

God's Promised Protection  
**PLACE OF SAFETY**  
*or Secret Rapture?*

**Many believe in a coming secret, supernatural RAPTURE, when Christ will carry away His saints to heaven. But is this what *the Bible* teaches?**

**God *does* promise protection—a place of safety. Is this a literal place, located somewhere on earth? Can we know?**

**Horrific prophecies *will* soon be fulfilled. Vast numbers *will* perish in the coming Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord. Who will be spared—PROTECTED? What does God expect of His servants?**

**The Bible reveals the answers!**

**THIS BOOKLET IS PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE AND IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST BY THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD.**

It is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of the Church and others who have elected to support the work of the Church. Contributions are welcomed and gratefully accepted. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support this WORK OF GOD around the world are gladly welcomed as co-workers in this major effort to preach the gospel to all nations.

Copyright © 2003, 2004 by The Restored Church of God

All Rights Reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

## *TABLE OF CONTENTS*

PART ONE –  
Is a Secret Rapture Coming? ..... 5

PART TWO –  
The Promised Place of Safety ..... 15

PART THREE –  
Who Will God Protect? ..... 27

## Is a Secret Rapture Coming?

This could be one of the most important pieces of literature you will ever read. Why? Civilization is on a collision course with unprecedented world trouble. Global problems will soon grow much worse, culminating in the Great Tribulation, followed by the year-long Day of the Lord, concluding with the Return of Christ. The vast majority of mankind is blissfully *unaware* of—and therefore utterly UNPREPARED for—what lies ahead.

You can be an exception!

According to professing Christianity, a secret rapture is coming. Only those who are “saved,” “born again,” and have “accepted Jesus in their hearts” will be secretly whisked away without warning—regardless of where they are or what they are doing—to the safety of heaven. This supposed event, signaled by the sudden vanishing of millions, will “shock the world.”

All “unbelievers”—including the billions who have never even heard the name of Christ, much less understood *why* He came to earth—will remain to suffer through “7 years” of Great Tribulation. The ANTICHRIST will rule over those who are left behind, who missed out on their chance to be “vacuumed” into heaven, at Christ’s “secret” second coming. During this time, war, disease, famine and religious deception will proliferate throughout the world. The rapture theory also states that the antichrist will allow the Jews to build a temple in Jerusalem, which, 3½ years into this tribulation, he will turn on and destroy.

At the end of this period of turmoil, Christ will return—supposedly His *third* coming—but this time He will bring final defeat to the antichrist and his forces.

Try to imagine these headlines after the widescale confusion, caused by Christ’s initial “rapturing” away of His saints: “Driverless bus crashes—hun-

dreds killed,” “Schools in chaos: Where are the teachers?,” “Hundreds killed when pilot-less airplanes collide,” “200-car traffic jam: Where did all the drivers go?,” “Factory employees gone, management wondering—‘Why?’,” “Baseball game canceled: The Boston Angels are missing”—the possibilities are endless. Many have become so consumed by this doctrine that there has developed a series of movies and best-selling books, including board games, about the aftermath of such a worldwide vanishing act!

A “Christian” group has created a “Rapture Index,” which they have termed a “Dow Jones Industrial Average of end-time activity” and a “prophetic speedometer.” Supposedly, by calculating world conditions, this index can closely forecast when the Return of Christ will take place. “The higher the number,” this group’s website states, “the faster we’re moving towards the occurrence of pre-tribulation rapture!”

Another group has even gone so far as to program a “post-rapture” email chain letter, which would automatically be sent to family and friends after the rapture. The letter states, “Dear Friend, This message has been sent to you by a friend or a relative who has recently disappeared along with millions and millions of people around the world. The reason they chose to send you this letter is because they cared about you and would like you to know the truth about where they went. This may come as a shock to you, but the one who sent you this has been taken up to heaven...”

The email continues, “I am sure that there will be a lot of speculation as to what happened to all these people. The theories of some scientists and world leaders will have so much credibility that most of the world will believe them. It will sound like the truth!”

Incredibly, great numbers of sincere people have remained trapped in this fictional thinking! Are you among the millions who believe the rapture theory? Have you gone along with this idea, simply because it also “sounds like the truth”? Have you placed your hope in this belief without taking the time to prove what the Bible teaches?

God’s inspired Word—the Bible—reveals the TRUTH about what is to occur at Christ’s Second Coming. Much is at stake in this teaching. In fact, your life depends on it!

### History of the Rapture Theory

While many may believe that the rapture theory has always been a teaching in the Christian faith, they will be surprised to find this is simply not true. This idea came into existence much more recently than most admit. It was *unknown* to the world before the sixteenth century.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, reformers such as John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Luther and John Huss campaigned against the dominant, forceful Catholic Church. These reformers shook Catholic theology to its core, even identifying the Catholic Church as the antichrist! Previously, this church

would have followed its established tradition of forcing its beliefs, traditions and teachings on those who disagreed. However, the opposition building behind these reformers was mounting, as was the public undermining of Catholic power and authority, and the church was almost forced to comply.

To counter this, the church at Rome called for reconciliation, and convened a council in the city of Trent in 1545. From this council sprang the “counter-reformation” teachings of three Jesuit priests, Joseph Ribera, Cardinal Bellarmine and Alcasar (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, “Antichrist,” John McClintock, James Strong).

In the 1600s, Ribera wrote a personal commentary on the book of Revelation. To remove the church’s “burden” of being labeled antichrist, Ribera spawned the belief of *futurism*, meaning that the prophecies of Revelation *only* applied to the last seven years of mankind’s history. Thus, the Catholic Church simply could not be the antichrist because this role was *yet* to be fulfilled—in the time immediately preceding Christ’s Return!

This planted the seed of the rapture theory.

In view of this Catholic acceptance of new teachings and tradition over biblical truth, read the following quote: “A rule of faith, or a competent guide to heaven, must be able to instruct all the truths necessary for salvation. Now the Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice...” (*Faith of Our Fathers*, Cardinal Gibbons, p. 89, 1917).

The Catholic leadership did not hide their claim that tradition outweighed Scripture. In theory, the Council of Trent supposedly gave *tradition* equal authority to the Bible. In order to justify such teachings as futurism, and to accommodate the growing tide of Protestant reformers, Catholicism had to look somewhere *other* than Scripture.

Less than 300 years after Ribera began this theology, futurism found itself in the heart of Protestantism, starting with Anglican preacher John Nelson Darby.

Darby, known as the father of the rapture doctrine, picked up where Ribera left off and invented a form of interpreting the Bible known as *dispensationalism*. Darby taught that Christ would secretly collect His followers at His Second Coming, and then return to defeat the antichrist seven years later—at His *third* coming. From Darby, this teaching continued through one of his disciples, Cyrus Scofield, who assembled the Scofield Bible.

In *Heralds of the Dawn*, John A. Anderson records the extent of what originally was simply Catholic “counter-reformation” theology: “The Catholic Apostolic Church had its beginning in 1830. It was founded in Britain...by men who claimed divine inspiration. They said the Holy Spirit revealed to them that the last days had come, that the Lord was about to return, that first He would ‘rapture’ the believers who were ready, at a secret coming, that other believers would be left to pass through the great tribulation, after which Christ would come in manifested power.”

Since the sixteenth century, countless millions of professing Christians have blindly accepted the rapture theory—fearing what might happen if they do not follow suit. This doctrine originated in the minds of Catholic priests—not the sacred teachings of God!

In I Corinthians 14:33, the apostle Paul states, “For God is not the author of *confusion*, but of *peace*, as in all churches of the saints.” Verse 40 states, “Let all things be done *decently and in order*.” What could possibly be *orderly* or *peaceful* about millions of people suddenly vanishing from beds, workstations, automobiles, airplanes, etc.? The *obvious* result would be utter *confusion* and *chaos*!

Let's state this plainly! The rapture is a doctrine of chaos, and makes God and Christ the AUTHORS of *confusion*.

In addition, could so many theologians and religionists *all* be inspired to come up with new ways of interpreting the Bible and revealing “truth” nowhere found in God's Word?

