

WHAT TIME IS IT??

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose
under the heaven:*

Ecclesiastes 3:1

10, 9, 8, 7 Lift off? But wait, this lift off will not take place tomorrow—and it certainly has not taken place, yesterday. So. . . What are we discussing, here? It is the most important event in human history yet before us: another *first* in the teaching, and thoughts (and dreams) of those within the Christian faith: In what we call the “rapture” of the Church.

Of course, thinking Christians are used to being first in line for the supernatural. The God of the Bible is the first (and only) God to have committed Himself to being on the scene to deliver those He claims as His own (as with Moses & Pharaoh, for example). His good news for us in the 21st Century includes this projected hope of a *guaranteed* blessing (forever): and it all started long before we even dreamed of visiting the Christ Child in a manger. (What an event that was!)

For Scripture starts out with humankind in Paradise, does it not? We are not seen as mere maggots,



Let us be ready...



crawling through the refuse of the universe: clawing ourselves out of a primordial ooze to become some slimy event upon the shores of time: awash with no ancestry other than filth, and mindless chance.

No, the Bible is not Utopian in its outlook: but triumphant in its expectancy of returning to what God had already perfected at our creation. Then *after preparing Paradise* for our occupancy, the next step was to invite ius (humankind) to take up residence. —As God said (in the beginning) “Let us make man in our image, according to Our likeness . . .” (Genesis 1:26)

Now *that* my friend, is perfection! Performed by the God who called the universe into being *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) —for that is what even modern quantum physics now acknowledges in its “big bang” (with origins that have been discovered in the radiological background noise of our universe) —meaning that our Universe had to have a . . .

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beginning—and more!

In other words: there was “once upon a time” in all of “space” when our universe was not. So then, how do you get *something* out of nothing? (Go back to elementary science, to when civilization debunked “spontaneous generation” . . .). —For there *is* an answer, and only one that makes real sense: but before we arrive, we must remember what we are contemplating (if our heads are not hurting from the experience of thinking such things).

“Frank,” you may say to me, “you really *are* hurting my head!” After all, “This is the New Years’ season, for heaven’s sake. Take a break!” Of course, of course, but if we take a break . . . and then have no more tomorrows, after today (at the end of what we now call life)—would it not have been to our advantage to have already made peace with the God who is there, and was there, before time, as we know it?

Is it not really comforting, when considering the fact that *we are not* eternal . . . to know the One who is, and really does love those He claims as His own? Now really, what person is really to ready live . . . who has not prepared to meet the One who gave all of this to us, in the first place?

So, what is the answer to our question? Since we now know, from advanced studies, and examinations of our universe, that it really did have a *beginning*. HOW DID IT START? Or, to be more specific: WHO started it all?

No, don’t go to your latest sci-fi book, or occult manual of “alien activities”—that will only push the question back in our minds, a little further. So, if you believe in aliens: Who created *them*??

No, let us return to the world’s number one best seller (by far, by far) and look for the answer—not in the dark, but in the Light! For it took a horrible payday to have that “little black book,” on many a coffee table come to life: it took God’s commitment—not only to put on an earth suit, and enter our cosmos through the womb of a woman that he had created in the first place (that was our Christmas)—but He went all the way to the Cross (in what we now call Easter) . . . And now promises to one day return, after that “countdown” we had considered earlier: By returning to take His own . . . to Paradise.

Now that, my friend, will truly be a *New Year*—forever!

And yet, according to the Scriptures, it will not happen tomorrow . . .

BUT NOT TOMMORROW (NOT YET)

“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

Matthew 24:40-42

When we are familiar with the term “rapture” or, especially, with the *LEFT BEHIND* series, the destruction and mayhem envisioned on the next page may seem very familiar. For, as Wikipedia describes the series, “*Left Behind* tells the story of

the end times (set in the contemporary era), in which true believers in Christ have been “raptured” (taken instantly to heaven), leaving the world shattered and chaotic.”¹

