

# Anything But Secret

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In the early 1500s, the Aztec empire was one of the most powerful and sophisticated civilizations in the western hemisphere. However, within one year's time this mighty nation of over two million people was conquered and enslaved by just six hundred men. How did it happen?

The Aztecs had a prophecy about Quetzalcoatl (kèt-säl'ko-ä-tal), a legendary feathered god-king who was light skinned and bearded. It predicted that he would return to Mexico from across the sea and that he would come in the clouds from the east to save them.

Well, in 1519 Spanish galleons arrived in Mexico carrying a group of conquistadors led by Hernando Cortez. When the Aztecs saw these ships with their billowing sails, they thought it looked like clouds. Cortez heard about the Aztec legend from some Indians who lived on the shore and decided to use the situation to his advantage. He astutely assumed the mantle of deity to befuddle superstitious King Montezuma II.

While the king was waiting to receive him with honor, Cortez marched his army right into the center of the Aztec capital. By the time the people realized that Cortez was not the savior they were expecting, it was too late. The conquistadors proceeded to plunder, enslave, and kill the Aztec people. An entire nation was deceived and destroyed-in part because the prophecies of their god's return were so ambiguous that almost anyone could have served as a counterfeit.

In the near future, Satan will attempt to personate Jesus and counterfeit His return to earth. But God's people need not be deceived. When the disciples asked Jesus for the sign of His coming and the end of the world, the very first thing He told them was to be on guard against impostors. He said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Matthew 24:4, 5.

Christ then proceeded to give His followers a wealth of information about His second coming so there would be no doubt as to how He would return. Jesus not only wants us to know that He is coming and that He's coming soon; He wants us to understand the manner of His coming.

The reason this is so important is because Satan will soon attempt to personate Jesus and counterfeit His return. And to pave the way, Satan has introduced a strong delusion to the Christian world that has been almost universally accepted in mainline churches. I am speaking of the popular teaching regarding a "secret rapture."

The secret rapture theory was designed to lull God's people into a false sense of security and to prepare them for this final master deception. Jesus warned, "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 shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matthew 24:23, 24.

Satan's deceptions will be strong and convincing, but Christ has given us ample information to help us discern truth from error.

## Not a Secret

Will there be a rapture? Yes. Will it be a secret? NO! Rapture means "to be carried away with power," and it is true that when Jesus comes we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). But many have come to believe that this rapture will take place quietly-that faithful Christians all

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around the world will suddenly disappear and that life here on earth will continue for a seven-year period of tribulation. During this time, they say, many will be converted and have a "second chance" at salvation before Christ's final coming.

Although the secret rapture scenario may appear comforting at first glance, there is absolutely no scriptural support for it. The Bible plainly teaches that when Jesus comes again, every one of our senses will be bombarded with evidence!

### **His Coming Will Be Literal**

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11.

Heaven-sent messengers told the disciples that Jesus would return to this earth in the same manner He left. Christ left in the clouds, and He will come back in the clouds. He was visible when He left, and He will be visible when He comes again. He had a real body when He left, and He will return the same way.

### **His Coming Will Be Visible**

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Revelation 1:7.

"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 be." Matthew 24:27.

"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." Matthew 24:30.

When Christ comes, it will not be merely a local sighting or an isolated event. It will be visible across the entire world.

### **His Coming Will Be Audible**

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven 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." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

"The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout." Jeremiah 25:30.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." Psalm 50:3.

Christ's second coming will be loud! There will be shouts and trumpets and all kinds of noise. No one will accidentally miss it or be able to read about it in the newspaper the next day.

## **His Coming Will Be Emotional**

"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." Luke 21:26, 27.

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9.

When Christ returns, it will be an emotional day for the wicked and righteous alike. The lost will experience indescribable fear and anguish, while the saved will experience the perfect joy of eternal salvation.

## **His Coming Will Open the Graves**

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:40.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven 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." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

This is the Bible's description of the rapture. The dead in Christ will rise by His power and will meet Him in the air. Afterward the faithful who are still alive will also be caught up. It will not be a secret!

## **His Coming Will Destroy the Earth**

"The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again." Isaiah 24:19, 20.

"And the heaven [sky] departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Revelation 6:14.

"And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Revelation 16:18-20.

This world will be uninhabitable by people after Christ comes. His coming will shake the very foundations of the earth.

## **His Coming Will Mean Final Judgment**

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27.

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

It is at Christ's return that we will receive our final reward. Each person's decision will have already been made; there will be no second chance to convert. The time to make a decision to follow Christ is now!