Since God is perfect in all His ways, and is the wisest and most intelligent Being in the universe, then surely He does not require man to invent endless theologies, such as *futurism* or *dispensationalism*, simply to UNDERSTAND His Word! By following the first rule of Bible study—*let the Bible interpret itself*—one can easily understand the sequence of events surrounding the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

### What Will Really Happen?

Matthew 24 is a prophecy from Christ (often referred to as the “Olivet Prophecy”), describing the Great Tribulation and other end-time events that will precede His Return.

In verses 37 and 38, Christ refers to the Tribulation occurring when society is “as the days of Noah were.” In the time of Noah, the world was “filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11), and people were going about their daily business when *disaster* came upon them—just as it will be at “the coming of the Son of man” (vs. 39).

People in the end time will be so caught up in their daily lives, seeking pleasure and personal gain, that the Tribulation—called the worst time of trouble *ever* (vs. 21)—will take the world by surprise. II Peter 3:4 states, “And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, *all things continue as they were* from the beginning of the creation.”

In Luke 21:35, Christ refers to the Tribulation, “For *as a snare* shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” Ecclesiastes 9:12 states, “For man also knows not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are *caught in the snare*; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time [the end time], when it falls suddenly upon them.”

The Olivet Prophecy primarily deals with the siege and eventual destruction of Jerusalem, possibly including a restored temple in Jerusalem. This destruc-

tion of Jerusalem is referred to as “the abomination of desolation” (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). While most Bible prophecies have a dual fulfillment, this prophecy actually has a *third* realization of Daniel's original prophecy in Daniel 12:11. (To learn more about world conditions preceding Christ's Return, read our free article “What is the ‘Abomination of Desolation’?” and our booklet *Are these the LAST DAYS?*)

The *first* fulfillment occurred in 167 B.C., when Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes offered a pig upon an altar to the Greek god Zeus directly on the temple mount in Jerusalem. The *second* fulfillment is a type of what Christ referred to in Matthew 24:15, occurring when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The *third* fulfillment is yet to occur in the very near future, and is the main fulfillment of Matthew 24:15.

A short time before Christ returns to earth, armies will again surround Jerusalem and another “abomination” will take place. At that time, God's people are commanded to *flee to safety* (Matt. 24:16-22; Luke 21:20-27).

Matthew 24:16 states, “Then let them which be in Judea FLEE into the *mountains*.” When the third fulfillment of this prophecy occurs, immediately before the coming Great Tribulation, God promises that His people will literally *flee* (Rev. 12:14). The coming Great Tribulation is real—as is God's promise to protect His people. But, different than the rapture theory, the Bible reveals that there is a designated place ON EARTH—not heaven, behind the “pearly gates”—where His true Church will be safe during the 3½ (not 7) years of Tribulation. Matthew 24 also reveals that the surrounding of Jerusalem by foreign forces is the event that signals when God's people should *flee*—not be *raptured* away to heaven! (Part Two covers this in detail.)

Jesus was concerned for His people, and warned them of this time of great trouble, and their inevitable need to flee invading armies and escalating wars. He knew that, in all three instances, those with small children, and especially those with nursing babies, would have particular difficulty escaping (vs. 19). He also warned us to pray that the time of flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath (vs. 20). The inclement weather of winter and the sanctity of the Sabbath would make flight more difficult.

Consider: Why would Christ instruct us to pray concerning the time of our flight if we were simply going to be supernaturally carried away? Also, why would He have given the following admonition?: “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house” (Matt. 24:17; Mark 13:15). This would require a *conscious* decision to *actively* do something. The belief in the rapture bypasses the need for PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY!

### Rapture “Proof Texts”

Rapture supporters commonly cite the following five verses as supposed “proof texts” of their theory's validity as a biblical teaching.

**(1) Daniel 9:27:** “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the *midst of the week* he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of *abominations* he shall make it *desolate*, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Due to the muddled prophetic understanding of rapture theorists, they claim that the phrase “one week,” refers to the last seven *years*, or seven “prophetic days,” of mankind’s history. But this is not so!

This verse actually refers to the abomination of desolation (Dan. 12:11), when occupying forces make an end of the Jews’ daily sacrifice at the Temple. Daniel 9:27 also addresses the final week of the 70 weeks prophecy and shows that Christ would be cut off in the middle of the week, after the 3½ “days”—actually 3½ *years*—of His earthly mission. (To learn more about this prophecy, read our free article “What is the ‘Seventy Weeks’ Prophecy?”)

**(2) Matthew 24:36-42:** “But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only...Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come.”

The comprehension of any difficult scripture must start with understanding the context in which it is written. Beginning in verse 40 of Matthew 24, Christ talks about the condition of society in the end time. People will be working “in the field” and “at the mill” (vs. 40-41), carrying on with their daily cares. They will also be “eating and drinking” and “marrying and giving in marriage” (vs. 38). In other words, life will *seem* normal just prior to the Tribulation. Verse 42 confirms that it will fall upon people *unexpectedly*. Death from famine, pestilence and military invasion will collectively claim two-thirds of the population of the modern nations of Israel (Ezek. 5:12). Captivity will claim the remaining third.

Many professing Christians believe that those whom God deems worthy will be magically snatched from wherever they are and taken to heaven for protection from end-time events. However, if they were to apply the *same* logic to *every* aspect of Matthew 24, they would have to conclude that *only* those individuals engaging in the specifically described activities could hope to receive divine protection. That *only* those who are “in the field,” “grinding at the mill” or “on the housetop” (and only half of these) can expect to be spared. (This would make God not only a respecter of persons but also a respecter of occupations!) Christ was not referring to *specific situations* but rather *general scenarios*.

**(3) John 14:1-3:** “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

The term translated “mansions” means “rooms, abode or residence.” The temple during the times of ancient Israel provided rooms for the various priests who served there. The different rooms signified different *positions of authority*. Thus, the word “mansions,” as used here, refers to positions of authority—OFFICES. These verses show that, upon Christ’s Return, His faithful servants will work under His direction as kings and priests.

These events take place on EARTH—not in heaven. We see that, at Christ’s Return, “...we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the *air*: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thes. 4:17). Yet, it is also shown that “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east...and the LORD my God *shall come*, and all the saints with [Him]” (Zech. 14:4-5). Revelation 5:10 clearly states, “And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH.” (Also read Matthew 5:5.)

**(4) I Corinthians 15:50-53:** “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the LAST TRUMP: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory*.”

Rapture supporters use these verses to show the rapidity of events in Christ’s “second, secret coming.” However, notice the phrase “the last trump.” This refers to the seventh—last—trumpet, which announces Christ’s Return *to the entire world*. This last trumpet is also referred to in Revelation 11:15 and I Thessalonians 4:15-16, and sends an immense, reverberating shrill sound that *all* inhabitants of the earth will hear.

Notice Matthew 24:30-31: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall *all the tribes of the earth mourn*, and THEY SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a *great sound of a trumpet*, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

This cannot describe Christ’s “secret” coming—because there is no such event! This seventh and last trumpet blast announces Christ’s Return, and it is then when He gathers His people. At this point, Christ’s true followers will be changed into perfect, immortal, incorruptible beings. This last trumpet also announces the First Resurrection, when the “dead in Christ” will also be raised to spirit-begotten immortal life.

**(5) I Thessalonians 4:15-17:** “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heav-

en with a SHOUT, with the voice of the archangel, and with the TRUMP OF GOD: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be *caught up* together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Again, this verse describes Christ's Second Coming, which is announced by the *seventh* and *last* trumpet blast. There can only be ONE last trumpet—ONE seventh trumpet. To state that Christ will return a *third* time suggests that He lied about His prophesied Coming! If Christ returns to earth a third time, there must be another trumpet blast, which would make it the "eighth trumpet," and the seventh and last trumpet really the "second-to-the-last-trumpet." This is utterly ridiculous! In effect, the rapture theory makes Christ a LIAR—and the PERPETRATOR of one of the *greatest acts of confusion in history!*

After examining the plain words of the Bible, the above "proof texts" used to promote rapture theology actually prove the *falsehood* and *deceitfulness* of this doctrine!

#### "Astrape" and "Parousia"

In Matthew 24:27, Christ describes His Second Coming: "For as the *lightning* comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the *coming* of the Son of man be."

There are two Greek words used in this verse, *astrape* and *parousia*, which are commonly misapplied and altered to change Christ's clearly intended meaning.

