications, there was, again, a lot of disappointment and confusion within the ranks of born-again members of Christ's Body.

A few weeks after the fiasco, the brother's books were selling in the same stores for less than half the original price.

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Courageous Koreans

A number of years ago dedicated date-setting again resurfaced, this time among a group of Korean believers. Newspaper advertisements, tracts and an intensive, aggressive, personal evangelism campaign was implemented. A warning was sounded: "Jesus is coming! Repent! The Rapture will occur on October 28th."

It didn't happen.

Jesus didn't return.

While we commend the believers' zeal, we must conclude it was not according to knowledge.

The Truth

What shall we say to these experiential facts which do not square with the various scholars' interpretations?

Are there sure and certain signs of the times?

Is there some clear teaching in the Bible which will deter groups of

Jesus is Coming!

Christians from donning white robes and waiting on hills and housetops for the Master's return?

Jesus said the Truth would set us free. The same Truth which sets us free from sin, sickness and Satan can also liberate us from false notions regarding the Second Coming of Christ.

It is my desire in this little book to examine the biblical truth relative to the Return of Christ and our gathering together unto Him, especially regarding how we may truly be, "ready for the Rapture."

If this book clears away spiritual confusion concerning this topic, furnishes the believer with a firm foundation regarding spiritual signposts pointing to the Second Coming, including clear, scriptural advice in terms of exactly how to prepare for this glorious event, the author will have achieved his goal.

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Signs of the Times

Signs of the Times

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1).

There can be little doubt to the thinking individual that we are living in trying or difficult times. It seems nothing is stable or secure. It matters not in which direction one looks: political, social, national, international, economic or religious, chaos reigns and peace eludes us. Change is the order of the day. Although living is uncomfortable in the midst of such hard times the believer need not be unprepared.

Jesus warned of such a time as this.

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“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John. 16:33).

Paul spoke of the generation in which we live.

“We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:23).

In situations such as the order of the day in which we live, we must remember it is not as important what happens to us as much as what happens in us. Our spiritual attitude toward conflict is all-important. It, alone, determines whether we overcome or are overcome in life's fight.

Prophetic Words

Our Lord gave us numerous clear warning signs of His soon return in the gospels. By carefully reading Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, one can gather a great deal of information concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The disciples requested sure and certain information concerning the end

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times from Jesus in the gospel accounts. Matthew's gospel has the apostles questioning the Master about the destruction of the temple, the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age (Mt. 24:3).

Jesus prophesied specifically concerning false Christs, wars and rumors of wars and famines, pestilences and earthquakes (Mt. 24:4ff.).

In addition, He spoke of a time of persecution of believers prior to His return (Mt. 24:9ff.).

In spite of this, the Master assured them that His gospel would first be preached in all the world for a witness among all the peoples of the earth, and then would the end of the age come (Mt. 24:14). In the light of this, it is easy to understand the spiritual climate as we approach the end of the age. Will it be ruin or revival? The answer is both!

As I said in my book, **You Must Be Drunk!**, as the world gets darker and darker, the Church has the unprecedented opportunity of growing

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brighter and brighter! HalleluYah!

Following this time of persecution and preaching, the Holy Place of the temple would be defiled precipitating a time of trouble never before seen on earth; nor would it ever be repeated (Mt. 24:19ff.). Again, false apostles and messiahs would proliferate during this period (Mt. 24:25ff.).

According to Jesus, it is after these events that cataclysmic events in the heavens will take place, followed by the sign of the Son of Man and His personal appearance in clouds of glory (Mt. 24:29ff.).

It is at this time that the Lord will send forth His angels with a trumpet blast to gather together His people from all over the face of the earth (Mt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16ff.).

A Visible Event

It is not our purpose to discuss these prophetic points in detail. Suffice it to say that this scenario describes a publicly heralded event. Indeed, our

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Lord likens His Coming to *“lightning coming out from the east and shining to the west”* (Mt. 24:27): hardly a “secretive” matter!

Nor is His Return to take us unawares.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘take heed that no man deceive you’” (Mt. 24:4).

The Master intends on arriving *“with power and great glory”* (Mt. 24:30).

Does it sound to you as though our Lord intended us to be in doubt concerning the *“signs of the times?”*

“Therefore become ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh” (Mt. 24:44, Gk.).

Jesus desires that we be prepared.

He has given us clear and concise guidelines for our examination as we approach the time of the end. It is not His desire that we be taken by surprise.

Unfortunately, there are those who take issue with the clear teaching of the Master. Some would ascribe His Olivet discourse warnings to the unsaved Jews

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living at the time of the end.

Is it likely that unbelieving Jewish persons—some of whom even doubt the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth—should take seriously His warnings concerning the “signs of the times?”

Still others contend that to believe certain events must transpire before Christ’s Return—even though prophesied by Christ—is to be sidetracked from “looking for His appearing.”

This misses the mark entirely.

As one writer has put it: if we seek directions to town and are told to look for the bakery, the drugstore and, finally, the meat market on our way (the businesses serving as reference points), town is still our destination!

These signs are not hindrances, but helps!

Paul’s Prophecies

The apostle Paul gives the two most important “signs of the times” in his letter to the Thessalonian church. He is

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in perfect agreement with the Lord Jesus. May the Lord, Himself, enable us to examine the apostle's inspired words without the prejudice of man's ideas.

“Now we are beseeching you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him” (2 Thess. 2:1).

Notice, carefully, Paul's subject matter: it is the key to understanding what follows. It is a misunderstanding of these critical verses which has done much to confuse the understanding of events preceding our Lord's Return.

He is writing regarding Christ's Return and the Rapture (our “gathering together unto Him”).

Rather than frighten or confuse, he desires to comfort and encourage.

“That ye be not soon shaken in the mind, or be being troubled” (2 Thess. 2:2, Gk.).

Apparently, some of our modern spiritual problems are not “modern” at all. The sound teaching of the Bible can yet dispel our fears and plant our feet on

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firm, prophetic ground.

“Neither by spirit, nor through teaching, nor through letter as though from us, as that the day of the Christ hath come” (2 Thess. 2:2, Gk.).

Persecution or Wrath?

Perhaps it will be helpful at this stage in our examination of this important portion of scripture to address another common teaching.

According to one very popular view, Paul's words above were to reassure the Thessalonian believers that they had not “missed the Rapture,” and were not suffering by their having done so.

The reasoning behind this interpretation hinges on a variant Greek text of the verse quoted above which reads, “*as that the day of the Lord has come,*” rather than, “*the day of Christ.*”

The idea is that since these saints were being severely persecuted (cp., 2 Thess. 1:4), they mistakenly believed that they were in the midst of the “Day of the Lord” which the Old Testament

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also calls the “Time of Jacob's trouble,” having missed out on “God's escape plan,” the Rapture.

According to this view, the “apostasy” substantiates a “pre-tribulation Rapture” by having it refer, not to the defection from the faith by “unbelieving believers,” but, rather, to the “departure” of the Church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, before the Antichrist is revealed.