Is Wikipedia really correct? And is it true that tomorrow this “rapture” may take place, leaving most of the world in a lurch for a brief period of “great tribulation” (GT)—which the Bible describes as a time “ . . . *such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.*” —a time that will be **so catastrophic** that “ . . . *unless those days were [cut short], no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.*” (Matt. 24:21,22). We really should note, however, that the Lord’s own description of these events necessarily includes the presence of real Christians during this time; for the “elect” are, by definition, the chosen ones who will live and reign with Christ forever. —And continuing to read, we do discover these very same persons are the ones “air marked” by Jesus for the rapture. For, just



eight verses down, after giving a very brief description of some of the events that will take place during the GT, Jesus states:

³⁰ *“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”.*

Matthew 24:30-31 [emphasis added]

Please keep the above information (or revelation . . .) in mind, as we take a few minutes to bring new readers us up to speed concerning the biblical description of this amazing event that many of us now recognize as the “rapture.” We will not exhaust the origins of the word, itself (which does not explicitly appear in the Greek text of the New Testament, but is derived from a Latin translation)—only get down to the nitty gritty (or heavenly!) aspects of how Scripture, itself, describes this amazing event that will take place soon, but as we shall ultimately see—not tomorrow. (This article is being written in December of 2022. . .). This may seem quite puzzling to some, but to others, really quite logical—after reviewing what is known as a “pre-trib” (or pre-tribulation) perspective on the text soon

following.

Again, please bear with me during these few technicalities. Believe me, they are *very relevant* to our current events!

Now, on to one of the key texts on this amazing event, written by the apostle Paul to a church located in Asia minor, within the city of Thessalonica. This will be an extended quotation, but very necessary, I assure you.

¹³ *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 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*

(Continued on page 7)

Now What? (an offer worth considering!!)

⁹ *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.* ¹⁰ *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,* ¹¹ *who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? 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 1:9-11

5, 4, 3, 1 . . . Lift Off! And Jesus, the Christ, really *did* lift off, right from the backyard of His crucifixion; just across from the Kidron Valley.—Which is so like Jesus, don't you think? As He confronts the big issues head-on, and answers them: not denying that He was the Christ, for example—while first confirming the power of this major paradigm shift to a simple Samaritan woman as she sought to avoid the cancel culture by getting her daily water in the heat of the day (Jn. 4:3-7). Meanwhile, among the most educated and informed theologians of the day, a premier scholar was still scratching his head, after hearing Christ say that he must first be “born again” to enter the Kingdom of God. So, too, some of our learned scholars & teachers might do well to first observe and study the most obvious demonstrations of Scripture regarding Christ's returning, before seeking to uncover secrets in the exotic niches of imagery and symbols: not insisting that Jesus address us on *our* terms, because we are so learned, while being willing to bend *our* thinking to meet His (and the scriptures) before we make assumptions concerning His return.

In our opening text we see one of the clearest and most certain statements made within the context of future events found within Scripture: revealing not only the manner of Christ's returning, but the specific location of His return—and by simple deduction, and the reading of text directly linked to this event—the condition of the geopo-

litical climate of that day. All of this we are invited to gain access to because, as Jesus lifted off from the Mount of Olives, two angels revealed to observers clear and precise information on the second coming of Christ.

Please note: there is no mention of a 2nd and 3rd coming: only one returning of the Christ (Heb. 9:27-28).

Now, with a simple knowledge that there will be only *one* second coming, we can be assured that we can simply link this event to that revealed in the opening chapter of John's Revelation where “every eye shall see Him” even those who pierced Him (Rev. 1:7)—and since it seems safe to assume that the one who actually pierced Jesus has died, we may also assume that this viewing of Christ's returning will not be made available through a simple television transmission, but by a far superior “technology” that will access the minds of those existing throughout the cosmos: in heaven, earth, and under the earth (Col. 1:19-20 & Phil. 2:10).

Further, by simply studying the prophets and combing through their writings for an event that matches the one described in the first chapter of Acts, we may come upon the final chapter of the prophet Zechariah, and its opening verses.