The word *astrape* is the word from which "lightning" is translated. This word means, "lightning, glare, bright shining." Would anyone dare suggest that people will not be able to see lightning that is to occur *worldwide*? However, some suggest that all the inhabitants of the world will *not* see Christ's Return, even though it is foretold to be as a GLARE and BRIGHT SHINING that "comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west."

The word translated "coming" comes from the Greek word *parousia*, meaning "being near, coming, presence." But rapture supporters claim that it really does not mean "coming," but instead, a "secret nearness" or "invisible presence." This is plain dishonesty with Scripture. Christ said exactly what He meant. If He had meant "secret nearness," would He not have plainly told His disciples that He would secretly sweep them away to heaven? Instead, Christ said "coming"—*parousia*. This same Greek word is used in various other scriptures (Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; I Cor. 15:23; 16:17; II Cor. 7:6-7; 10:10; Phil. 1:26; 2:12; I Thes. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15). In all the passages where *parousia* is used, they refer to the same meaning—not some mysterious "secret nearness."

Revelation 1:16 describes Christ appearance as "the sun [that] *shines* in his strength." In the context of Matthew 24:27, Christ's *parousia* is His shining bright and trumpeted Return!

#### Christ's Second—*Final*—Coming

As we have seen, the rapture theory has *some* truth mixed with MUCH error. The difference between this teaching and what God's Word really says about Christ's Return is astounding.

The Bible reveals that there will be a final fulfillment of the "abomination of desolation" in the near future, when a religious-political force stops the daily sacrifices in Israel. This destruction will be one of the two aspects of the sign for God's true people to flee, again, as you will learn in greater detail in Part Two, to a physical place of protection. Soon after this, the Great Tribulation will strike the world, to the surprise of all earth's inhabitants.

This is explained in I Thessalonians 5:2: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a *thief in the night*." II Peter 3:10 further states, "But the day of the Lord will come as a *thief in the night*; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

This worst time of trouble in history will last for 3½ years, until the last trumpet announces Christ's Return. Acts 1:9-11 states that, just as Christ had departed to heaven after His crucifixion and resurrection, He will return on a cloud. Revelation 1:7 adds, "Behold, He comes with clouds; and *every eye shall see Him*, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

Zechariah 14:4 further reveals a location on earth where Christ will stand: "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

With a shout, "the *dead in Christ shall rise first*" (I Thes. 4:16) and true Christians will be changed into spirit beings. All the world's inhabitants will witness this climactic event.

Matthew 24 adds, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a TRUMPET, and they shall *gather* together His elect *from the four winds* [the "dead in Christ" will be resurrected—not raptured—from their graves], from one end of heaven to the other" (vs. 30-31). Christ and His saints will then rule for 1,000 years, in the established kingdom of God. *This* is the PLAIN TRUTH about what will occur as the end is reached.

Do not be fooled by teachings claiming that Christ has already returned a second time, or that He is returning in secret. Matthew 24:23-27 clearly warned, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; *believe it not*."

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if...possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the *secret* chambers; believe it not. For as the *lightning* comes *out of the east*, and *shines even unto the west*; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Christ emphatically WARNED that many false teachers would arise, deceiving most people about His Second Coming. Do not be fooled by such misguided doctrines as the rapture. This teaching is not found in the Bible—it is a *manmade* fiction aimed at giving false hope to the unwitting and unsuspecting!

The Bible records the unmistakably LOUD and BRIGHT Coming of Christ. His Second—FINAL—Coming will mark the end of the 3½-year period of the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord, and will inaugurate the 1,000-year reign of Christ and His saints *on the earth*.

Will you reject the teaching of the rapture—and accept the *truth* of what God really promises, as taught in your Bible?

## The Promised Place of Safety

Unrest grows around the world. Violence is exploding. Terrorism mounts. Bad news increases, while good news is increasingly *scarce*. Conditions worsen daily. In a world of insecurities, people are unsure of what the future holds. As world troubles increase, many fear the onset of World War III and the manifestation of biblical end-time prophecies. Many are at least somewhat familiar with what the Bible says, and hope to escape the dreaded time of the Great Tribulation, leading up to Armageddon.

But what does the future hold? All want to know. Many have opinions, but few recognize where to find the answers. Others *think* they understand the prophecies of the Bible—and this is probably most true of the book of Revelation. Yet all popular *human* interpretations of this book are ridiculous. They are a complete jumble of ideas where a *little* truth is invariably mixed with MUCH error. These are almost painful to read—yet major magazines report that great numbers do believe these dangerous, counterfeit scenarios.

To add to this confusion, there is a growing culture of “end-of-the-world” prognosticators, who manipulate and twist Bible prophecies to feed the public’s hunger for “understanding” of the unknown.

Even Christ’s original disciples, who heard Him personally deliver the Olivet Prophecy of Matthew 24—describing events preceding Christ’s Return—did not grasp its full impact, especially the time element. Similarly, the prophet Daniel did not understand what he was inspired to record. Notice: “And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go your way, Daniel: for the words are *closed up and sealed till the time of the end*” (12:8-9).



These prophecies are no longer “closed up and sealed”—this understanding has NOW BEEN MADE KNOWN—and the end of this age looms *much closer!* It has become God's time to REVEAL what lies ahead. The stage is set and He has lifted the curtain on the future. This world must be warned while there is still time—and so must *you* be warned!

Revelation describes soon-coming terrible plagues and earth-shaking events! Take heed. If you do, God's Word also reveals that you can *escape*—and, as you have seen, it will not be by a secret rapture!

### The Great Tribulation

God promises to protect His people from the terrible suffering that will be unleashed on the world during the Great Tribulation. His statements are real. Will you take them to heart?

In order to better put this promise into perspective, consider this admonition: “Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to ESCAPE all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36). The phrase “accounted worthy to escape *all these things*” pertains to end-time events—those just prior to Christ's Return. Recall that verse 35 states, “For as a *snare* shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” This passage shows that it is God's purpose that some will be spared from—can ESCAPE—the global calamity lying just ahead. (Part Three discusses *who* will qualify for God's protection.)

Matthew 24:21-22 shows the unprecedented worldwide turbulence of this future time: “For then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, *there should no flesh be saved* [alive]; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”

Of this time, Daniel 12:1 states, “...and there shall be a *time of trouble*, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time...” Of this same time of extreme global troubles, Jeremiah 30:4-5 adds, “And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.” Then, in verse 7: “Alas! for that day is *great*, so that NONE IS LIKE IT: it is even the *time of Jacob's trouble*; but he shall be saved out of it.”

Only a remnant—a tenth—of Jacob (the modern descendants of Israel) will survive these tumultuous times (Ezek. 6:8; Isa. 6:11-13; Amos 5:1-3).

### Overview of the True Church

Another of God's explicit promises of safety is found in Revelation 3:10, addressing the Philadelphian era of the Church of God: “Because you have kept the word of My patience, *I also will keep you from the hour of temptation* [trial], which shall come upon *all the world*, to try them that dwell upon *the earth*.”

This verse refers to the Great Tribulation. This is the “snare” Christ referred to when He warned His flock to watch and pray always (Luke 21:35-36).

Let's see how this promise of protection fits into the overview of Church history as foretold in Revelation 12. Verses 1 to 4 reveal that Satan—the “great red dragon” (vs. 9)—attempted to devour Christ as He was born of the “woman” depicted there, symbolizing the Old Testament Church (Acts 7:38), ancient Israel.

Verse 6 adds, “And the WOMAN [now *spiritual* Israel, the New Testament Church] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore *days*.”

In Bible prophecy, a day often represents a year, as revealed in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. The Church's time in the wilderness began in A.D. 325 (with the Nicene Council), continuing until 1585. In A.D. 325, the Roman Empire forbade the true Church from continuing to function within its domain, forcing God's people to flee to survive. Catholic domination ended in Britain in about 1585 (and shortly afterward, Holland). This allowed the struggling remnants of God's Church a greater degree of religious freedom after 1,260 years of suppression and martyrdom by the counterfeit church.

Revelation 12:9 continues, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” This leads to the event described in verse 13: “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.” Again, this woman is the true Church that Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18). The timing of this persecution is in the near future.