The context mitigates against this interpretation.

Paul's subject here is not a future time of God's wrath, but, rather, the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, our gathering together unto Him and His defeat of the Antichrist and his armies at His glorious Second Advent.

This view is also unlikely due to the teaching of scripture for several reasons.

In the first place, even if we accept the variant reading of “day of the Lord,” rather than “day of Christ,” this phrase by no means inevitably refers only to the time of difficulty for Israel described in

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the Old Testament.

The very same Apostle, Paul, who penned these words, also wrote to the Corinthian church regarding the excommunication of a “make-believer” within their ranks who was living in gross sexual sin with his stepmother.

Paul advised excommunication of this sinner that though his flesh be destroyed, his spirit might be saved, “*in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Cor. 5:5).

More to the point of this book, Paul uses the phrase, “day of the Lord” to refer to our Lord's Second Coming in 1 Thess. 5:2: “*For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night.*”

This verse follows the apostle's clear and concise teaching regarding Christ's Second Coming, the resurrection of the righteous dead and Rapture of the living saints. He says nothing about the tribulation period in that first letter.

Instead, he speaks of that “day” overtaking the unsaved like “a thief in the night” and bringing upon them,

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“sudden destruction,” v. 3. However, that “day” will not overtake the saints, v. 5.

It is nearly identical information to what he shares in his second letter:

“We are bound to always give thanks to God for you, brothers, even as it is appropriate, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each and every one of you towards one another abounds; so that we ourselves boast about you in the assemblies of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you endure. This is an obvious sign of the righteous judgment of God, to the end that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you also suffer. Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay affliction to those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted with us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, giving vengeance to those who don’t know God, and to those who don’t obey the Good

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News of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:3-8, WEB).

These verses are abundantly clear that the same event—the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—will bring wrath to His enemies and rest to His friends.

Another reason this view does not adequately explain the text is that the Old Testament “Day of the Lord” is not a time of persecution of the righteous, but, rather, a pouring out of God's wrath upon His unbelieving people, Israel, as well as sinning Gentiles.

Our Lord has made it crystal clear that His people will never undergo His wrath:

“For God didn’t appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9).

For these reasons, this view is untenable in the light of the clear teaching of both the Old and New Testaments.

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Forewarned = Forearmed

Our blessed Lord counseled us the same, warning of those who would declare, “*I am the Christ;*” “*‘Lo, here is the Christ,’ or ‘there;’ believe it not*” (Mt. 24:5, 23).

Such declarations are being made continually—years ago in full page newspaper ads—today through “New Age” teaching, preaching and “spiritual channeling,” etc.

What is Paul’s advice?

“*Do not let any one deceive you by any means*” (2 Thess. 2:3, Gk.).

Good advice, wouldn’t you say?

The question is, “What is our biblical defense against those who counsel us, “Jesus has already come,” or “He is here or there?”

According to the inspired apostle, our faith must rest, not in our experiences, nor upon the teaching of man, but upon two divinely revealed facts of scripture.

“*For that day shall not come, except*

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there come the apostasy first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of the destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3, Gk.).

It is not our desire to labor the point, but remember Paul’s subject: the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture (our gathering together unto Him).

Are these blessed events to happen “at any moment?”

Or are there clear and certain warning signs that must take place first?

Two Signs

Although there are many “signs of the times” as given by Jesus, for our purposes, we will examine in detail only these two reiterated by Paul.

First, there will come not “a” falling away, but “the” apostasy. This refers to a “mass exodus” from the faith (the established body of orthodox Christian doctrine).

We are living in the midst of this!

Bibles are being changed to render God “male and female.”

The “higher ups” in a mainline

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Protestant denomination have written books publicly stating “Jesus Christ is not God.” When questioned regarding the controversial nature of the subject matter, their response was: “Our theologians have believed this way for years; it’s time to let the truth filter down to the laymen.”

Make-believers

This is not to say that all believers who are involved in such conduct are personally denying their faith in Christ. It is doubtful if they ever enjoyed such a relationship in the first place. No, they are not Buddhists, Hindus or Muslims in name. They are “Christians” in name; but not necessarily in truth. Jesus prophesied of these (Mt. 7:21ff.). Not all that glitters is gold; we don’t keep the “Lamb’s Book of Life.”

The Master spoke of this situation.

“For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible, (and it's not) they shall deceive

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even the elect” (Mt. 24:2, AT).

True believer, be encouraged.

As my translation of the verse above states, real saints will not be finally and fully deceived. Our Lord's Greek in this verse is, grammatically, what is known as a “condition of the second class,” meaning a “contrary to fact” statement.

Praise God! The saints shall persevere!

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because the lawlessness shall abound, the love of the many shall wax cold” (Mt. 24:11-12, Gk.).

Paul, too, reiterated this truth.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons” (2 Tim. 4:1, Gk.).

Today, whole segments of Christendom are leaving the faith for humanist and “New Age” theologies. It is here.

This can be a cause of gloom or

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gladness, depending upon our attitude toward it.

Looking at the situation from one perspective it is tragic to see deception and wickedness abounding. However, from another viewpoint this situation triumphantly declares: Jesus is Coming! The Bible is true! Prophecy is trustworthy!

Second Sign

We will now approach one of the more controversial aspects of this study: the second of Paul's signs which must precede the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture.

According to Paul's inspired teaching, not only must there be a mass falling away from the faith prior to Christ's Return, but the "man of the sin" must be revealed (manifested).

This individual is commonly known as the "Antichrist." This Greek title carries with it two ideas: a false messiah, and one who opposes the true Messiah.

The Antichrist will be both.

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What are his characteristics?

“Who is constantly opposing and constantly exalting himself above all that is being called Divine, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the holy of holies of the (one, true) God, showing himself that he is divine” (2 Thess. 2:4, Gk.).

We can derive great benefit from this verse, if we take it literally.

Many years ago I came across this piece of advice regarding biblical interpretation:

“If the literal sense makes good sense, seek no other sense, lest it become nonsense.”

The Antichrist will sternly oppose the true Christ and real spirituality and will be fiercely proud and self-exalting, elevating himself above any and every object or person of worship known to man. He will climax his self-deification by *“sitting in the temple (ναος [‘naos’], Gk.) of the (one, true) God; showing himself that he is divine” (2 Thess. 2:4, Gk.).*

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You will recall there are two aspects to the Jewish temple (this letter was written while the temple remained standing in Jerusalem): the holy place (ιερον [‘ieron’], Gk.), and the holy of holies (ναος [‘naos’], Gk.).

While in Greece preaching, advertisements of my meetings in Crete heralded me as an “Ieroapostolos,” i.e., “holy messenger.” This is from the word for the “holy place” where the incense altar, lamp stand and table of showbread were kept.

However, the Antichrist will not stop there, but he will enter the “holy of holies” (naos, Gk.) where the ark was, kept secluded from view by the veil. It was here that the Personal Presence of Yahweh (Shekinah, Hb.) came down upon the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement after the blood of the sacrifices had been applied.

