

THE RAPTURE

PART II

AS SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
ANTITYPE IN I THESSALONIANS 4, 5

By Arlen L. Chitwood

In I Thess. 4:16, 17, the Lord Himself is seen descending from heaven, though not coming all the way to the earth. Christ, after descending to a place above the earth, will “shout [*lit.*, ‘issue a command’].” The voice of the archangel (Michael) will then sound, a trumpet will be blown, and “the dead in Christ” from throughout the dispensation will come forth.

Resulting from Christ’s command, “the dead in Christ” will be raised. Christ — Who is “the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25) — must be present to give the command in order for the dead to be raised (*cf.* John 5:28, 29; 11:25, 43). Then, living believers — those Christians alive at the end of the present dispensation — will be caught up together with resurrected believers to meet the Lord in the air.

THE ONE NEW MAN

Near the end of the past dispensation, God inter-

rupted His dealings with Israel seven years short of completion, set Israel aside, and called *an entirely new nation* into existence. This new nation is not Jewish; nor is this new nation Gentile. Rather, this new nation is comprised of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, who have become *new creations* “in Christ” (II Cor. 5:17); and these *new creations* “in Christ” form *one new man* (Eph. 2:11-15).

During the present dispensation, God is dealing with this *new man*, not with Israel. And this *new man* — referred to as *a nation* (*cf.* Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10) — is exactly as Scripture describes. It is a nation completely separate from all other nations on earth — separate from either Israel or the Gentile nations (Gal. 3:26-29). And God has set aside an entire dispensation in which He will deal solely with this *new man*.

(In the preceding respect, there is *absolutely no place* in Christendom for distinctions to be made between saved Jews and saved Gentiles. Both are *new creations* “in Christ,” part of *the one new man*, wherein distinctions between those comprising this *new man* cannot exist [Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:11-15; 3:1-6].

But in Christendom today, completely contrary to Scripture, certain individuals from both groups [from saved Jews, and from saved Gentiles] attempt to form distinctions between the two groups. For example, there are congregations of saved Jews calling themselves “Messianic Jews” or “completed Jews” [both misnomers], distinguishing themselves from saved Gentiles. And there are groups comprised of saved Gentiles who look askance at saved Jews, somewhat forcing saved Jews to meet together in separate places, often referred to as “Messianic congregations,” distinguishing themselves from saved Gentiles.

All of this — by saved Jews or by saved Gentiles — forms no more than vain attempts to build up a middle wall which has been broken down by Christ Himself [Eph. 2:14].

And, as well, there is *absolutely no place* in Christendom for *the new creation* “in Christ” to go back to the old creation in Jacob [*cf.* Isa. 43:1, 7; II Cor 5:17] and attempt to bring things from this old creation over into the new [*cf.* Matt. 9:16, 17]. God has set Israel aside for a dispensation; and He is, today, dealing with *the one new man* “in Christ,” not with Israel. And for *the one new man* to go back to Israel [a nation set aside] and bring things having to do with this nation over into things having to do with *the one new man* [the Law, forms, ceremonies, etc.] is not only completely out of place but it serves to break down distinctions which God established between the two creations, *adding to an already existing confusion.*)

The Spirit of God is in the world today searching for a bride for God’s Son, with the search being conducted among those comprising *the one new man*. And once the Spirit has completed this work, *the one new man* will be removed, with a view to this *new man* being dealt with in relation to the reason he had been called into existence. Then God will resume His dealing with Israel (during seven unfulfilled years, completing not only Daniel’s unfulfilled Seventieth Week but Man’s Day as well).

God’s dealings with both *Israel* and *the Church* (*the new nation, the one new man* “in Christ”) must be kept separate and distinct from one another. To have God dealing with either Israel during the present dispensation or the Church once God resumes His dealings with Israel is *completely foreign* to the way in which Scripture sets forth God’s dispensational dealings with man.

Israel has been set aside, and God is presently dealing with a new nation; and, following the completion of God’s present dealings with this new nation, He will remove this nation, turn back to Israel, and complete His dispensational dealings with Israel. The

whole of the matter is that simple.

