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Reasons why the Great Tribulation and the revelation of the Anti-christ must precede the rapture of the Church.

(An address given by the late Pastor James Kyle Paisley at a Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony Conference at Highgate Road Chapel, London, in April, 1947.)

Foreword by Rev Ivan Foster

The recent folly of Dr Harold Camping in predicting that the “secret rapture” of the Redeemed would take place on Saturday 21st May 2011 has highlighted the most important event for which the people of God are required to watch and wait.

The failure of Dr Camping's prediction has given the unregenerate opportunity to laugh and mock. Doubtless, it has confirmed many in their unbelief.

However, let all recognise that poor Dr Camping, a very elderly man, acted very foolishly and in complete defiance of God's Word.

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is,” Mark 13:32, 33, KJV. The day of the return of Christ cannot be calculated or predicted by man. Dr Camping should have known this for he made a similar foolish prediction back in 1994.

What the Saviour has said is that there will be signs, given of God, which will herald the approach of His return.

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,” Luke 21:25-28, KJV.

The unfolding of those events revealed in prophecy will tell believers of the approach of Christ's return.

One last comment on Dr Camping's folly. It is mentioned by Christ!

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were 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 cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man



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be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 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," Matthew 24:24-31, KJV.

There will be other false predictions but God's people are to watch for the signs foretold by Christ rather than listen to the silly prognostications uttered by men.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Matthew 25:13, KJV.



FOR many years I was a believer in the view of "The any-moment rapture of the Saints," and in a measure believed in a secret rapture. But from the study of God's Word and by the help of the Holy Spirit I have been taught differently. In those early days when I was searching with regard to this truth I was afraid to express my mind to other Christians, for I felt that they might look upon me as a heretic.

In the North of Ireland the "Any-moment rapture" is held largely by most evangelicals, and there are very few who believe in the scriptural truth of the one coming of the Lord.

I ventured to open my mind to a dear brother who is now in glory. When I told him, he encouraged me and said, "Brother, I am thinking the same way," and that gave me courage. Then I wrote to the secretary of this Advent Testimony in London and received from him some literature, from the which I found help and cheer. The literature I received confirmed the truth and faith that was in my own heart on this all-important subject.

Some outstanding passages of God's word.

Some outstanding passages of God's Word that gave me light and understanding and brought me to realise The truth of the blessed hope were:

First: Matthew 24:29-31. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of



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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." It was that passage that caused me to think deeply: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days." Immediately after, and as I studied Matthew 24 I was convinced that the great tribulation must precede the Coming of the Lord for His church; that was made unmistakably clear to me.

Second: 2 Thessalonians 2:3. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." That day shall not come except. . . that man of sin be revealed. In the school of thought in which I had been instructed, they made a distinction between "the day of the Lord" and "the day of Christ" and "that day." They expounded things differently with regard to "days" and Christ's Coming for the Church and with the Church. But Paul wrote by inspiration in 2 Timothy 1:12. "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." And "that day" referred to there is the day of His Coming. "That day" shall not come (2 Thess. 2:3) except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed. Strange as it may seem, I was preaching on one occasion of the "Any-moment Coming of the Lord" and in the course of my message I quoted that verse. "For that day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." I was arrested that evening in the middle of my address and was deeply convinced that the "Any-moment" theory was not according to Scripture.

There is a young farmer in the church at Ballymena who studies the Scriptures even in the fields at his work. One day he came to me and began to talk about the Coming of the Lord. He said "I believe that the tribulation and the manifestation of the Antichrist must precede the Coming of the Lord." He asked me to explain to him Revelation 20:4 and 5: "And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." Who will take part in the first resurrection, he desired to know. He pointed out that these were those who had lived during the reign of the Antichrist and had refused his mark and were martyred for the witness of Jesus and the word of God. These souls were raised at the first resurrection. Therefore he said Christ could not come until the end of the tribulation and the end of the reign of the Antichrist. It was evident that the Holy Spirit gave this young man illumination as he studied the Scriptures. "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

The "priests of God and of Christ" refers to the Church for the Church is spoken of as a "royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." These passages were made a great



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blessing to me in the study of this subject. I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Word of God, and that it is God's Word from the first "In" in Genesis to the last "Amen" in the Revelation. This book is God-breathed and on the whole we have the seal, "Thus saith the Lord." I remember being taught when a student in Dublin never to build a doctrine upon one isolated passage of Scripture, and this has had a balancing effect upon my ministry throughout the years. We have, for these truths for which we stand, the whole Word of God, the whole of the Old Testament and the whole of the New Testament.