Thus, the Antichrist will identify himself with the God of Creation.

This blasphemous concept seemed more impossible before the advent of the

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“New Age” movement where it is common for an adherent to declare “I am God.”

Who’s Who?

We now want to deal with some very difficult verses of scripture. However, they are worth wrestling with, for they contain the key to understanding the apostle’s argument and warning.

“Remember ye not, that, while I was yet with you, I told you these things” (2 Thess. 2:5)?

Here, Paul alludes to some “in-person” instruction he had given his converts previously.

The difficulty arises is ascertaining to whom Paul refers in the next few verses: Christ or Antichrist?

Perhaps another helpful hint regarding proper biblical interpretation will help us a bit.

“Context is everything.”

That is, we must keep in mind what the writer’s subject matter is when determining the meaning of a difficult

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passage.

Whose Coming and Revelation was the apostle discussing in chapter one of his letter?

The Lord Jesus Christ's.

"When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" (2 Thess. 1:7).

Our Lord's Coming is here referred to as His being revealed (apokaleepsee, Gk.).

As Paul continues his discussion in chapter two, to Whose Coming does he refer?

The Lord Jesus Christ's.

"Now we are beseeching you, brethren, by the coming ('parousia,' Gk.) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him" (2 Thess. 2:1, Gk.).

Notice as you compare these two verses that this same event is called both a "coming" and a "revealing" (outward manifestation).

It is also noteworthy that Paul uses the verb form of the word, "synagogue," in reference to our "gathering together."

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It is the same verb our Lord used in describing the same event in Matthew's gospel, chapter 24, verse 31.

Another fascinating fact about this verse is its construction in the original Greek language in which it was penned.

There is a rule in Greek grammar named after the minister who first discovered it, called Granville Sharp's rule.

Briefly, it states this:

When the copulative “and” (kai, Gk.) connects two nouns of the same case (ie., nominative, genitive, accusative, dative, etc.), either substantive, or adjective or participle, and if the definite article, “the,” (“o,” etc. Gk.) in any of its cases, precedes the first noun, but not the second one, the latter refers to the same person or noun expressed by the first noun or participle.

In this verse quoted above, the noun “the coming” (of the Lord) is in the genitive case and is preceded by the definite article, “the” (tees, Gk.). The copulative “and” (kai, Gk.) follows and

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connects it with the noun, “gathering together,” also in the genitive case.

According to this law of Greek grammar, these two events are one and the same. The Coming (parousia) of the Lord is equivalent to the Rapture (our “gathering together”). In other words, they occur at the same time.

“Now I am requesting you, brethren, with regard to the coming and personal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, even our being assembled together with Him” (2 Thess. 2:1, Wuest).

This translation by Professor Wuest, of Moody Bible Institute, captures the force of the original text. It is especially noteworthy since the translator believed in a “pre-tribulation” Rapture!

This rule of grammar and subsequent rendering becomes especially important, then, when Paul tells us in 2 Thess. 2:9:

“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the Spirit of His mouth and will abolish by means of the appearing (epifanea) of His coming (parousia).”

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As clear as any language, Greek or English, can convey thought, the Rapture, or our “gathering together” unto Jesus will take place at the same time as His destruction of the Antichrist with His glorious appearing!

Again, Whose Coming or Revealing are these two signs to precede?

The Lord Jesus Christ’s.

Read carefully again 2 Thess. 2:2-3.

The confusion in understanding these very important verses comes from wrongly assuming that Paul has switched subjects mid-stream.

Why would he suddenly stray from his concern that these Thessalonian believers be encouraged that their time of persecution would not go unanswered nor unattended by their God, and then launch unexpectedly into great detail about the Antichrist!

Paul’s concern—in both of his letters to this church—has to do, primarily, with the Second Coming of Christ and our conduct and character as believers in the light of it.

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Christ Revealed

Keeping this information in mind, we can now understand what Paul is going to say.

“And now ye know the thing withholding (the revelation of the Antichrist) that He (the Lord Jesus Christ) might be revealed in His own season” (2 Thess. 2:6, AT).

The phrase, “the thing withholding,” in my translation quoted above is neuter in gender and singular in number in the original text.

While there are two signs preceding the Second Coming of the Lord, Paul now narrows this down to one.

But which one?

Is he speaking of the apostasy from the faith or the revelation of the Antichrist?

Thank God for our Greek New Testament.

The word “apostasy” is a feminine noun.

The phrase “the thing withholding”

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is neuter in gender.

The word, “mystery” is neuter, agreeing, grammatically, with the phrase, “the thing withholding.”

Thus, Paul has now narrowed his discussion to the second item: the “mystery of lawlessness.”

Isn't it amazing how the Bible interprets itself?

What is preventing (withholding) the Coming or Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ?

These two “signs”: the falling away of “make-believers” from the historic Christian faith and the revelation of the Antichrist.

This is Paul's subject matter; this is why he says “now, (since I've just given you the reasons), you know what is delaying our Lord's Return or Revelation.”

“For the mystery of the lawlessness is already effectually working” (2 Thess. 2:7).

The Antichrist is called the “son of the perdition (destruction).” Here, he is

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referred to as “the mystery.”

Paul is reminding us that his formal “revelation” is on the way.

“Only he, the one constantly withholding, will, until he become out of the midst” (2 Thess. 2:7, Gk.).

Here, Paul switches from referring to the Antichrist as “it” (ie., the mystery of lawlessness) to the personal pronoun, “he.”

Antichrist Revealed

The apostle has now changed his subject matter, briefly, to the revelation of the Antichrist. He has said that the mystery of iniquity (sin, lawlessness) is already “effectually working.” That is, the man of sin is on the way, apparently operating on a diabolical timetable.

Whose power is behind this?

“And the Dragon (Satan, Rev. 12:9) gave him (the Beast, the Antichrist, Rev. 13:1) his power, and his throne and great authority” (Rev. 13:2, Gk.).

My literal translation of 2 Thess. 2:7 clears away much confusion regarding

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the teaching of this truth.

Due to an unfortunate rendering of this verse in the KJV: “*only he who now letteth (withholdeth, Gk.) will let, until he be taken out of the way,*” many have seen in this verse a reference to the Holy Spirit as “*he who withholdeth,*” and his “*being taken out of the way,*” as a reference to the disappearance of the Church which He indwells.

We have already discussed this view, made popular by the British preacher, E. Schuyler English.

By my computer is my Greek New Testament.

Let’s examine this verse carefully, for it holds the key to our understanding this truth.

“*Only he, the one who is constantly withholding will let.”*

This he clearly refers to a person (masculine pronoun). It is also followed by a present participle, “continually withholding.”

The phrase “will let” in the KJV is in italics, meaning it isn’t in the Greek text.

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However, it is certainly implied by the context. The KJV continues with this phrase:

“Until he be taken out of the way.”