¹ *Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst.*

² *For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

³ *Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.*

⁴ *And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. . . .*

Zechariah 14:1-4

Pretty straightforward, don't you think? Therefore, knowing that Christ returns *after* the Great Tribulation (see also Matt. 24:29-31 —and realize that discarding this passage, will require much more than a simple denial, such as, “We don't believe that way.” Circular reasoning & dispensational meanderings which posit a special Jewish chastisement at the end of the age—while exempting those *grafted into Israel's lineage* (Romans 11:18ff) —are an example of modern day hypocrisy and circular reasoning . . .). Forgive my own meandering, from our stated purpose.

We are simply discovering the obvious, from Scriptural prophecies that clearly forecast Christ's



second coming.

To review: we are now linking two clear cut statements made within Scripture: one given by angels, at Christ's ascension, and a second: derived from the direct fulfillment of statements recorded in the writings of an Old Testament Prophet, Zechariah (chapter 14, verses 1-4). From these two clearly stated texts we may safely conclude:

1. That Israel must exist, before Christ returns
2. All nations upon the face of the earth will then be in agreement to execute a "final solution," by seeking to wipe Israel off the face of the earth.
3. A world-wide plan to thwart God's work upon the earth (by eliminating God's visible and literal demonstration of His love and promises to humankind)—will then be in progress.
4. The nations of the world will appear to be succeeding in this endeavor (at first, in Zech. 14:2)
5. Then Christ Himself, will appear in the heavens and descend to the Mount of Olives to execute God's judgment upon the nations.

By combining the above points with a few other "open statements" made by Christ, we can also deduce a few other definite events, both past and present. For Christ foretold that there would be a Diaspora (a world wide dispersion) of the Jewish nation, that comes to an end

within the generation that would see His returning. (These conclusion may now appear to be quite obvious . . . but when tracking their fulfillment, in time and space— even Zionists (such as Theodor Herzl) found it difficult to believe them—yet this celebrated hero, is today buried in the very place Scripture forecast would become Israel's homeland (Zech. 12:6)).

Back to the Messiah's projection for the nation of Israel: her past, within her projected Diaspora and, further, into our present day . . .

²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains . . .

²² For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³ But woe to those who are pregnant . . . ! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. ²⁴ And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Luke 21:20-24 [emphasis added]

Here, Jesus was actually forecasting a period of Gentile domination within the Kingdom of God (through what we formally acknowledge to be "the Church" (Romans 11:25 (Romans 2:28,29))). Therefore, what is strongly implied within the above text is that after an extended period of spreading the gospel throughout the Gentile world, there will be a new chapter in the history of current events, i.e. the reestablishment of the nation of Israel. Now, I really must issue a caveat, at this point, because I want to be totally up front with those reading this material: for we are about to take a leap into faith, which is necessary when both issuing prophecy (Romans 12:6) as well as when interpreting the same.

Therefore, may I suggest that when studying prophecy one should always do so very prayerfully(?): seeking the *Lord's interpretation* of these events (Mark 13:35- 36, 2 Peter 1:20-21). I say this because we are about to return to the writings of the prophet Zechariah, where Christ obviously is shown returning . . . and then back up two chapters, where we read:

¹ *The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him:* ² "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, . . . ³ And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are

(Continued on page 6)

gathered against it."

Zechariah 12:1-3

This is where "prophecy watching" by prayer warriors requires great humility. Remember what we read about "all nations" uniting against Israel, just prior to His returning? This implies that there must be very serious and heart wrenching current events preceding that event! In this light it does appear that the above text is describing the sorrows, or "birthing pangs" (Matt. 24:8) of day, when the peoples of the world (at the UN??) begin seeking ways to "cancel" the re-forming of the nation of Israel which took place in 1948 (this is a quick "fly over" version of what is now taking place in our world).

Again, discernment is required as we also remember that prophets write in a manner that does not always reference historical events in a sequential manner (I know, I'm not supposed to be telling this to those who may just now have begun to wonder why everyone does not see the "obvious" within these prophecies. No, quite honestly, it has taken decades to avoid pitfalls and "blind alleys" in this treasure hunt for the truth.)