Revelation 12:14 leads to a pivotal point. Notice how the woman is protected: “And to the woman were given *two wings* of a GREAT EAGLE, that she might fly into the wilderness, into *HER PLACE*, where she is nourished for a *time*, and *times*, and *half a time*, from the face of the serpent.”

In the Bible, a “time” is equal to a prophetic year of 360 days. Revelation 12:14 refers to the same period of time, that being 3½ “times,” 42 months or 1,260 days (3½ x 360 days). Revelation 12:14 describes the context of time in units of literal days, just as we find in Daniel 12:11-12. (We will see that these 1,260 days correspond with the verses in Daniel.) In Revelation 12:14, the woman was taken into “her place” in the wilderness for 3½ times, or 1,260 literal days—which is 3½ years. This is inconsistent with the idea of a rapture.

Some have misunderstood the phrase “she might *fly* into the wilderness.” This does not indicate the mode of transportation, but rather that the woman escapes, or flees—“flies”—from Satan's persecution. Notice that Exodus 19:4 uses this same term: “You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how *I bore you on eagles' wings*, and brought you unto Myself.” Israel did not literally fly out of Egypt—they walked! Yet *God* (the “great eagle”) still carried them on “eagles' wings”—He *provided* for and *protected* them in their journey.

The providing of a place for the Church (Rev. 12:14) corresponds directly to the promise given to Philadelphians (Rev. 3:10). Revelation 12:15-16 con-

tinues this prophetic account: "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a *flood* after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and *swallowed* up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

This paints a dramatic picture, with miraculous delivery necessary to provide escape for God's people. The term "flood" represents an army sent to destroy the Church. A number of scriptures use this analogy. For example, notice Isaiah 59:19: "When the enemy shall come in like a *flood*, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." Speaking of Korah's rebellion against Moses' authority, Numbers 16:32 gives the following account: "And the earth opened her mouth, and *swallowed* them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods."

The account of the earth swallowing up the flood is also analogous to the Red Sea closing in and drowning the Egyptian army pursuing the Israelites. The parallels are clear. Revelation 12:15-16 points to God's deliverance of His Church during the time of protection when the woman is "in *her place*, where she is nourished" (vs. 14). The timeframe indicates Satan's attempt to destroy the woman.

Revelation 12:17 shows what happens next: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which *keep the commandments of God*, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." This occurs during the Tribulation—the time of Satan's wrath against the Church of God and the modern nations of Israel.

The "remnant of her seed" are those of God's people who are *not* protected during the Tribulation. Those protected are much fewer than this "remnant." The Greek word *loipoi*, translated "remnant," more accurately means the "remaining ones, residue, or the rest."

Thus, Revelation 12 gives a 2,000-year overview of the true Church until the Return of Christ. Before discussing the sequence of events given in Daniel 12, we must examine an event in which God protected the Headquarters Church in the first century, prior to another time of tribulation for Judea and Jerusalem.

### The Fall of Jerusalem

A series of provocations by Roman procurators against the Jewish priesthood after about A.D. 60 led to an inevitable revolt by Jewish separatists. This led to escalating military reprisals, which resulted in another dramatic delivery of God's true servants.

In Judea, in A.D. 66, the Roman army, under General Cestius, came in sight of the walls of Jerusalem and could have taken the city at that time. For unknown reasons, Cestius lost his momentum and turned back. The Jews took heart. Cestius had missed his chance. The Roman army later regained their momentum under General Vespasian, but their advance was also suddenly halted as he raced to Rome to become emperor. Upon his departure, his son Titus assumed command.

These two delays were not random events. God's Headquarters Church was still in Jerusalem! Of course, it was only a matter of time before Rome's mighty armies inevitably defeated Jerusalem. But Christ, who oversees His Church, was guiding and altering events to allow His people to vacate Jerusalem before the city was besieged and finally devastated by the Roman armies.

The famous Jewish historian Josephus gave a detailed account of various signs that occurred at the time of Pentecost A.D. 69. He related that many had witnessed, shortly before Pentecost, what seemed to be formations in the clouds that took the form of troops and chariots surrounding cities. Josephus continued, "Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner court of the temple...they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a multitude, saying, 'LET US REMOVE HENCE'" (*Wars of the Jews*, bk. VI, ch. V, sec. 3).

God's people did flee Jerusalem at that time. But without God's intervention, they would have never been able to leave. Since the Roman armies were preparing their siege upon Jerusalem, these faithful few had to exit in full view of Roman soldiers, before crossing the Jordan River. They also had to contend with fellow Jewish fighters who probably considered them traitors. With God's protection, the new exiles proceeded northeast to the little town of Pella. Within months, after much horrible suffering and starvation, Jerusalem fell to the Romans. The temple was destroyed.

## Fanatical Belief?

Some may find it embarrassing to believe in a literal place of safety. They associate it with religious fanaticism, such as the Jim Jones cult, who retreated to Guyana in the late 1970s, and the crisis at Waco, Texas in the 1990s, and other religious groups with fanatical or bizarre conduct.

The actions of such leaders, and the groups following them, distort and taint the Bible's teachings, repelling many from the truth. Such fanatics personify this prophetic scripture: "But there were *false prophets* also among the people, even as there shall be *false teachers* among you...And *many* shall follow their pernicious ways; *by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*" (II Pet. 2:1-2).

Some, aware of growing world

trouble, have expressed that whatever happens, they do not want their relatives, friends, neighbors or associates to look upon them as religious fanatics. They seem to prefer to suffer the *greatest time of trouble* the world has ever known, rather than obey God and risk suffering ridicule and scorn.

What about those who fled Jerusalem in A.D. 69, who may have been considered traitors, fanatics or cowards? Then, what about those who stayed behind, concerned about what friends and associates would think? In the end, these were victims of starvation, crucifixion and other horrors of war. Those who *obeyed* and *trusted* God—following His instructions to flee—survived.

This will again be crucial in the prophesied flight to come!

Without *divine, miraculous* intervention, those of the Jerusalem Church would have perished during the destruction of this city. Again, a prelude to the warning described by Josephus had included cloud formations that clearly manifested a siege army—WITH DISCERNABLE TROOPS AND CHARIOTS—surrounding the walls of Jerusalem. Then, on Pentecost, there occurred a quaking that captured everyone's attention, followed by a *great* noise. After that, there came the "sound as of a multitude, saying, 'LET US REMOVE HENCE.'"

Quite possibly, the voices of the multitude were discernable only to God's people—just as Paul heard the voice in Acts 22:6-9, when others with him did not. Those in tune with God heard and heeded the warning to flee. Understand. God is not limited in His ability to bring about *any* form of miraculous manifestation, whether an earthquake, signs in the clouds or the loud noise of a multitude. (In documenting those miracles, Josephus recorded that the temple priests could also hear these voices.)

Yet, many ridicule the promise of a flight to a place of protection, on the premise that "there is no way of knowing the time to flee" or "one cannot know that the signal is valid," etc.

How shallow these excuses are in light of the miracles God performed!

These modern critics would insist that Pella was the worst possible choice because it was within territory easily accessible to the Romans. Jewish patriots, who most likely regarded as traitors those who fled Jerusalem, also patrolled the region around Pella. But God protected the Jerusalem-Pella congregation exactly where *He* led them. They survived and even thrived in Pella for a number of decades. "Rational" objections could never negate God's ability to carry out His purpose.

### Church Eras and the Place of Safety

The place of safety is directly tied to the biblical understanding of Church eras—that Christ has guided His Church through seven successive eras, described in Revelation 2 and 3. Those who dismiss the plain scriptural record that the sixth era—Philadelphia—is promised protection, also dismiss the existence of seven literal Church eras. Conversely, those who reject this doctrine inevitably reject the belief in a literal, single place of safety.

A general overview of Church eras, represented in the following chart, is helpful in grasping the historical perspective, recorded in Revelation 2 and 3.

There will be elements of three different eras alive when Christ Returns. In Revelation 2:25, Christ addresses the Thyatiran Era: "But that which you have already hold fast *till I come*." This short statement shows that there will be a remnant (however tiny) from this era alive when Christ returns.

Next, in Revelation 3:3-4, Christ addresses the Sardis Era: "Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, *I will come on you as a thief*, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis which

## Overview of Church Eras

Below is a listing of the seven successive eras along with the approximate dates and key events of each era. (The term "RC" in the chart is an abbreviation for Roman Catholic.)