The word “taken” is in italics in the KJV, again, meaning it does not appear in the original, Greek text.

This fact is important.

Nothing and no one (ie., the Holy Spirit, the Church, etc.) is suddenly, being “taken away,” here, as certainly is the case in the Rapture which Paul discusses in 1 Thess. 4:13-17. There, the word for “caught up” means exactly that: to “snatch, catch or take away by force.”

The literal translation of the verse we are presently considering reads:

“Only he, the one constantly withholding at present (will), until out of the midst he become.”

The word in this verse rendered “way” in the KJV and other versions, is, literally, “midst” (Gk. μεσου [mesou]) or middle.

The Greek verb translated “be” in the Authorized version and others is,

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literally, “become” (Gk. γενηται [geneeteh]).

No honest minister or scholar with knowledge of and access to the original Greek text can dispute these facts.

Both instances of the personal pronoun, “he,” refers to the Antichrist.

As we have shown, the Antichrist is the one withholding the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How long will this demonically empowered Antichrist continue to withhold our Lord's Return and Revelation?

Until the time of the last of the “last days,” when he publicly reveals himself as the deceiver that he really is.

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a wild beast rising up out of the sea” (Rev. 13:1, Gk.).

This is the Antichrist, rising up out of the midst of the sea of humanity at the proper time to fulfill our God's agenda.

This blends perfectly with Paul's next statement.

“And then shall the lawless one be

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revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall consume with the brightness (manifestation, epifania, Gk.) of his coming (parousia, Gk., 2 Thess. 2:8, Gk.).

Again, notice how the words coming and manifestation (i.e., glorious appearing) are used interchangeably to describe our Lord's Return.

They refer to one and the same event.

Paul again underscores the "mystery of iniquity" (Gk. ανομιας [lawlessness]) already "effectually working":

"Even him (the Antichrist) whose coming is after the effectual working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood" (2 Thess. 2:9, Gk.).

Just as God is "constantly effectually working" in His children (Phil. 2:13) motivating them by His Spirit (Rom. 8:4), so, too, the Devil is also working in his children, directing their paths toward his ends (Eph. 2:1 ff.).

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Satan's masterpiece in this regard will be the Antichrist.

Critical Conclusion

What can we conclude thus far in our study? Jesus is coming again!

There are two sure signs preceding His Second Advent:

1. A mass departure from the historic Christian faith.
2. The revelation of the Antichrist.

While we are not looking for the signs, but rather, unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, these two events do serve as spiritual reference points on the path to His appearing.

Jesus is coming!

Are you ready for the Rapture?

Sins of the Times

Sins of the Times

“For the men shall be lovers of their own selves” (2 Tim. 3:2, Gk.).

This verse and those that follow describe the character of unsaved humanity during the “last days.”

They do not paint a pretty picture. Rather, mankind is described as: covetous, boastful, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.

No, I am not reading from the newspaper: this is God’s inspired word.

The scripture goes on to describe them as “without natural affection.”

Even animals care for their young.

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In our nation, over a million unborn human beings are murdered yearly. Just the other day I read of another baby abandoned in a garbage can: right here in America.

The “New Age” cult and its myriad of secular humanist offspring predominate in the book market, media and market place. The twenty first century American man is infatuated with himself. He has left the worship of God in the dim past of his Puritan roots.

Paul goes on to say of unsaved humanity:

“Trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, without love to good, traitors, heady, puffed up” (2 Tim. 3:3-4, Gk.).

Here is perhaps the “punch line”:

“Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:4-5, Gk.).

Never have we seen a more decadent, self-serving God-denying generation. Surely the spirit of prophecy,

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regarding the time in which we live, came upon Agur of old when he penned Proverbs 30:11-14:

“There is a generation that is cursing their father and doth not bless their mother... that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness... how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up... whose teeth are as swords and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”

This is our day.

Christianity Corrupted

We have already referred to Jesus’ warnings concerning “false prophets” and “false Christs.”

“Special sins” will abound in the “last days” among the clergy: demonic doctrines and lying life styles (1 Tim. 4:1 ff.).

Peter and Jude, likewise, speak in great detail of false teachers who will appear in the last days, bringing in damnable heresies, living “double lives”

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and by their lips and lives “denying the Lord that bought them” (2 Pet. 2; Jude 4, 8-19).

According to Jude, the half-brother of our blessed Lord, these are “*soulish, having not the spirit*” (Jude 19).

Certainly, Paul assures us if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his (Rom. 8:9); but this fact does not deter “make-believers” from infiltrating the ranks of the true Church to further their ruinous work.

How careful must we be!

The Rhythm of Infinity

Perhaps we should remind ourselves of a very important fact at this point.

Invariably, when one discusses the “end-times” some will object, reminding us of the amount of time already passed without a prophetic fulfillment.

This itself is a proof of the Truth of God’s Word!

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the days—the last ones—scoffers, walking after the lusts—their

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own—and saying, ‘where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue thus from the beginning of the creation’” (2 Pet. 3:3-4, Gk.).

Another important point to remember is this:

God’s “clock” is different than ours (Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8).

We must adjust to Him, not the reverse! He is long suffering, not desiring any to perish everlastingly, but for all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

The apostle Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, equated Joel’s prophecy of the Spirit’s outpouring in the “last days” with the Pentecostal effusion.

God’s “last days” have already lasted 2,000 years!

John, writing two thousand years ago, declared:

“Little children, it is the last hour”
(1 John 2:18, Gk.).

So God’s “days” and “hours” are decidedly different than ours!

If this were not enough, the Master

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announced to Paul at the hour of the apostle's conversion on the road to Damascus:

“Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee” (Acts 26:17, Gk.).

As all Bible scholars know, Paul didn't fulfill this prophetic word by preaching to the non-Jews for another thirteen to fifteen years!

God's "now" is different than ours!

May these facts not only encourage you regarding the fulfillment of the Lord's prophetic program, but also inspire you to hold fast to unfulfilled promises from God concerning your own life and ministry.

The Bottom Line

What can we learn from these facts?

In the "last days," wickedness will abound, deception will increase, even the organized Church will not be exempt. Sin, selfishness and satanic deception will escalate and penetrate every level of society. Looking at the

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situation from the natural standpoint, it will be a dark hour, indeed.

We should not be shocked or surprised by what we are witnessing. God's Word is being fulfilled.

Viewing the same scenario with "x-ray eyes" of the Spirit, we should be "looking up;" for our redemption draws nigh!

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Sons of the Times

“Beloved ones, now are we the children of God” (1 John 3:2, Gk.).

We are perhaps the most blessed generation of believers ever to live and walk with God on planet earth. It is entirely possible that we will live to see the Return of Jesus Christ.

What an exciting prospect!

What a sobering possibility!

If this is so, how should we then live?

“And every man that is having this hope on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

This is not a “dry-run.” This is the

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real thing.

It remains for us as the sons of God at this time on God's prophetic clock to live up to the full stature of the Body of Christ according to His Divine intent.