The one new man — comprised of those “in Christ,” *all Christians* — will be removed at the end of the dispensation. And this will be for reasons surrounding two nations — both *the one new man* and *Israel*. God will complete His dealings with one nation (*the one new man*), *in the heavens*, in relation to this nation’s calling; and God will complete His dealings with the other nation (*Israel*), *on the earth*, in relation to this nation’s calling.

The former nation possesses *a heavenly calling* and the latter *an earthly calling*; and it is only fitting that God will complete His dealings with each *in the place to which they have been called*.

The preceding is the clear teaching seen in both the Old Testament types and the New Testament antitypes. Biblical distinctions surrounding both *Israel* and *the Church* must be maintained, and Scripture must be allowed to speak for itself in that which has been revealed about both.

IN THE LORD’S DAY

If the entire *one new man* “in Christ” (comprised of both faithful and unfaithful Christians living throughout the dispensation) was not removed at the end of the dispensation (as seen in I Thess. 4:13-18), Paul could not have written that which is recorded in the verses which immediately follow (5:1-9). These verses have to do with both faithful and unfaithful Christians, removed from Man’s Day and placed together *at the same time and place in the Lord’s Day*.

Man’s Day has to do with man upon the earth throughout a 6,000-year period. It has to do with that time when matters have been allowed to remain under Satan’s control, with man having his way and sway in the kingdom under Satan.

On the other hand, *the Lord’s Day* has to do with the Lord conducting affairs in His kingdom throughout a 7,000-year period. The Lord’s Day runs concurrent with Man’s Day, though not encompassing affairs on the earth during Man’s Day (when fallen man finds himself associated with Satan’s rule and reign). Only when Man’s Day ends, will the Lord’s Day encompass affairs on the earth; and it will do so for a succeeding 1,000 years (for Christ and His co-heirs will then rule and reign over the earth, in the stead of Satan and his angels).

Note that Abraham, following death, saw the Lord’s Day (John 8:56). This was almost 4,000 years ago, in the middle of Man’s Day, as it existed upon the earth. This could be true because Abraham, following death, no longer had a connection with Man’s Day upon the earth. Rather, he then found himself removed from Man’s Day and placed in the Lord’s Day.

And exactly the same thing would be true relative to Christians, whether following death during the present time or when Christians are removed from the earth at the time of the rapture. Events surrounding the rapture show this to be the case in no uncertain terms, with Christians removed from Man’s Day and placed in the Lord’s Day (while Man’s Day continues on the earth).

Christians removed from the earth at the time of the rapture will find themselves in the Lord’s Day (I Thess. 5:1-4), though Man’s Day will still have at least seven years to run upon earth. And I Thess. 5:1ff clearly shows that the rapture (4:13-18) will include both faithful and unfaithful Christians. Both are seen together in the Lord’s Day, with faithful Christians experiencing “salvation” and unfaithful Christians experiencing “sudden destruction,” “wrath” (vv. 3, 9).

(There is a common but fallacious interpretation of I Thess. 5:1-4 which relates these verses to individu-

als left behind at the time of the rapture, to go through the Tribulation [with the advocates of this teaching referring to *the Tribulation* as “the Day of the Lord,” or “the Lord’s Day”].

This though cannot possibly be correct, for the Lord’s Day will not begin on earth *until after Man’s Day has run its course*. It cannot begin *until the Tribulation is over*.

Scripture is quite clear concerning the time when the Lord’s Day begins on earth. The Lord’s Day begins on earth in connection with judgments at the time Christ returns to the earth [not at some point in time during the Tribulation, preceding Christ’s return], and the Lord’s Day will continue as long as this present earth exists. Time in relation to the succeeding new heavens and new earth, following the Messianic Era, is called “the Day of God,” *when God will be “all in all”* [Joel 2:27-32; 3:9-16; Mal. 4:5, 6; I Cor. 15:24-28; II Thess. 2:2, 3; II Peter 3:10-13].

Only when Man’s Day ends — at the end of the Tribulation, at the end of Daniel’s Seventieth Week — can the Lord’s Day replace Man’s Day upon the earth. At that time, Man’s Day will end on earth, and the Lord’s Day will begin on earth. This change will occur because *the Lord will then reign supreme over the earth*, with the whole of God’s affairs in His kingdom being brought under the scope of time referred to by the Lord’s Day.

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