CHURCH ERA	DATES (approx.)	EVENTS
<b>Ephesus</b> (Rev. 2:1-7)	A.D. 31-135	Apostolic era (A.D. 31-98). Persecution begins at Rome (A.D. 64). Church flees to Pella; Jerusalem falls (A.D. 69-70).
<b>Smyrna</b> (Rev. 2:8-11)	A.D. 135-325	Church leaders attempt to combat heresy (A.D. 150s-190s). Ten years severe persecution (Rev 2:10; A.D. 303-313). Nicene Council outlaws true religion; Church flees (A.D. 325).
<b>Pergamos</b> (Rev. 2:12-17)	A.D. 325-900	Constantine of Mananali leads Church (about A.D. 675). Sergius leads Church (about A.D. 800). Paulicians relocate to Balkans (about A.D. 800-900).
<b>Thyatira</b> (Rev. 2:18-29)	A.D. 900-1600	Peter DeBruys and Henry of Lausanne lead Church (1104-1135). Peter Waldo leads Church (1161-1217). RC Inquisition begins against Church (1229). Gutenberg Bibles printed (1450). RC persecution for the 1,260 years restrained after 1585. Destruction of Spanish Armada (1588).
<b>Sardis</b> (Rev. 3:1-6)	1600-1934	Church revives in England as persecution abates (1600s). Bampfields and Stennetts lead Church (about 1650-1750). Stephen Mumford establishes Church in America; 1668. Arriving immigrants set up churches in Pennsylvania and New Jersey (1700s). Many depart Church to align with Adventists (1840s-1860s). Church of God Seventh Day established in Stanberry, Mo. (early 1900s).
<b>Philadelphia</b> (Rev. 3:7-13)	1934-1980s	Herbert W. Armstrong begins first radio broadcast (1934). Radio broadcast begins in Europe (1953). Literature, TV and radio reach over 100 million (1970-1980s). Mr. Armstrong dies (1986).
<b>Laodicea</b> (Rev. 3:14-22)	1980s-present	Remnants fragment after apostasy.

have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." Christ is obviously correcting a Sardis remnant *alive at His Return*.

Then, in Revelation 3:10, is Christ's promise to Philadelphians to protect them from the hour of temptation, the Tribulation, which does not begin until late in the Laodicean era. The Philadelphians existing at that time will be a *remnant* of the Philadelphian era—including those who "anointed their eyes" (vs. 18).

Revelation 2 and 3 show that there will be remnants of Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia at the time of Christ's Return. Scripture shows that none of Laodicea survive the Tribulation. Those who purchased "gold tried in the fire" (Rev. 3:18) will die physically but survive spiritually. Those who yield under pressure and take the mark of the beast (13:15), to save their physical lives, will lose out on eternal life for failing to hold fast.

The above scriptures make very obvious how interrelated the understanding of Church eras is with the place of safety. Anyone rejecting either one of these doctrines inevitably abandons the other. (To understand the importance of Church eras, read our booklet *The History of God's TRUE CHURCH*. It would also be helpful to study *Where is God's TRUE CHURCH?*)

### Sobering Prophecy

Ezekiel 5 records a truly stunning prophecy concerning the nations of modern Israel in the coming Tribulation. We must carefully examine it for God's promised protection of His faithful servants.

Verse 1 states, "And you, son of man, take you a sharp knife, take you a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon your head and upon your beard: then take you balances to weigh, and divide the hair."

Verse 2 shows what is to happen to the portions of thirds: "You shall burn with fire a *third part* in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and you shall take a *third part*, and smite about it with a knife: and a *third part* you shall scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them."

Verse 3 introduces a fascinating detail: "You shall also take thereof a *few* in number, and bind them in your skirts." Verse 4 expounds on this: "Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel."

To understand this passage, we must allow the Bible to interpret itself. Verse 1 is thoroughly explained in verse 12: "A *third part* of you shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of you: and a *third part* shall fall by the sword round about you; and I will scatter a *third part* into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them."

The first third of the populations of all modern Israelitish nations are foretold to perish from disease and famine. The second third will die from military invasion. Then, the final third attempt to escape—unsuccessfully. The majority of this surviving third are taken into captivity.

Notice the clarity with which Jeremiah records their fate: "And it shall

come to pass, if they say unto you, Where shall we go forth? Then you shall tell them, Thus says the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity" (15:2).

The term "skirts" in Ezekiel 5:3 is from the Hebrew word *kanaph*, better translated "wings" (as noted in most Bible margins). This is the very same Hebrew word translated "wings" in Exodus 19:4, where God bore Israel on "eagles' wings"! This parallels Revelation 12:14, in which the Church is taken to "her place" by the wings of an eagle. Ezekiel 5:4 shows that some who are protected at first will be cast back into the fire—the Tribulation.

### "Blessed Is He That Waits..."

A crucial series of events is described in Daniel 12. Notice verse 10: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." There are *two* times of trial ahead. The *first* will be upon God's people, in which "many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." This continues into the *second*—the Great Tribulation—which strikes the world in general ("which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" – Rev. 3:10), and the modern nations of Israel in particular ("the time of Jacob's trouble" – Jer. 30:7).

Recall that Revelation 12:13 describes the trial upon God's people occurring right before the Tribulation: "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child."

The next event is covered in Daniel 12:11: "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the ABOMINATION THAT MAKES DESOLATE set up, there shall be a *thousand two hundred and ninety days*." This describes a period of 1,290 days, beginning with the setting up of the abomination of desolation. Revelation 12:14 shows the Church will be protected for 3½ times—1,260 days.

These time periods begin with *different* events, but end with the *same* event—the Return of Christ!

Another time period is introduced in Daniel 12:12: "Blessed is he that *waits*, and comes to the *thousand three hundred and five and thirty days*." This describes 1,335 days that begin with a specific event but also end at Christ's Return. The graph on page 24 shows how these three durations of time overlap.

### 1,335 Days—1,290 Days—1,260 Days

Since Daniel prefixes the event beginning the 1,335 days with "blessed is he that waits," this is designated as the *event* or *signal*—at this *specific* time—for which the Church waits. It will be something the Church will recognize, just as the Church at Jerusalem recognized the miracles signaling them to flee. God is capable of revealing every necessary event to His people at the precise time. From all indications, the first-century leadership of God's Church knew

that their destination was Pella, and how and when to get there. Although the Bible does not precisely reveal what this sign will be, there will be no doubt in the minds of those willing to trust God's instructions and directions.

Forty-five days later, the abomination will be set up. When this occurs, it will be known to all who are close to God. The dual event of the daily sacrifices taken away and the abomination being set up will become evident.

Matthew 24:15 describes this event: "When you therefore shall see the *abomination of desolation*, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:)." This is clarified in Luke 21:20: "And when you shall see *Jerusalem compassed with armies*, then know that the desolation thereof is near."

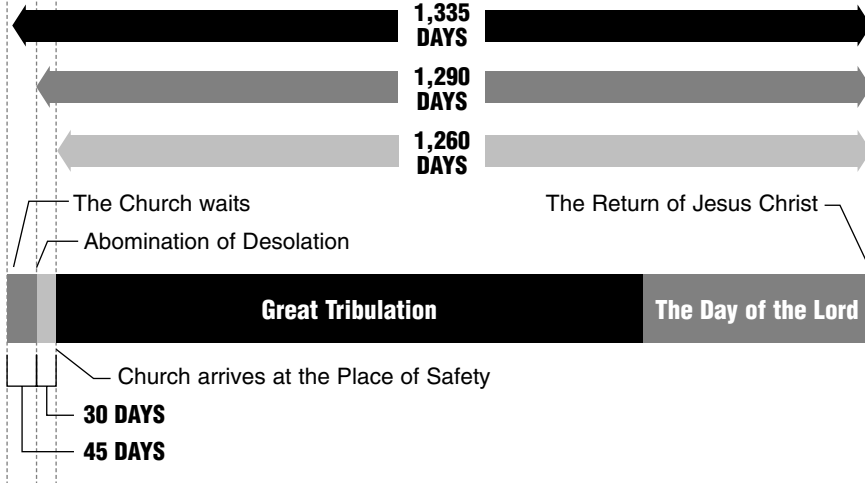
The abomination of desolation will involve not only the sacrifices being taken away, and a religious figure standing in the holy place, but also Jerusalem being surrounded by armies. The *most evident* of these signs would naturally be Jerusalem being encompassed by armies.