Perhaps Mordecai's words to Esther can rightly be applied to the saints of this age:

“And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this” (Est. 4:14)?

Peter reminds us that judgment begins at the House of God (1 Pet. 4:17-18). Paul, agreeing with him, reminds all of those who name the Name of Christ in living faith to “walk their talk” by achieving and maintaining purity: inside and outside (2 Cor. 7:1).

Our first priority is to “test ourselves, whether we be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Are we believers or “make-believers?”

Have we really been “born again” or simply “fooled again” or “joined again?”

A tremendous experience awaits the true believer:

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“And it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him according as he is” (I John 3:2, Gk.).

We shall look like Jesus, with a glorified body, released from the limitations of space and time (Phil. 3:20)!

The Eternal Life which we received in our spirits when we first received Jesus and Lord and Savior (John. 3:16), the Life which we have been allowing to renew our souls daily (James. 1:21), will finally thrill our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11)!

We shall be like Him! HalleluYah!

New Birth

If we have never surrendered our hearts and wills to Jesus as Lord, the time to do so is now (2 Cor. 6:2). Now is the time, today is the day.

This is not the day nor hour to rest content with a pious display of “churchianity.”

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We must make our decision and make it now.

Water Baptism

Again, if we have not yet followed the Lord in water baptism, now is the time to do so. This is a divine command (Acts 2:38) and an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

It is a privilege to take our places, symbolically, with Christ, dying with Him to the world, the flesh and the Devil. This is what we say in deed as we stand in the baptismal pool. As the minister lowers us back under the water we testify to our having buried the “old man” (all that we were apart from Christ). And then as we come back up out of the water, we proclaim our walking in newness life.

Of course water baptism does not “save,” anymore than a wedding ring “marries.” But it does graphically portray—publicly—our relationship to the Lord. If we are faithful to confess Him in word and deed before men, He

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will be faithful to do likewise for us before the Father (Mt. 10:32).

Spirit Baptism

If ever the believer needed to heed the command of scripture, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18), he needs to do so today.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit is absolutely indispensable for our worship (Eph. 5:18-20), witness (Acts 1:8), walk (Gal. 5:16) and work (John. 14:10-13).

If Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 4:18), the original apostles (Acts 2:4), and one as mightily used as Paul (Acts 9:17) needed the anointing of Power from on High, how much more do we, living two thousand years nearer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?!

Prayer

One can't read the Bible carefully regarding the end-times without seeing the importance of prayer.

“But the end of all things hath drawn nigh: be ye therefore

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soberminded, and watch unto the prayers (of the Holy Spirit)” (1 Pet. 4:7, Gk.).

This verse is clear enough not to require additional comment.

“But ye, beloved ones, continually building up yourselves on the faith—your most holy one—praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life (for your bodies)” (Jude 20-21, Gk.).

Jude is in perfect agreement with Peter regarding our life style during these “last days.”

How better to “purify ourselves,” as John admonishes (1 John 3:3), than to advance upon the foundation of our saving faith, praying in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18), and thereby keep ourselves in the Love of God?

Paul reminds us that Love is the fulfilling of the Law (Rom. 13:10).

Servants of God

Not only are we sons of God in the

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closing hours of this dispensation, but the Bible reminds us, repeatedly, we are also servants, or bond-slaves of our Master. That is, we have willingly offered ourselves unto Him to be used in His service.

In salvation, we gave Him the “old” us.

In consecration, we give Him the “new” us.

If we have never yet surrendered our Christian lives to God in unconditional dedication, to be used by Him where and how He deems appropriate, the time to do so is now (Rom. 12:1ff.).

We will never find our place in the Body of Christ, discover fulfillment in life, or bring any real amount of glory to God unless and until we do so.

Our confession should be Paul’s:

“For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

Gifts or Giver?

It is so easy to become so enamored of the gifts of God that we lose sight of

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the God Whose gifts they are. This is a trap we must avoid in the end-times.

A happy marriage is the gift of God, but if its attainment is our obsession, it is an idol.

There will be no marriage in Heaven; we shall be like the angels.

Health and prosperity are God's gifts and the heritage of the children of God; but if their acquisition and maintenance become our sole or primary focus in life, they are idols.

We will have glorified bodies at Jesus' Return, and Heaven requires no "silver nor gold."

Certainly, we were "saved to serve" and have been given gifts and graces with which to serve others in the Body of Christ and the world; but if our ministry means more than our Maker, it is an idol.

When we see Jesus, we shall cast our (ministerial) crowns at His feet.

It is not to no purpose that the Master allowed the story of Mary and Martha to find its way into Holy Writ (see my

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book, **At the Master's Feet**).

Christ's words to Martha apply to us, especially in the Day in which we live:

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but of one thing there is need: and Mary chose the portion—the good one—which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42, Gk.).

When will we believe it is not ours, but us that He desires?

He loves us and created us for His pleasure, to commune with us in love and fellowship.

Analyze Our Assets

There was something more important in life to Mary than family (Martha and Lazarus).

Her allegiance transcended formal religious ties and observances (Judaism).

Her commitment rose above mere political affiliations (Israel).

She discovered the Pearl of great price.

Like Job of old, she “esteemed his

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words more than her necessary food” (Job. 23:12).

She put first things first and sought—directly from the lips of the Master—her “daily bread,” realizing the Truth He spoke, that *“it stands written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every spoken word that is constantly proceeding through the mouth of God’”* (Mt. 4:4, Gk.).

What do we treasure in this final hour?

Quality Commitment

If we will make the consecration—with our lives as well as our lips—we will find our minds progressively being renewed (Rom. 12:1-2).

The gifts and ministries, the talents—natural and supernatural—placed in us by God, will find their way into our consciousness where they can be seen and partaken of by needy mankind.

This will make end-time living exciting and fulfilling.

Will we do it?

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Soldiers of God

Beyond being sons and servants, we are also called to be soldiers in the Army of God.

We do not have to enlist; we have been drafted!

The question is not, “Do we really have to fight the enemy?” but “Where?”

Certainly, we have also faced numerous “evil days” (Eph. 6:13) in our individual walks with God, but the time in which we live might more properly be deemed an “evil era.” That is, in addition to “personal skirmishes” there is also an all out “war” going on, globally. It is definitely a “fight to the finish.”

From, Not For

It is important for us to remember that the war was won—legally—two thousand years ago in and through the Cross of Christ (Col. 2:15).

We do not fight for victory, but from it. That is, we are to enforce—

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experientially—the Master’s past legal one. This means “possessing our possessions.”

According to Paul, this includes two activities: standing and withstanding (Eph. 6:11, 13).

Our enemies are spiritual.

We must first—individually and collectively—stand or hold fast what we have gained in the Lord. We must put on the “whole armor of God.”

Second, we should withstand or take new ground from the enemy. This is bringing the Kingdom of God into every area of our lives (marriage, family, work, government, ministry, etc.).