So, what have we accomplished thus far? Like a puzzle master, assembling a massive 5000 piece puzzle, we have just taken some of the most obvious pieces (the edges of the puzzle) and begun to put those pieces in order. Further, we have also begun to "look at the box top" and to pay attention to what the "finished picture" should look like: it shows Christ descending from the sky, exiting a cloud, and executing judgment upon a Christ-rejecting world. Further, we know that prior to these events, the *nation* of Israel must exist.

And what does this mean for us, today?

It means that Jesus never told His followers that He would "return tomorrow." Quite the contrary, He told them that (for starters) the beautiful Jerusalem temple—one of the wonders of the ancient world, would one day be so decimated that not even one stone would be left upon another (Matt. 24:2). The ful-

fillment of this event took place *after* the apostle Paul was beheaded: so he could never have taught that Jesus would return "tomorrow." Further (this is where we must "bend our minds" to agree with the Lord's) Christ stated that when we see the budding of the fig tree (the reviving of the nation of Israel that was cursed—as the fig tree was, while Jesus was on earth (Matt. 21:19-20, 24:32-35))—Within *that* (or this) generation we will see the completion of all the events foretold to His disciples.

²⁹ *Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.*

³² *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.*

³³ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

Luke 21:29-33

A "generation" according to Scripture, lasts from 70-80 years (Psalm 90:10)—or, it could last 100 years + (Genesis 15:13-16). Israel became a nation in 1948. Eighty years from 1948 would bring us to the year 2028. Seventy years would bring us to the year 2018. The Corona Virus, *which mandated the controlling of the economies of the world* (much as the Mark of the Beast will mandate)—took place in 2020.

Do you think that, just perhaps, the Lord was trying to give His people an early wake up call?

In the future, when we "bump into" the mark of the beast, which may easily be executed via total control of digital currencies; in a manner similar to the social credit scoring system of the Chinese Communist Party, today—when believers will be forbidden to take part in that global economy (Rev. 13:16-18, 14:8-12). —*That* will be a wake up call, to end all others! Yet, also consider the following:

Within the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew (which follows the 24th from which we often quote from, for end time events) Jesus tells a parable of ten virgins: of five who are wise and five foolish: All of them go to sleep at the close of the age (see also 2 Thes. 2:1-3). Then, in the middle of Christ's parable there is a cry made "Behold the Bridegroom comes, go out to meet Him!" (vs. 6) —and, suddenly, the virgins awaken to run around in disarray, seeking to reignite their fire for the Lord—seeking to prepare themselves for the test of a lifetime: a test that they, no doubt, thought they would never have to undergo, since they had been told that they would be exempt (through teachings promoting a pre-tribulation rapture, for example).

Yet, suddenly these virgins (true believers, by all appearances – 2 Cor. 11:2) discover that they are *not* exempt; and neither are we. Do you get this?

I really do believe that the Lord has graciously allowed the devil to "shake our world" with the Corona virus to allow His sleeping church-at-large (those "virgins") to awaken early. Why? So that we may have an extension of our freedoms. I also believe our Lord to be, not only a God of judgment (Isaiah 30:18, 1 Pet. 4:17) —but One of mercy, as well (James 2:13).

Within Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, after describing the rapture of the church in the fourth chapter (as Jesus did, within Matthew's 24th) Paul makes reference to a sleeping church (as Christ did, in His 25th chapter of Matthew)—except that Paul admonishes us: "**Therefore let us not sleep, as others do. . .**" (1 Thes. 5:6).

—So perhaps, just perhaps, if we awaken sufficiently? Perhaps we may awaken the rest of the church, as well.

Then, who knows? Perhaps the "equation" of Christ's returning may be extended, to 100 years . . . or more?

This is something that I do believe, *is worth considering. . . ! !*

(Continued from page 3)

—**Not Tomorrow**—

the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17
[emphasis added]

Paul then adds a special word, of encouragement to those digesting the above teaching, by saying;

¹⁸ *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Thessalonians 4:17-18

Just in case that last sentence of comfort should seem odd in the context of tribulation—please note how the apostle opens his very next letter, to this very same fellowship of believers:

⁴ . . . *we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,⁵ which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;*

It really does appear, does it not, that the above trouble (tribulation) was starting to weigh heavily upon this precious fellowship of believers.