### Great Haste!

Notice Christ's instructions as to what to do when the abomination of desolations is fulfilled: "Then let them which are in Judea *flee* to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it *depart out*; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto" (Luke 21:21). The message here is to flee Judea quickly! Recall that when this warning to leave is heard, the urgency is so great that those who flee are instructed not to return home for *anything* (Matt. 24:17-18).

Comparing Daniel 12:11 (1,290 days) with Revelation 12:14 (1,260 days) shows that there are 30 days between the setting up of the abomination of desolation

## Three Overlapping Time Periods



olation until the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Notice the 45-day difference between the event or signal for which the Church waits and the time the abomination appears. This 45-day period allows for the Church to gather in Judea. The 30-day period following the appearance of the abomination allows for the Church to travel to the place of safety.

Recall that Satan will send an army to destroy the Church, with God supernaturally opening the earth to swallow the army, destroying it. This happens shortly before the Church arrives at the place of safety.

Hosea 5 describes this same 30-day period: "And the pride of Israel does testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them. They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall A MONTH devour them with their portions" (vs. 5-7).

This reveals why the Church must flee in great haste. During that short interval, God could be holding events back, just as He did when Noah prepared the ark and when Lot had to vacate Sodom. Imminent destruction was apparently held back until these men and their families were in a position of safety.

Notice Luke 17:26-27, regarding Noah's time: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, *until the day* that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." The point is: Once Noah's family was in the ark, the Flood came quickly on the world!

Luke 17:28-29 tells us about Lot's situation: "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the *same day* that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." Once again, as with Noah's time, destruction came the very same day—immediately *after* Lot had escaped!

God held back events before Lot's escape from Sodom and Gomorrah. God protected Lot's family in the small city of Zoar for some time, but they later took refuge in the mountains. Notice God's reply as Lot sought refuge in Zoar: "Haste you, escape there; for *I cannot do anything till you be come there...*" (Gen. 19:22). Regardless of Lot's location, God could have destroyed Sodom, but He held back events until *certain individuals* were taken from harm's way!

Likewise, Christ indicated that His people will flee in great haste without returning for their possessions or anything that would slow them down. Events are apparently held back until His people have left Judea (Hos. 5:5-7; Matt. 24:16; Luke 21:21).

Timing is vital. This is why God's servants must look to Him to know what to do and when to do it. Suppose that some in the Jerusalem Church learned in advance that Pella would be their place of protection. Suppose they actually fled there years in advance. What would have happened? They would have been killed by the Roman armies that devastated Pella in A.D. 69. God allowed His people to go there only *after* the Romans had already destroyed Pella!

### Do You Believe God?

Those who reject and ridicule a place of safety deny all God's explicit promises to protect His people.

Keep this simple! You have seen that Scripture emphatically *proves* there will be a specific, physical PLACE OF SAFETY!

Remember Christ's admonition, "But pray you that your *flight* be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day" (Matt. 24:20). Verse 15 reveals the signal for God's people to flee—the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. Those in Judea at that time are to flee into nearby mountains.

Verses 4-15 follow with Christ listing a series of events to occur sequentially until just before His Return. Verse 15 concludes, "whoso reads, *let him understand.*"

Most today do not—and *will not!*—UNDERSTAND the shocking crush of events soon to smash into civilization. Here is why. God's servants obey Him (Acts 5:32). Understanding flows directly from obedience to God: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that *do His commandments*" (Psa. 111:10).

All who yield themselves in obedience to God, striving to be His servants, *will* understand these great prophecies and be found worthy to ESCAPE this worst time of trouble ever (Luke 21:36)!

Professing Christianity refuses to obey God, rejecting His authority—and remaining blind as a result. No amount of trying to understand will unlock God's purpose to those who will not keep His Law. Remaining in confusion, they mangle and misunderstand the prophecies concerning the terrible, civilization-shattering events to soon directly impact every human being on this planet!

The promises of protection from these end-time calamities are intended for, and will only be understood by, God's true people. Two revealing passages in Isaiah speak of those whom God will protect from Satan's army: "Let MINE OUTCASTS dwell with you, Moab; be you a covert to them from the face of the spoiler" (16:4). (While the *location* of Moab introduces a fascinating aspect of the place of safety, with the Bible offering certain possible clues, precisely *where* God may choose to protect His people is not the subject of this booklet.)

Even more specific, notice God's direct promise, ten chapters later, to those who will be protected during the 3½ years of the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord: "Come, MY PEOPLE, enter you into *your chambers*, and shut your doors about you: hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation [God's wrath—the Day of the Lord] be overpast. For, behold, the LORD comes out of His place *to punish the inhabitants of the earth* for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (26:20-21).

God *will* provide a place of safety for His people. Will you TRUST Him—BELIEVE His promises? Will you QUALIFY for His deliverance and protection?

## Who Will God Protect?

Civilization will soon experience untold—and almost entirely now UNSEEN—calamity! Almost no one envisions what is coming on the entire western world, and later the whole world. Troubles and difficulties are mounting worldwide, and will soon spin completely out of man's control. Yet nothing is out of *God's* control! He has a Master Plan, involving 6,000 years in which man is learning that he cannot rule himself or solve his problems and ills apart from God.

Of course, the WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW lies beyond the terrible time foretold to strike the whole world *soon*—and, as you have seen, *suddenly*. But only a small percentage of the world's population will live through oncoming events into that time. You have seen that God will take faithful Christians to a specially-prepared place of safe protection, and keep them from the "hour of trial," which will come on the "whole earth." We have learned that their flight will occur *before* horrendous, earth-jarring, supernatural PUNISHMENT strikes all nations.

But we have also learned that even some of *God's people* will not be protected. Like the vast numbers caught unprepared when atomic bombs struck two Japanese cities at the end of World War II, and when millions of Jews lost their lives because they could not believe the Nazis capable of a holocaust, many today will be unnecessarily swept away into suffering punishment and death when they could have been protected—could have SURVIVED!

Verses 9 to 11 of Revelation 6 describe the opening of the FIFTH SEAL—the Great Tribulation. This passage symbolically paints a grim picture of martyred Christians from previous ages awaiting a final time when "their fellow servants

also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” Revelation 12:17 identifies who these “fellow servants” are. We have seen that they are described as “the remnant of her [the Church’s] seed”—those that “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” While verses 13 to 16 describe those whom God *will* protect, verse 17 identifies those who will *not* be protected. This remnant is directly persecuted by Satan, as he “makes war” with them, eventually causing their death.

Understand! As we learned in the previous section, including the inset about Church eras, even some *true* Christians will not escape the devil’s wrath in the Tribulation!

This is most serious! Think of it. If even certain *true* servants of God will not be spared from coming martyrdom, because their conduct and beliefs are deficient in various ways from what God expects, then He must have *very high standards* for those He DOES select for protection. Your life hangs in the balance. Quite literally, if you miscalculate or falsely assume, the personal price you pay could be catastrophic. It is time we WAKE UP to what is at stake!

Grasp this! You have a PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY—and the remainder of this booklet covers basic, vital points that you *must* know, if you hope to escape what others will not! Also recognize that, however important, just “keeping the commandments of God” (Rev. 12:17) is not enough to be protected from—to escape—the devil’s angry attack. Although the world ignores or rejects this great SPIRITUAL LAW altogether, God requires far more than just this essential but basic obedience to escape the coming times of world trial.

### You Have a Responsibility

We have seen that the rapture theory has no biblical basis whatsoever. But this may not be the worst part of this false doctrine. Consider for a moment. Merely waiting to be whisked away—mysteriously *vacuumed* into heaven—produces a carefree and careless attitude in those awaiting Christ’s Return. This thinking subtly defeats the need for any *personal responsibility*—for taking action in a host of vital areas of Christian conduct and behavior. Tragically, millions are now being set up to “Simply believe in Christ, and He will take care of everything else.”

This is short-sighted, dangerous thinking! It is also very irresponsible.

