

## Introduction

With sales of more than 25 million copies, including dozens of foreign editions, Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* was the biggest-selling nonfiction book of the 1970's. With its easy to read style, the book made the topic of Bible prophecy intriguing and exciting to millions who had never been interested in the subject before. Its message was compelling: All of the "signs of the times" pointed to an apocalyptic end to history in fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

The rapture of the church was imminent, to be expected at any moment. It would be followed by the Great Tribulation, then the rise of the Antichrist, and later world war - Armageddon - in the Middle East. With Israel under attack by the surrounding world's armies and about to be destroyed, Jesus would return from heaven in the Second Coming to rescue His people who would recognize Him as their Messiah. He would destroy His enemies and establish His literal and personal thousand-year reign on earth, the Millennial Kingdom.

The rapture was the most talked about topic in the church. Pastors preached about heaven and believers eagerly anticipated being caught-up at any moment to meet Jesus in the air. Even the secular world became familiar with the rapture. There were movies, such as "The Omen," about the end times. Radio and television mentioned the Second Coming frequently, and cartoons and bumper stickers were everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

**All of that has changed!** Today what was once the hope of the church being taken home to heaven at any moment is often ridiculed by Christians. Being taken to heaven in the rapture has been replaced by the rapidly growing new hope that the church is destined to conquer the world and establish the kingdom of God on earth. The focus has changed from winning souls for citizenship in heaven to winning seats in government to effect political and social action aimed at transforming society.<sup>2</sup>

What should your attitude be toward the coming of the Lord to rapture His church? *It ought to be what Paul's was!* In verse 20 and 21 he said,

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Philippians 3:21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

These verses describe the day that Jesus will change your earthly body into an eternal one. According to First Thessalonians 4:16 and 17, this will occur when Jesus returns in the air to rapture the church:

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup>see Hunt, *Whatever Happened To Heaven?*, p. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

We - **you**, if you're still living - will be "caught-up" by Jesus. "Caught-up" is translated into Latin by the word *rapture*. You will be *raptured*, at which time your body will be transformed, or, as you read in First Corinthians 15:51-53,

1 Corinthians 15:51 ...we shall all be changed;

1 Corinthians 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Regardless the current climate in the church to ridicule or reduce the importance of the rapture, Paul the apostle taught that it was imminent, to be expected at any moment. In the book we're studying, he refers to it in every chapter:

vPhilippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

vPhilippians 1:10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

vPhilippians 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

vPhilippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

vPhilippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

"The day of Christ" is a reference to the rapture. "The Lord is at hand," Paul said, returning imminently. Therefore "eagerly wait - *look for* - the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

And that brings us to the application of this wonderful doctrine. *Your attitude toward the rapture definitely affects your walk!* If you are eagerly waiting for the Lord's return to rapture you, then you **will** set your mind on eternal things and you **won't** set your mind on earthly things.

We'll see two things this morning:

#1 Looking For The Lord Is What  
Sets Your Mind To Loathe Earthly Lusts  
(v17-19)

#2 Looking For The Lord Is What  
Sets Your Mind To Love Eternal Life  
(v20-21)

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#1 Looking For The Lord Is What  
Sets Your Mind To Loathe Earthly Lusts  
(v17-19)

Now might be a good time to tell you that not all Christians agree that the rapture is imminent. There are at least four different views as to the timing of the rapture:

=The pretribulation rapture is the view that the entire church will be caught-up to be with the Lord before any part of the future seven year tribulation begins.

=The posttribulation rapture is the view that the entire church must pass through the seven year tribulation and be caught-up at the Second Coming.

=The midtribulation rapture is the view that the entire church will pass through the first half of the tribulation and be caught-up after three and one half years of the seven year tribulation.

=The prewrath rapture is the view that the entire church will pass through more than the first three and one half years of the tribulation and be caught-up approximately 18 months prior to the Lord's Second Coming.

Added to this controversy are three different views of the kingdom of God on earth, the Millennial Kingdom:

=Premillennialism is the view that Jesus will return and establish a kingdom of perfect peace and righteousness on earth that will last for a literal one thousand years.

=Amillennialism is the view that when Jesus returns, eternity begins with no prior, literal thousand year kingdom on the earth.

=Postmillennialism is the view that through the church's influence the world will be Christianized before Jesus returns; eternity begins immediately following His return, again with no literal thousand year kingdom on earth.

We love our Christian brothers who hold the other positions, but are nevertheless unashamedly *pretribulation* and *premillennial!* The rapture of the church **is** imminent, to be expected at any moment. It **will** be followed by the seven year Great Tribulation. At the end of those seven years Jesus **will** return from heaven in the Second Coming. He **will** establish His literal and personal thousand-year reign on earth, the Millennial Kingdom.