## **Basis for Confusion**

With so much evidence in the Bible as to the manner of Christ's coming, where do people get the idea that the rapture will be a secret event?

As with most deceptions, the secret rapture theory is based on a few texts which have been taken out of context. There are two main concepts in Scripture that have been used to substantiate a "secret" rapture.

The primary one is that Jesus will come as "a thief in the night." The secret rapture theory assumes this means that Christ will come secretly to steal away the righteous and carry them quietly to heaven.

Christ's coming is described as "a thief" several times throughout the New Testament. Let's look at one of these passages and see if it describes a secret rapture. "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." 2 Peter 3:10. That doesn't sound like a secret event to me!

In describing His return as a thief, Christ did not intend to show that it would be quiet, but that it would be sudden and unexpected-that the wicked would be taken by surprise. He said, "If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Luke 12:39, 40. Likewise, Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." 1 Thessalonians 5:4. God does not want His followers to be surprised. He wants us to be watchful and ready.

The second concept used to support a "secret" coming is found in Luke 17:34-36: "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

Secret rapture proponents say this passage proves that the saints will suddenly disappear from the earth when Jesus returns. But let's take an honest look at the evidence and see what these verses actually teach.

In Luke 17:34-36, Jesus employs some of His favorite symbols to illustrate a simple point. At the end of time, there will be just two groups of people living upon the earth-the lost and the saved.

- Two men in one bed. A bed generally connotes sleep, and Jesus used sleep as a symbol of death. He said to the disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." John 11:11, 14. In the resurrection at the last day, there will be two kinds of people sleeping in the grave-the lost and the saved.
- Two women grinding together. In Bible prophecy, a woman is a symbol of a church (Jeremiah 6:2). Grinding grain represents working with the Word of God. When Christ comes in glory, there will be two kinds of churches-the false and the true. Both will be outwardly doing the same thing, but only one will be redeemed.
- Two men in the field. The field represents the world (Matthew 13:38). When Jesus comes again, there will be two kinds of missionaries laboring out in the field-the false and the true. This is why He said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and

in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22, 23.

## **The Devil's Hidden Agenda**

The devil knows that Jesus is coming back and that his time is short (Revelation 12:12). He has been sharpening his skills of deception for 6,000 years, and his last masquerade will be his masterpiece. One day soon, Satan is going to attempt to personate Christ Himself. And Jesus warns that he will do such a convincing job that, if it were possible, even the very elect would be deceived. "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." Mark 13:22.

Satan is not an ugly, grotesque, bat-winged creature wearing a red leotard. He's an angel—a beautiful, powerful angel. And the Bible makes it clear that he is able to transform himself and appear in different forms. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:13, 14. We must not underestimate how convincing and overpowering Satan's final deception will be. I'm sure he will even quote Scripture, as he did while tempting Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-6).

The devil also has the ability to create the illusion of miracles. You will remember that when Moses went in before Pharaoh to plead for the children of Israel, the magicians of Egypt were able to duplicate the first few signs from God (Exodus chapters 7, 8). Satan is in the business of deception. And we know that he is saving his greatest deception of all for the last days. We need to know how Jesus is coming, or we will be deceived.

The Bible is very clear that when Jesus comes back, His feet never touch the ground. It says the righteous will be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This is why Jesus emphatically warns us, "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." Matthew 24:26, 27, NKJV.

Satan cannot replicate a worldwide, cataclysmic event the magnitude of the real second coming. But if he can seduce Christians into believing the secret rapture theory, he won't have to. He can simply show up around the world in various places, perform great miracles, make TV appearances, and thereby deceive the entire world.

Every general knows that the key to victory in battle is to maintain an element of surprise. Many battles have been won because of a clever diversionary tactic. While one army was distracted and looking at the diversion, the enemy came up from behind to conquer them. In the devil's final assault, he will do the same thing. The archdeceiver has always wanted to be God. Now he knows that he is doomed, but his last taunting gesture against heaven will be to personate Jesus and receive the worship of a lost world.

Sadly, the devil is not the only one who likes to masquerade as God. Many people who claim to be Christians have never come to the place where they are willing to make a complete surrender and allow Jesus to be Lord of their lives. They still want to be in charge. They call him, "Lord, Lord," but do not obey Him.

Friend, is Jesus your Lord? Are you submitting to His will now, or are you masquerading as your own master? No man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). It must be Jesus or yourself. He will soon come in glory for all to see. Will you give Him the crown, throne, and scepter of your life now?