Recall that the Bible instructs God’s people to “*Watch* you therefore, and *pray* always, that you may be accounted worthy to *escape* all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

Numerous verses demonstrate that Christianity involves *active effort*. True conversion does not allow for *passive bystanding*. Of course, just the act of escaping implies effort. But Luke records that one must do at least two other specific things for escape to be possible: “WATCH...and PRAY always”!

This further introduces the need for taking action and accepting personal responsibility!

### Watch and Pray

Take Christ’s instruction at face value. There is no room in Luke 21:36 for disinterest, or even passive semi-interest, in the exact sequence of crucial events, as they lead up to the fulfillment of the greatest single prophecy in the Bible—Christ’s Return. All who wish to truly be God’s servants—and to stand before Christ in His kingdom—will be found carefully WATCHING for *many* specific trends and events, either occurring now or lying just over the horizon.

The Restored Church of God has prepared many tools to help you look ahead to—and carefully WATCH—BIG EVENTS, soon to EXPLODE on the world scene! I urge you to develop a burning interest in what will happen and to learn while there is still time. Determine to grasp, with full understanding, how and in what order these events will occur. Nothing less will do.

Luke also said to “pray always.” Obviously, prayer—“effectual [poured out], fervent [intense] prayer” (Jms. 5:16)—requires real effort. Such prayer is not done automatically or easily, and you must set your hand to learn *how* to do it and to WORK at it.

Most people have no idea how to pray, or even that they should *regularly* talk to God. That is what prayer is—talking to God. Most offer empty, canned, self-righteous platitudes, repeating the same thing over and over, contrary to Christ’s teaching (Matt. 6:7). Others merely pray selfish prayers, reflecting the “gimmies.” Still others seem to confuse thinking “happy thoughts” or “positive thinking” with prayer. Of course, these *are* good, if correctly based. But they are not prayer!

Take time to read our straightforward article “The Keys to Dynamic Prayer.” It will forever change the way you view the powerful, personal tool of prayer. Also take the time to learn how to *study* God’s Word, and to *meditate* on what you are reading, sometimes accompanied with *fasting*. (We also offer vital, thorough, helpful articles on all these topics.) You can understand and master these tools. Done effectively, they will change—and SAVE—your life!

### Real Faith Is Vital!

Paul writes, “Without FAITH it is *impossible* to please [God]” (Heb. 11:6). This incredibly blunt statement is in the Bible. Once again, take this passage for exactly what it says. Then recognize that the Bible teaches (in both the Old and New Testaments) that “the just shall *live* by His faith” (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17).

Many of the Bible’s greatest prophecies lead to and culminate in Christ’s Second Coming. While His establishing of the kingdom of God will be the most wonderful event the world has ever seen, what precedes it will be something vastly different. Humanity is hurtling toward untold catastrophe. Tumultuous events will soon engulf *every* society, *every* nation—affecting the

lives of *every* human being on earth. Even for the strong, with events simultaneously overlapping *and* crescendoing, it will take immense trust—real FAITH!—in God's power to avoid panic, and to hold steady, simply believing His promises. Surely, there is no time in human history when the need for true faith would be greater than when these prophecies begin to unfold.

Therefore, Christ asks this all-important and *open* question about faith, directed to each person who will consider it in the time just prior to His Return: “When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

God wants you to rely on Him—to trust Him completely in everything. Remember. You really have no choice if you hope to please Him. In the near future, when others are gripped by fear, uncertainty and confusion, their whole world collapsing around them and having no idea where to turn for answers, God does not want *His* people to fret, worry or agonize over what will happen next—or to themselves. Think of it this way. One of the greatest things that you really *should* worry about is if you do *not overcome worry*. God promises to provide your every need *if* you believe Him, trust Him and wait on Him without doubting. Having done this, you should EXPECT Him to continually deliver you, no matter how impossible your personal circumstances may become! (Take time to read our booklet *What is real FAITH?*)

### The Crucial Role of Patience

In Luke 21:19, in the context of events swirling around God's people, Christ instructs, “In your *patience* possess you your souls [lives].” Christ knew that having and *exercising* tremendous patience, in the face of swirling, confusing events, is an inseparable companion to real believing faith.

In the middle of Revelation 13, which describes cataclysmic events happening in Europe and impacting the whole world, verse 10 states, “Here is the *patience* and the *faith* of the saints.” The rise of the false system described there certainly requires enormous patience and faith to endure, because of the almost non-stop persecution it has brought to God's people.

Further, in Revelation 3:10, Christ commends His faithful people in the end time, those of the Philadelphian era, “Because you have kept *the word of My patience*, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” The New King James Version renders the italicized passage as “My command to persevere.” This helps to better convey Christ's meaning. Scripture shows how patience, endurance and perseverance *are* vital in a Christian's life, especially in the end time, when the severity of world conditions will be worse than ever before.

Take time to look up the following scriptures, noticing that many are attached to having patience at the end of the age.

In Matthew 10:22, Christ states, “And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that *endures to the end* shall be saved.” Then notice Matthew 24:13, in the middle of the Olivet Prophecy. When describing all that

will occur prior to His Return, He repeats, “But he that shall ENDURE UNTO THE END, the same shall be saved.”

If Christianity was compared to a track meet, it would be more like running a marathon than a sprint. It involves ENDURANCE, yet it also means running to win (I Cor. 9:24).

Next, read Acts 14:22. It recounts part of Paul's ministry: “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we [all Christians] must through *much tribulation* [trial] enter into the kingdom of God.”

Now notice Revelation 14:12: “Here is the *patience* of the saints: here are they that *keep the commandments* of God, and the *faith* of Jesus.”

We have already seen that Daniel 12:12 states, “Blessed is he that *waits*...” Why would there be a defined waiting period—until the 1,335 days begin—if extraordinary patience—and patient *endurance*—was not necessary?

Galatians 5:22 includes *longsuffering* as one of the nine fruits of God's Holy Spirit, to be evident in every Christian's life. “Suffering long,” enduring through trials, requires a great degree of PATIENCE to always remember that God has promised a way of escape for those praying and seeking His will, and watching world conditions.

### A Life of Growing and Overcoming

Most people feel trapped, unable to *overcome*—to GROW in areas of weakness, fault and sin. Instead of overcoming their problems, most are overcome *by* their problems. This should not be—this need not be! You can overcome in your life.

Through the years, I have pastored thousands who have been called to God's Way. All people struggle against the pulls of the flesh and the temptations of Satan and his world. Some overcome. Others do not.

Christ said, “Enter you in at the strait [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad [easy] is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait [difficult] is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). Most seek the easy, “broad” path in life.

Overcoming is hard—DIFFICULT!—and it is a continuous struggle. But it IS possible (Matt. 19:26). You can overcome (Phil. 4:13). If you are a Christian, you *must*!

Yet, this world is drifting along, completely unaware of God's great purpose for man, which is to build holy, righteous character in this life. God is preparing a team of those who will qualify to be part of restoring His government to earth at Christ's Return (Acts 3:19-21).

In Revelation, Christ stated, “And he that OVERCOMES, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give *power over the nations*: And he shall *rule* them with a rod of iron...” (2:26-27). A chapter later, He adds, “To him that OVERCOMES will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (3:21).



These verses picture Christ re-establishing God's government over all nations on earth. Christians will receive *real power* to RULE. But first, they must overcome SIN—defeating, with God's help, their flesh, this world and the devil!

Overcoming is rarely easy, nor does it happen overnight. It is a lifelong battle against well-established attitudes and a former way of life that the Christian has now rejected and turned from. The one who is walking God's path is striving to *curb* and withhold himself wherever God's Word instructs him. He strives to *exercise* himself in matters where God says to do so. When God gives instruction to *do* something, the Christian strives to *do* it! When God instructs *not* to do something, he strives *not* to do it.

Christians are those who follow—who COPY—Christ (I Pet. 2:21). What then is the pattern Christ established for us to follow? Did *He* overcome?

In reference to His own struggle to remain free of sin and perfect in character, Christ said, "In the world you shall have tribulation [how true today!]; but be of good cheer; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD" (John 16:33). Christ had overcome both the world and its god—Satan (II Cor. 4:4). Recall that He said, "*even as* I ALSO OVERCAME, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Christ overcame and qualified to rule. Just as He *qualified* to replace Satan, so must we!