The Son of Man is the coming Lord.

There is a teaching, largely accepted in the North of Ireland, that there is a difference between Christ coming as "The Son of man" and coming as "Lord." That means that there are two second comings! First they say He is coming for His people and then with His people. As I searched the Scriptures in relation to that doctrine I found in the study of the following words in relation to the Lord's coming in the Greek text that: (1) Parousia stands for "Coming," "Personal Presence" or "Arrival," as in Matthew 24. (2) Epiphaneia stands for "Manifestation" or "Appearing," as in Titus 2:13:

"Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"; and 2 Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." (3) Apocalypse stands for "Unveiling," "Revelation," or "The removal of all that conceals." All these words refer to one and the same "Coining," one and the same event. These convinced me that the Lord's Coming is one glorious event, but I had no one to talk the matter with except my wife, who has been a great help to me in the study of this subject.

There was hardly one person in the town where I preached who believed that the tribulation would precede the Coming of the Lord. Through the study of God's Word I was fully persuaded that there was no difference between Christ's coming as Son of Man and Coming as Lord. Some teach that the name Son of Man has no relation to the Church. Let us hear God's Word. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14,15). Has that nothing to do with the Church? It has. And it is hard for those who make such a distinction to get over that. There is another passage: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). Has that nothing to do with the Church? Then in relation to His Coming: "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" The Coming of the Son of man and the Coming of the Lord refer to the one and same event. Why did Christ go into so many details concerning His Coming if we are to pay no attention to the particular signs and predictions that He said would come to pass? I know the way our friends get out of that — they say that Matthew 24 is not for the Church, and not for this age. Some are even more extreme and take away all the Gospels. They would leave us with a few of the Epistles of Paul. I read that "all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).



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Now Christ went into details in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25, concerning His Coming and I would exhort people to read and study His own words in relation to His own Coming.

I stood up in much weakness and trembling in the Gospel Tabernacle where I preach, and told them what the Lord had taught me by His Holy Spirit concerning His Coming. I said, "I do not want you to receive this truth because I say it, but search the Scriptures and set aside all preconceived ideas about the Lord's Coming, and get to the Word." The majority of the congregation meeting in the Gospel Tabernacle, Ballymena, have at length accepted this truth concerning the Lord's Coming, as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God.

How are people to be saved if the Church and the Holy Spirit are to be removed from the earth? This is taught by those who hold Any-moment and Secret-rapture views. These views often troubled me. I was taught that a great number would be saved after the rapture of the Church through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. But in the study of the Scriptures I found that there is only one gospel and that there is no radical difference between the gospel of the kingdom, and the gospel of the grace of God. Paul, in Acts 20:24, speaks of the gospel of the grace of God, and in the next verse, he speaks of the gospel of the kingdom, that is, of one and the same gospel. No one could be saved apart from the grace of God, and all who are in glory and all who will be in glory must be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is only one gospel and only one way of salvation, in every dispensation.

Now it is only the Holy Spirit who can teach us, and if we go to God's Word with an unbiased mind, and if there is a desire in our hearts to know the truth I believe God will reveal His truth to us by His Holy Spirit.

There are a few reasons I want to give you as briefly as possible why the great tribulation must precede the Church's translation.

There must be a witness on the earth until Christ comes.

There will be a witness to the saving grace of God, a witness to Christ and His power to redeem, right on to the end of this age. From the teaching of the Scriptures I am assured that part of the Church is on the earth when the Antichrist is reigning. During the great tribulation and during the reign of the Antichrist there are those who are saved by the gospel of the grace of God; those on the earth whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life—there are those who are washed and redeemed through the Blood of the Lamb. We read in His Word that all that dwell on the earth shall worship the beast whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

What characterises the Church? One word: "REDEEMED." That word characterises the whole Church. All who are in the Church are REDEEMED: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb



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without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18,19).

Saints here during the reign of Antichrist.

I read of the saints that "They overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). In the Old Testament they are called "saints" and in the New Testament they are called "saints." In Paul's epistles and in the book of Revelation they are called "saints," and there is no difference; they are all classified as "saints" of God and of Christ; all redeemed by the same blood; all born again by the same mighty Spirit of God.