The Bible says “*the earth is Yahweh’s, and the fullness thereof; the habitable world and they that dwell therein*” (Ps. 24:1, Hb.).

It belongs to Him twice: by creation and by redemption.

When Israel conquered Canaan each tribe (consisting of many families) was given a lot or portion, along with power to possess it (Dt. 8:18). This is true of us

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(Col. 1:12).

Not only must we maintain our position in Christ, but we should mount offensive maneuvers, declaring our Lord's redemption to those who have yet to hear of it.

Since we have been given the keys of the Kingdom, the "gates of hell" shall not prevail against us.

Once while praying about this concept the Spirit spoke to my heart: "The keys of the Kingdom are the gifts of the Spirit."

For every one of the devil's "locks," we have been given a key!

The kingdom of darkness cannot resist the onslaught of the conquering Church!

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The Blessed Hope

The Blessed Hope

I trust we have made it abundantly clear in this volume that the Coming and Glorious Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ are one and the same event.

Some in the Church endeavor to distinguish between our Lord's Coming (for the Church; i.e., the Rapture) and His subsequent Return (with the Church; i.e., the glorious Second Advent).

Anywhere from three and one half to seven years separate these two events, depending upon which scholar one follows.

This view does not seem to be supported by the scriptures as we have already shown since the Bible declares

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these two experiences refer to the same event.

For example, if we are to await our Lord's (pre-tribulation) Coming as the culmination of our salvation, why does Paul refer to Christ's Glorious Second Advent as the "blessed hope" (Ti. 2:13)? It makes no sense, since in that view, He would have already come for us some seven years previously, unless both words refer to the same event.

Peter is in agreement with Paul when he encourages believers to: "*hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation (i.e., Glorious Second Advent) of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pt. 1:13).

Again, this exhortation would be meaningless unless the apostle understood Christ's Coming and Revelation to be the same event.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Another closely related subject which is affected by one's view of the timing of "end-time" events is the

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placement of the Judgment Seat of Christ and the rewards faithful believers receive there.

Those who “separate” Christ’s Coming (i.e., the Rapture) from His Return (i.e., Glorious Second Advent) place this time of reward between these two events—in Heaven—during the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.”

But the Bible does not appear to support this either.

Jesus, Himself, clearly placed the time of the rewards for our stewardship at His glorious Second Advent (Rev. 22:12).

This is after the statement, “*the marriage supper of the Lamb has come*,” Rev. 19:7.

This Greek verb, “has come,” is commonly known in Greek grammar as a dramatic aorist which refers to: “an event which is on the point of being accomplished” (**Dana & Mantey’s Greek Grammar**).

In actual fact, nothing is said about the “supper” literally taking place in

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Rev. 19:7, only that its time “has come.”

Earlier in the Book of Revelation, we read a prophetic announcement of this blessed event for believers.

As the seventh angel sounds the “last trumpet” (cp., 1 Cor. 15:52), John writes:

“And great voices in heaven followed, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. He will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15, WEB)!

John continues in the same chapter:

“The nations were angry, and your wrath came, as did the time for the dead to be judged, and to give your bondservants the prophets, their reward, as well as to the saints, and those who fear your name, to the small and the great; and to destroy those who destroy the earth” (Rev. 11:18, WEB).

Notice that these events are to take place at the sounding of the “last trumpet” when the prophetic plan of God has been fulfilled. This is a time of “wrath” for the wicked as well as judgment and reward for the godly. The

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word rendered, “reward,” refers to a payment of wages for services performed. Praise God! All of our service for the Master will be richly rewarded by Him at His Return.

The word, “judged,” may seem misleading at first glance.

As we will see in another chapter, the judgment of the wicked dead will not occur until at least one thousand years following the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 20:12-14).

This “judgment,” however, is of the dead and now to be resurrected saints. It is not a judgment for sin (John 5:24) but, rather, for service done in the Master's Name. It is a form of the identical verb Paul uses in the light of the Second Coming of Christ and all believers receiving their “praise from God.”

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each man will get his

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praise from God” (1 Cor. 4:5, WEB).

The only example of a “Judgment Seat of Christ” in the Bible is the one that takes place on earth; this is clearly after our Lord’s Glorious Return (Mt. 25:31ff.).

This portion of scripture is the well-known separation of the sheep from the goats.

Some denominations equate this with a final judgment of all humanity resulting in eternal life for the saved and eternal punishment for the lost (Mt. 25:46).

As we will see later in this book, the Bible teaches two, separate resurrections: one for the righteous, unto eternal life and another for the unrighteous, unto eternal judgment.

Other groups seize on Christ’s phrase, “all the nations,” and see in this a separation of so-called, “sheep nations,” which are seen to be those countries which have given sustenance to the people of Israel during the “Great Tribulation,” and the “goat nations” the

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countries which refused to do so.

The scriptures do not support this view either for the simple reason that God does not judge any “entire nation” or “people group” as either meriting eternal life or eternal punishment based upon their treatment of the nation of Israel.

God deals with individuals only.

His gift of eternal life is just that, a gift, given on the basis of the shed blood of Christ on our behalf, not on any “good works,” regardless of how noble, that we have done to benefit others (Rom. 3:23).

The word Jesus uses for nations is “ethnos,” from which we derive our English word, ethnic. It simply means, “peoples.”

To what judgment then does our Lord's teaching in Mt. 25:31ff., apply?

It is the same judgment as the one He spoke of in His parables of the “tares and wheat,” “good seed and bad,” “good fish and bad,” “wise and unwise virgins” and “profitable and unprofitable servants.”

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In short, this is Christ's judgment on His “visible Church,” composed of “peoples” of every language, culture and kind.

You will notice that both groups (sheep and goats) refer to Him as “Lord,” asking when had they seen Him in need and ministered to Him or not.

Mt. 7:21-23 is a severe indictment of “make-believers” who claim to have prophesied, cast out demons and performed “signs, wonders and miracles” in the Name of Christ.

Jesus makes it very clear that one need do more than say with one's lips, “Lord, Lord” to the Master. We must also serve Him with our lives.

When will they say these things?

According to Christ, “in that day,” meaning the Day of His return.

On a side note, these individuals are not true believers who started out well and unfortunately, subsequently lost out with God by turning away from Him.

They said they did these things; the Lord Jesus didn't.

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As a matter of fact He is unequivocally clear that these “Christians” were never believers.

“And then I will confess to them, ‘I never at any time knew you, Depart at once from Me, the ones constantly working the lawlessness’” (Mt. 7:23, AT).

It is also interesting to note the definite article before “lawlessness.” This would likely mean a particular kind: not believing (in one's heart) in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (cp. John 3:18, 8:24, 16:9).

Mat. 25:31ff., then is not a general judgment of all people groups and religions, but only of those who “profess” to be believers.

This is clear enough not to require additional comment. It is at this time that we will receive rewards or demerits from our returning Lord (1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Similarly, Jesus expected to “dine with us” in His Kingdom (Mt. 26:29), after His return from Heaven (Luke

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12:37).