In addition, the Christian strives to fulfill the command to "grow in grace and knowledge" (II Pet. 3:18), also on a daily basis.

Such enormous power to rule—to guide and affect millions of lives during Christ's millennial rule—could never be given to people who are *unprepared*—who have not QUALIFIED to properly use it. God will not hand this unprecedented authority to people who might rebel and revert to Satan's ways. God's servants must diligently use *this life* to build His very character, so necessary for those who will one day hold offices of great authority.

### Zeal Lacking

The final era of Christ's Church—Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)—lacks sufficient ZEAL to receive God's blessings and promise of protection. Christ describes those of this era as "lukewarm," stating that because they are "neither cold nor hot, I [Christ] will spew you out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16). Verse 17 continues with Christ describing a smugness that has taken hold within many of His people.

In the world at large, most people do not get excited about much of anything, preferring to "relax"—"be cool"—"take it easy"—not get "worked up." But this is not a picture of the true Christian. He is one who is on fire—for *all* things of God! His whole heart, mind and being is committed to living God's Way. He continually seeks to fully submit to God, yielding to God's direction in all matters. He recognizes and practices Paul's instruction, "I beseech you...brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies A LIVING SACRIFICE, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable service*" (Rom. 12:1).

Most in the world do not want to sacrifice for any but themselves, feeling this to be very *unreasonable*. They are committed to "getting while the getting is good"—unconsciously seeming to follow the unstated goal of "seeing who can die with the most toys." The vast majority of people lead lives reflecting little more than seeing how much they can accumulate in this life.

But the Christian recognizes that his life belongs entirely to God. He is committed to using it for God's purpose. He is interested in serving others—in GIVING rather than GETTING (Acts 20:25). His heart is in preaching the gospel to the world (Matt. 24:14) and God's warning message (Ezek. 33:1-9) to the modern nations descended from ancient Israel. He wants to help fulfill Christ's command, incumbent on His servants for 2,000 years: "Go you therefore, and *teach all nations*, baptizing them [into] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to *observe all things* whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

### Birth of the Church and God's Work

Christ understood and taught His disciples that of Himself He could do nothing (John 5:30). The Spirit of God enabled Him to accomplish all that He did. Prior to His ascension to heaven, Christ told His disciples He would soon send *them* God's Holy Spirit.

This event, the beginning of the Church of God, occurred in A.D. 31. Christ described the significance of what happened at that time: "But you shall receive POWER, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: And you shall be *witnesses* unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the *utmost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Ten days later, God gave His Spirit, initially to just 120 disciples.

Infused with the Holy Spirit, God's people were now empowered to fulfill His mission. Like the first-century Church, this same *twenty-first-century* Church has neither millions of members nor political power or clout.

The true New Testament Work of God also began in A.D. 31. In ignorance of the real gospel of the Bible, and what really is God's Work, this world's Christianity has trusted in a false gospel, merely about the *Person* of Christ. Most today think they must spread *this* "gospel," seeking to bring as many people as possible to Jesus to be "saved." This is far from the truth of the Bible.

Delivering Christ's *real* gospel to the world—the GOOD NEWS of the coming *kingdom of God*—is and always has been the true Work of God's Church!

### Only One Church

Christ said, "I will build *My Church*" (Matt. 16:18). No matter how men interpret this verse, it speaks of a single Church! Christ continued, "and the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail against it." He promised that *His* Church could never be destroyed.

In the previous chapter, Jesus had said, “But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the *commandments of men*” (15:9). In Mark’s parallel account of this statement, He continued, “Full well you *reject the commandment of God*, that you may keep your *own tradition*” (7:9).

The world’s Christianity is filled with traditions, assumed by most to be biblical—when the Bible often teaches the exact opposite. One of the largest is the traditional view of what is the New Testament Church. Most ministers, theologians and religionists typically define the church in this way: “All those who sincerely believe in Jesus as their Savior comprise the church.” This is often followed with the familiar statement, “There are many routes to heaven.” Though the Bible nowhere teaches that heaven is the reward of the saved, the clear implication of this statement is that people can largely believe what they want, or be a part of any group that they choose, and still be Christians. While people may sincerely believe these traditional ideas—they are sincerely wrong!

We saw that the Bible declares, “God is *not* the author of CONFUSION, but of peace” (I Cor. 14:33). God’s Church *does* reflect PEACE—not confusion!

You need not be confused about the identity of the true Church. God inspired Paul to write, “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21). Surely God would not exclude something of such magnitude—such vital importance—as the matter of what and where His true Church is. He would never tell people to prove what cannot be proven.

God’s Church also walks in complete unity—AGREEMENT—with all of the Bible’s doctrines. His servants live Christianity, practicing all the truths and ways of the Bible without compromise. While persecuted in a world rejecting God’s authority, they press forward, determined to fulfill their INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL!

When speaking to His disciples about the importance of seeking the kingdom of God, Christ said, “Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the KINGDOM” (Luke 12:32). By no stretch of the imagination can churches comprised of over *two billion* professing Christians be considered a “little flock.” However, somewhere on earth today is that same little flock faithfully yielding to and obeying God, and fulfilling His SUPREME PLAN in this age.

You must set out to PROVE the location of God’s true Church!

When Christ stated, “I will build My Church,” it went far beyond just beginning, increasing and protecting it—insuring its survival. There is a great TRANSCENDENT PURPOSE for the Church that Christ built—the only true Church of God!

### God’s Work—The Mission

God’s Church has a MISSION. Every member is called to become a part of the exciting, biblically-defined Work of God (Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20). We understand the need to spread the truth of God’s real message—to *announce* a new

world order coming to a struggling, suffering civilization, incapable of even addressing, let alone fixing, its mounting troubles and difficulties. While the commission began with the original apostles, The Restored Church of God continues it today. The message and goal are the same—only the methods differ.

This mission has a two-fold commission. The first is “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The second is to feed the flock of God—to supply each member of God’s Church with spiritual food (John 21:15-17). As God’s members are fed, they grow spiritually, allowing them to serve and dedicate themselves more to the Church’s great First Commission. Today, large numbers of people can learn the full truth of God as never before. Many thousands around the world are learning sound, proven principles, straight from their Bible, helping them to live happier lives and become better citizens.

The Restored Church of God is a fountain of true knowledge in a parched world with ever-increasing evils!

### Christ’s Great Commission

God’s people are on a crusade to take Christ’s ANNOUNCEMENT of the kingdom of God—the most important MESSAGE on earth today—to a sick, dying world. They are passionate about—consumed with—the need to complete Christ’s Great Commission while there is still time (John 9:4). *You* are now reading God’s final warning message to all those who will take heed!

Again, The Restored Church of God is fulfilling that commission, and you can be a part of it—YOU CAN BE PROTECTED. By now, you know that no secret rapture is coming, but instead God promises His faithful people a place of special protection—COMPLETE SAFETY—from the incomprehensible horrors soon to engulf the entire planet!

When world leaders, scientists, educators and others offer warnings of worsening global problems, the general public, feeling largely helpless, tunes them out. In addition, the world has many who find reasons to “cry wolf.” As a result, most people have become *conditioned* to ignore grave warnings.

All who scoff at GOD’S WARNING, explained in this booklet, will soon scoff no more!

Will you prepare now—and be ready when time has run out? Will you submit to and obey God? Will you watch and pray always, demonstrate faith and practice patience, exhibiting zeal to grow and overcome, with your heart total in the Work of God, having sought out the Church that Christ built?

Will you be protected from the “hour of trial”—from the “snare”—that shall soon “come on ALL them that dwell on the face of the WHOLE EARTH”?

**The following literature expands  
on topics discussed in this book:**

- AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN BIBLE PROPHECY
- *Who* or *What* is the BEAST of Revelation?
- REVELATION – Explained at last!
- And there shall be PESTILENCES
- And there shall be FAMINES
- And you shall hear of WARS

040701  
PS

**The Restored Church of God**

P.O. Box 23295  
Wadsworth, OH 44282  
USA

P.O. Box 4064  
St. Catharines, ONT L2R 7S3  
CANADA

Phone: (330) 334-2266  
Fax: (330) 334-6513  
E-mail: [info@TheRCG.org](mailto:info@TheRCG.org)  
Web: [www.TheRCG.org](http://www.TheRCG.org)