In the economy of the New Testament there is one faith—the faith of Abraham, who believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. That faith is in you and in me if we are saved: one Lord, one faith, one hope.

Now through the Church on earth there is a mighty witness to all that grace means, and to all that Calvary means. That witness must continue to the full end of the age, or the completion of the age. Therefore there must be a witness on earth during the reign of the Antichrist and through the great tribulation. "Then shall the end come." We have seen that that witness is a witness to the sovereign grace of God, and that this gospel shall be preached in all the world, or through the inhabited earth for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.

Has the gospel been preached to all nations?

I remember reading that Dan Crawford once said, "I know why Christ has not come; there is a vast mileage that has not been touched; His body is not complete. When He comes He is coming for a complete body; coming for His Church." Dan Crawford taught the Lord's coming as I am trying to preach it. "This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; then shall the end come." This gospel of the kingdom, what does it mean? It means the gospel of glad tidings; it means the gospel of a royal reign, a royal dominion. That speaks of sovereignty, the sovereignty of Christ; that must be preached and proclaimed in all the inhabited world for a testimony; or, as one paraphrase gives it: "To set the evidence before the Gentiles or nations. Then shall the end come."

The Lord is with us to the end.

Here then is another reason: The promise of the Lord's presence can be relied upon right to the end of the age, as He said in Matthew 28:19 and 20. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," or "Lo, I am with you all the days even until the completion of the age." Therefore we have the promise of His presence with us right through in all our gospel witness to the end of the age.



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There is another point. We are to remember the Lord's death till He come." We have His spiritual presence with us now. When He comes we will have His personal presence, for we shall see Him as He is, and we are going to be like Him and with Him for all eternity. For the present, we remember the Lord's death at His table till He comes. Thank God tonight; that is our hope and no one can rob us of that blessed hope. Paul knew it. He had in his heart the hope of the Lord's coming. He said, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8). And for every one of us who are saved there is in our hearts that blessed hope.

I have been accused of looking for the great tribulation, but we are not looking for the night; we are looking for the morning. Was it not George Muller who said that when he went to the train to meet a friend he was not looking for the signal to drop; he was looking for his friend; but when the train was signalled it was a sign that his friend would soon arrive? Our hope is the coming of the Lord. Thank God Jesus is coming again. In his booklet, *The Second Coming of Christ* (pages 12/13), George Muller, commenting on 2 Thess. 2:3, says, " 'Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.' From this portion of the inspired Word of God we learn that the Lord Jesus will not come until after the manifestation of 'the apostasy.' Has the apostasy here spoken of taken place, and has the lawless one (or the Antichrist) been revealed? The reply from Scripture is: the apostasy has not yet taken place, and the lawless one has not yet been revealed. This passage has not found its fulfilment, either in popery or the popes. Fearful as the delusions of popery are, and awful as is the picture of what popes have been, the apostasy here referred to will be far more dreadful still; for it will be no less than an entire renunciation of all that is divine, and the setting up as God of the lawless one himself. For 'he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God,' he will be a king, a mighty monarch, whose might is obtained through the energy given to him by Satan, for 'the dragon gave him his power, and his seat and great authority' (Revelation 13:2)." When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28).

"The heavens shall glow with splendour
But brighter far than they
The saints shall shine in glory
As Christ shall them array.
The beauty of the Saviour shall dazzle every eye
In the crowning day that's coming bye and bye."

We are not looking for the darkness but for the crowning day. Thank God there will be grace given to those who go through the darkness with Him when the time comes. The apostasy is on, and it is deepening, but I know that before Christ comes it is going to deepen more and more. This present apostasy will culminate in the great apostasy, when the Antichrist shall declare that he is God Almighty, and the unbelieving world of mankind



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will wonder after him and follow him. There is tribulation now, well I know it, for it is not an easy thing to be a Christian; it is not an easy thing to be a preacher of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and to be faithful in all things! The tribulation of this present time will culminate in the great tribulation at the end of the age.

We are living in an antichristian age, with forces uniting against Christ. The apostle John said that now there are many antichrists; but the antichristian age will culminate in the personal Antichrist. Those who are saved have this blessed hope as individuals: "Christ in me the hope of glory." "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

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