Again, all the writers of the New Testament epistles encourage us with the idea of our being rewarded for faithful service to Christ at the time of His Revelation or Glorious Second Advent which is also His Coming for us.

Paul expected to receive his crown then (2 Tim. 4:8). He exhorted Timothy to remain faithful until Christ's Appearing (1 Tim. 6:14).

The Corinthians were waiting for the "Revelation of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:9).

Peter prayed that our lives would be rewarded at the Revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:7). He encouraged ministers along the same line; their reward would come: "*when the Chief Shepherd shall be Gloriously Manifested*" (1 Pet. 5:4).

These scriptures pose no problem with interpretation if one assumes—as the Bible declares—the Second Coming and Glorious Return of our Lord Jesus Christ are one and the same event.

The Blessed Hope

Author's Note

For an in-depth and scholarly discussion of the topic of this and other chapters of this book, I encourage you to consult **The Approaching Advent of Christ**, by Rev. Alexander Reese (Grand Rapids International Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 49501; ISBN # 0-8254-3610-9).

Rev. Reese was a Presbyterian missionary to Brazil, who had been schooled in the “pre-tribulation” view of the Second Coming of Christ. After careful examination of the scriptures, he abandoned that belief and adopted the traditional and historical “post-Tribulation” view of the return of the Lord.

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End-Time Events

End-Time Events

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ones, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16, AT).

We will present at this juncture a brief but beneficial scenario, in chronological order, of prophetic events which lay in front of us, along with the scriptures supporting them. It is my prayer that this information will place solid spiritual ground under your feet in the light of our future.

Just as the angels promised and prophesied, despite what many modern ministers believe and preach to the

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contrary, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ will return again to this earth: personally, visibly and bodily.

Return of Christ

“While they were looking steadfastly into the sky as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white clothing, who also said, “You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who was received up from you into the sky will come back in the same way as you saw him going into the sky” (Acts 1:10-11, WEB).

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Even so, Amen” Rev. 1:7, WEB).

Resurrection of the Righteous Dead

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:3, WEB).

End-Time Events

“Don’t marvel at this, for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs will hear his voice, and will come out; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29, WEB).

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God’s trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16, WEB).

“I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as didn’t worship the beast nor his image, and didn’t receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead didn’t live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first

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resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power; but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years” (Rev. 20:4-6, WEB).

Rapture of the Righteous Living

“Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must become imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:51-53, WEB).

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God’s trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess. 4:16-17, WEB).

End-Time Events

Retribution Upon the Wicked

“He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked” (Is. 11:4, WEB).

“Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay affliction to those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted with us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, giving vengeance to those who don't know God, and to those who don't obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus, who will pay the penalty: eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired among all those who have believed (because our testimony to you was believed) in that day” (2 Thess. 1:6-10, WEB).

“Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness

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which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14-15, WEB).

“I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it is called Faithful and True. In righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has names written and a name written which no one knows but he himself. He is clothed in a garment sprinkled with blood. His name is called “The Word of God.” The armies which are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in white, pure, fine linen. Out of his mouth proceeds a sharp, double-edged sword, that with it he should strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He treads the wine press of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. He has on his garment and on his thigh a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:11-16, WEB).

“I saw the beast, and the kings of

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the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him who sat on the horse, and against his army. The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who worked the signs in his sight, with which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword of him who sat on the horse, the sword which came out of his mouth. All the birds were filled with their flesh” (Rev. 19:19-21, WEB).

Reward for the Saints

“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. Before him all the nations will be gathered, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will tell those on

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his right hand, 'Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Mt. 25:31, WEB).

"But when you make a feast, ask the poor, the maimed, the lame, or the blind; and you will be blessed, because they don't have the resources to repay you. For you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:13-14, WEB).

"When he had come back again, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by conducting business. The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten more minas.' He said to him, 'Well done, you good servant! Because you were found faithful with very little, you shall have authority over ten cities'" (Luke 19:15-17, WEB).

"But if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or stubble; each

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man's work will be revealed. For the Day will declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself will test what sort of work each man's work is. If any man's work remains which he built on it, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, but as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:12-15, WEB).

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each man will get his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5, WEB).

"For we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" 2 Cor. 5:10, WEB).

Reigning of the Saints

"I confer on you a kingdom, even as my Father conferred on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom. You will sit on thrones,

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judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30, WEB).

“Don’t you know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Don’t you know that we will judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life” (1 Cor. 6:2-3, WEB)?

“If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12, WEB).

“To him who loves us, and washed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a Kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen!” (Rev. 1:5b-6, WEB).

“They sang a new song, saying, ‘You are worthy to take the book, and to open its seals: for you were killed, and bought us for God with your blood, out of every tribe, language, people, and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign on earth!’” (Rev. 5:9-10, WEB).

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“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years” (Rev. 20:6, WEB).

Resurrection of the Unrighteous

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:3, WEB).

“Don’t marvel at this, for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs will hear his voice, and will come out; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29, WEB).

“I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and they opened books. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books,

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according to their works. The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. They were judged, each one according to his works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. If anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:12-15, WEB).

Two Resurrections

As the preceding verses make abundantly clear, there is no “general resurrection of the dead” awaiting mankind at the end of this age.

Rather, there are two resurrections yet future.

The first is the resurrection, not to judgment, but to life, will occur at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (John 5:29).

The second is a resurrection unto judgment which is for the unrighteous dead only and which will take place at least one thousand years after the

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resurrection unto life for the believer.

It is imperative that we make our calling and election sure in this life, prior to our physical death and to our blessed Lord's return.

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“Be ye watching therefore, praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are about to come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36, Gk.).

Watching and praying are two words which effectively summarize what our spiritual posture must be to be “ready for the Rapture.” Thank God, He has not destined His Church for wrath (judgment), but to obtain (final) salvation at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:9).

Jesus is Coming!

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We can be prepared as faithful, diligent, sons, servants and soldiers, “occupying till He comes” (Luke 19:13).

We can continue to hold forth the word of Life in the midst of this present darkness (Phil. 2:16).

Although salvation is a gift, we are stewards of our time and talents. He is coming, His reward (μισθος [meesthos], Gk., “hire”) with Him, to render to each of us as we deserve (Rev. 22:12).

We shall all stand—individually—before His Throne at His Return to receive merits or demerits, depending upon our stewardship (Mt. 25:31ff.; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10).

May we be faithful in the service of Jesus. May we truly be, “ready for the Rapture.”

Are You Ready?

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that

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obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (1 Thess. 1:7-10).

While the Second Coming of Christ is the blessed hope for the believer, it is a time of judgment for the unbeliever.

However, those who do know God and obey His Son’s Gospel wait patiently and without fear for His soon return (2 Thess. 3:5).