Paul continues:

⁶ *since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,⁸ 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.*

2 Thessalonians 1:4-8

In other words, not only was the Thessalonian fellowship *already in tribulation* when this revelation was being given to them—but Paul appears to pronounce a curse upon their persecutors, to boot!

—So that, with the attitude of a

faithful soldier, willingly going into battle, and into harm's way to provide peace and safety for those at home—these faithful ones endure trials and tribulations on the battlefield for a much higher cause, than mere personal ease and pleasure.

For this reason also, the apostle Paul admonished other brethren:

²² *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 14:22

So, what is it, that Christians are to be particularly concerned with, within the GT (we must cut to the chase here)?

It is the issuance of the Mark of the Beast. For, when we get into the heart of John's Revelation, we discover a clearly stated event, and warning, regarding a day when all believers still living upon the earth must face the Antichrist, who will cause everyone ". . . both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." (Rev. 13:16-17)

In plain English (and the context of our discussion)? Our earlier illustration of planes crashing, busses and trains going out of control, within a world being left "in a lurch" as Christians are suddenly snatched out of this world—**describes a world in which the Mark of the Beast has not yet been issued and therefore . . . persons who are be trusted with critical jobs and responsibilities (such as surgeons within the operating theater, perhaps?)—may suddenly be snatched away from this old evil world, and leave those poor persons who are ill equipped to fend for ourselves, without their able assistance—to "tribulate" and suffer.**

Yet, it is actually within in context of tribulation that our opening text is revealed. Have you noticed? The ones being "taken" (with others being left, in Matt. 24:40-42) are living in **very humble conditions:** grinding meal, or simply sleeping in cramped quarters—very much like slaves, within concentration camps (note that Samson, after having his eyes removed, was tasked with a similar hardship (Judges 26:20-21)).

Nevertheless, American Bible scholars who hold to the very popular pre-tribulation viewpoint, are (to their credit) consistent in denying that our opening quote in any way refers to the rapture of the church.²—Also denying that saints in the Tribulation will participate in the rapture—but merely *survive*, into Christ's millennial reign!³

Again, I say, a clear and honest reading of the Scriptures, themselves, do not in any way exempt believers from the trials and hardships experienced within the world around us. Yet we are granted grace, comfort, and spiritual enablement: And finally...a great reward.

⁴ *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:4

And this is only the beginning!

And yet, there really is another perspective that I believe God would have us explore: *Within an early awakening.* What perspective is this, exactly? Come and see . . .

†

What Must I Do?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."
Acts 16:31

How?

... If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9,10

In Other Words

Acknowledge: your need

—as a sinner (Romans 3:23, II Cor. 5:14-15)

Accept: His work on the Cross —to be your Savior

Confess: your acceptance of His lordship over you.

Live for Him: with your new life.

For the scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be ashamed."

Romans 10:11

ENDNOTES;

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¹Left Behind. Wikipedia. < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Behind > 2022/12/26.

²The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.) —referencing Matthew 24 and the great tribulation (comments on Matthew 24:27-31).

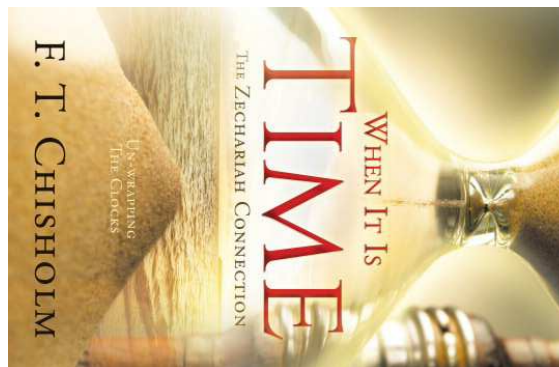
³Ibid—comments on Matthew 24:36-41 (Mark 13:32-33; Luke 21:26-27)

WHAT TIME
IS IT, NOW?

Features:
1. But ... Not Tomorrow
2. NOW WHAT? (An Offer worth Considering!)

p. 2
p. 4

A Comprehensive Approach
—to end time events



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