A conviction that you could be caught-up into heaven at any moment will weaken your natural tendencies towards identifying too closely with a world which does not hold your ultimate destiny. It will have a wholesome affect on your attitudes and your actions as you walk with the Lord waiting and watching for His return.

Paul describes that wholesome affect in verses 17 through 19,

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

Philippians 3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Philippians 3:19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who set their mind on earthly things.

The thought here is that those who keep the rapture as their imminent expectation, like Paul and his companions, won't set their minds on earthly lusts. Those who don't keep the rapture as their imminent expectation are forfeiting a powerful resource to keep their mind off earthly lusts.

Who are these "enemies of the cross" who "set their mind on earthly thing?" I think that Paul is describing the average unbeliever of his day. The Greek philosophies

of the day taught that the satisfaction of physical appetites was a chief aim of human beings. Thus they indulged in their many physical lusts.

*Things haven't changed!* Our society teaches that the satisfaction of physical appetites is a chief aim of human beings; thus we indulge in many physical lusts.

Before you were a Christian, you were no better than the unbelievers around you. Listen to these words of Paul's, in Ephesians 2:1-3,

Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,  
Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,  
Ephesians 2:3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

This was your past; it isn't your future, *and it need not be your present experience!* You don't have to follow the example of the world.

Look at the world's example:

Philippians 3:19 whose end is destruction...

The word "destruction" is *perdition*, referring to eternal destruction in Hell. Too many people live for the moment. If you live only for the moment, you will seek to fulfill your lusts. As a Christian you can live above the moment, looking past it to eternity. You will forfeit some physical pleasure; but you'll also forgo much emotional and spiritual pain!

Philippians 3:19 ...whose god is their belly...

If your god is your belly, all of your effort and energy are spent seeking to satisfy your own physical appetites. You are constantly trying to "get ahead," to make life better. Trouble is, those who do this usually end up wrecking their lives because they value things over people - even the people they love the most. This describes the person who asks his spouse and family to sacrifice until he or she gets that next promotion or position. Life is always just about to get better...

Philippians 3:19 ...and whose glory is in their shame...

This means that they glory, or boast, in sinful, shameful behaviors. This is the person who boasts about how much they drank... Or how many sexual experiences they've had... Or how violent they became...

Paul is describing unbelievers, but here is the problem for you: **You** once acted like this and, even though you are now saved, *you still have these tendencies in your old nature* and can be influenced by the world and the devil to act in these ways! You need to loathe earthly lusts, and to do so you should follow the example of Paul and remind yourself that the rapture is imminent.

#2 Looking For The Lord Is What  
Sets Your Mind To Love Eternal Life  
(v20-21)

"Follow my example," said Paul, "and the example of others who walk like I do." What example is he talking about? In our context, it is the example of eagerly waiting for the imminent rapture of the church!

If you're thinking "rapture," you can't help but set your mind on the events surrounding the rapture - described in verses 20 and 21,

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

The unbelievers Paul has been describing are citizens of the Roman Empire. In contrast, you are a citizen of heaven! This word "citizenship" means *a colony of foreigners*.<sup>3</sup> Looking for the Lord to come and rapture you keeps you homesick! When I'm homesick, on a long missions trip, once I set my mind towards returning home, I overcome any and all obstacles in my travel plans...

Are you homesick?

Philippians 3:21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

You have a "lowly body." Some translations use the word "vile." Your physical body was humiliated by sin by the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. It's not the body God intended you to have, and it is obviously unfit for heaven. Your body is burdened and abased by its daily functions, by its frequent infirmities, by its final dissolution into dust. You are humbled by its needs and limitations, and by the fact that it often is the handmaiden of sin and lust.

At the rapture, Jesus will transform your body into a glorious new body that is fit for eternity! Believers who have died in the Church Age will be resurrected; then living believers will be immediately transformed without ever dying. Together we will be taken by the Lord to heaven, to the place He's been preparing for us since His own resurrection and ascension.

Seem farfetched? Not if it is being done "according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." "Working" is the word for *power* or *energy*. "Subdue" means *to arrange under one's authority*. Jesus has the power and the authority to rearrange the molecules of your physical body into a glorified, heavenly body. As Paul once said to King Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible to you, that God should raise the dead?"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Walvoord, *Philippians*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>Acts 26:8

## Conclusion

Never before have there been so many signs of the end times: The rebirth of the nation of Israel, the dissolving of the Soviet Union, the coming together of the nations of Europe in a way not known since the fall of the Roman Empire, the spread of atheism and humanism, our permissive society, the widespread use of illegal drugs, the toleration and promotion of pornography and perversion, the rise of the occult, the spread of false religions, the emergence of deadly diseases resistant to all known drugs, and the advances in technology - to name a few!

There can be no better statement of the Christian philosophy of life than the one we read in these last two verses:

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Philippians 3:21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Look for the Lord's return and set your mind to love eternal life!