Here is a prayer you may pray to establish this relationship with God and Christ, to be truly ready for the Rapture:

"Dear God, I confess that I have sinned. But I believe that you sent Jesus to the Earth. I believe that He lived a sinless life. I believe that He died in my place; I believe He shed His Blood to forgive my

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sin; and I believe that He was buried and raised from the dead in order that I may have Eternal Life. Lord Jesus, I surrender my heart and my will to you. Come into my heart; come into my life; and make me the kind of person you want me to be. By your grace, I'll live for you, all the days of my life. Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my heart. Thank you, Jesus, for saving my soul."

If you prayed that prayer in faith, you are saved from the wrath to come and have the blessed hope of Jesus' return for you!

If you are a child of God but have never received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, here is a prayer you may pray:

"Heavenly Father, I thank you for the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Fill me, right now, with the Holy Spirit. I receive the Holy Spirit by faith, in Jesus' Name. Thank

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You, Father, for filling me with the Holy Spirit. Thank You for giving me the ability to pray and to praise You in a language I have never learned. Thank you for giving me the Power to live Your Life, and the Person Who will counsel me in all of Your ways. I receive Him now, by faith, in Jesus' Name. Amen."

As you are in the Presence of God, simply begin to speak forth the first words or syllables that come to your mind or that you feel prompted to say but *do not speak in your native language(s)*, as you cannot speak two languages at once. In every instance recorded in the Book of Acts where believers received the Holy Spirit, they spoke in "new tongues" (Mk. 16:17). Speaking in "other tongues" is the evidence of receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4, 10:44-48, 19:1-6); Power is the result (read **Prayer in the Spirit: the Missing Link**).

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Glossary of Important Terms

Glossary of Important Terms

1. Rapture.

This is from the Latin, “rapio,” meaning to catch up or away. The Greek verb is *αρπαζω* (“harpazo”), meaning to snatch or catch away, used of Paul’s being caught up into Paradise (2 Cor. 12:2, 4) and of Philip’s being translated, bodily, to Azotus (Acts 8:39). It is used of the Church’s being “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air as He returns, bodily, from Heaven (1 Thess. 4:17).

The Greek word for “air” refers to the lower atmosphere; Christ will come within one mile of the ground when He receives us to Himself!

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2. Meet.

“Then we the ones living and remaining shall be caught up (i.e., raptured) together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17, Gk.).

This word was used of “the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary” (**Vine**).

A related word was used of the coming out of all the people of a city to meet the Lord and then following Him back into it (Mt. 8:34).

In secular Greek of New Testament times, the word was used of a city’s people going out a small distance from the town to welcome home their king after a victorious conquest, and then continuing with Him back to the city.

3. Coming.

The Greek word is “*parousia*” (parousia) which means an “arrival and consequent presence with” (**Vine**). In

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terms of the Second Coming, it is used, often interchangeably, with:

A. Revealed / revelation / manifestation / appearing.

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (2 Thess. 1:7; “revealed,” αποκαλυψει [apokaleepsee], Gk.).

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, even by our gathering together unto him” (2 Thess. 2:1; “coming,” παρουσιας [parousia], Gk.).

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13; “revelation,” αποκαλυψει

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[apokaleepsee], Gk.).

B. Appearing.

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti. 2:13; “appearing,” επιφανειαν [epifaneean], Gk.).

“And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thess. 2:8; “brightness,” επιφανεια [epiphaneea], Gk.).

These words are used with “coming” (παρουσιας [parousia], Gk.), the word for Christ’s coming to meet us in the air (1 Thess. 4:16; i.e., the Rapture).

About the Author

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Joseph Kostelnik is founder and president of **Gospel Truth Ministries**, an apostolic ministry with a three-fold vision: a local church (**White Oak Chapel**), training up and sending out of God-called ministers of the Word (**The Prophetic Voice Institute**), and short-term mission trips and other international outreaches to nearly 160 nations.

He holds a B.A.,cum laude, from Point Park University, an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary, a Th.D. and Ph.D. from International Seminary, an honorary D.D. from Kingsway Christian College & Theological

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He has served as: pastor, assistant pastor, evangelist, Bible teacher, missionary, author, educator, and media minister. He has ministered in the United States as well as completing nearly 50 short-term mission trips to countries overseas, including: England, Scotland, Australia, France, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Crete, Haiti and New Zealand. Dr. Kostelnik also served as an adjunct professor for International Seminary (Plymouth, FL, USA) for 15 years, having authored lesson material for their curriculum, and remains a seminary representative. Joseph is assisted by his son, J. Solomon and his wife, Barbara, with whom he regularly co-hosted a local, Christian television program for over 15 years.

His ministry has continued over 40 years and is consistently confirmed by startling signs, wonders and miracles of the Holy Spirit.

About the Author

All Books by the Same Author

At the Master's Feet	Creative Faith
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The Stranger on the Road	Walk with God
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Why Not Women?	Wonder Working Words
You Must Be Drunk!	Your New Life

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About the Author

What Others Are Saying...

*“Dr. Kostelnik's book **The Lord Jesus: the Christ** is one of the most edifying and uplifting books I've ever read...and working with Dr. Cerullo, I've read a lot of good books!”* -**Ruth Meadows, European director, Morris Cerullo World Evangelism**

“To know Joe is to know he is an anointed minister of the gospel, striving to hear and do as the Holy Spirit directs. His revelations on women in ministry have surely been directed of God.” -**Mary Laird, former station manager, Trinity Broadcasting Network**

“His anointed teaching has inspired me and many others in Australia; after having Dr. Kostelnik minister in our church and in a citywide crusade, I recommend that you acquire more of this divinely inspired material through which you will undoubtedly be blessed also.” -**Rev. Merv Westbrook, Outback Evangelism, (Darwin, Australia)**

“I appreciate Joe's books, teaching and great evangelistic ministry; he has a unique combination of intellectual and educational depth, strict scriptural adherence and outstanding preaching ability.” -**Rev. Dick Taylor, founder & president FOCAS, (Cincinnati, Ohio)**

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*“We recommend Dr. Kostelnik and his ministry highly, he has been a great blessing in all of our churches in Holland and Belgium, with many saved, healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. We have published his articles in our magazine and are busy translating **Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link**, into Dutch.”* -**Gerie van der Dussen, secretary, Maasbach World Mission (Holland)**

“Now that we have translated your book on ministry into Greek, we can start on your others; the people here desperately need this anointed ministry.” -**the late Rev. D. Jimmy Zachariou, Assemblies of God, (Athens, Greece)**

“Brother Joe has a real touch of God on his ministry. We saw this in Haiti in great outdoor mass crusades... many were saved, healed, baptized in the Holy Ghost and delivered! We are very anxious for his next crusades here.” -**Bishop Liberius (Port-au-Prince, Haiti, W.I.)**

“Through the revelation of the Spirit and also the manifestation of God's Power to His children through him, I believe Dr. Kostelnik is qualified to tell God's people that signs, wonders and miracles are for the Body of Christ today.” -**the late Rev. Dr. Brian Graham, pastor-evangelist (Darlington, England)**