

## ESCAPE OR OVERCOME

I was raised from the age of three in a Pentecostal denomination and it would be fair to say that I had become a well-indoctrinated Pharisee. (I was pretty [fair]phar-I-see and you were pretty sad-u-see). I really did have a heart for the Lord, and after all, how can we know these attitudes are within us unless the Lord opens our eyes?

In early 1973 we moved from Phoenix, Arizona to Southwest Missouri where my husband grew up. Although he was raised in Pentecostal churches, they were non-denominational. As we settled in a small town of 600 people, we scoured the country-side for a church that was of the same Pentecostal denomination with which we were familiar.

I had been conditioned to look to the church and its structure for my life. When we couldn't find a church of that kind to attend, I began to weep one night feeling we would for sure backslide if we couldn't find a church of that denomination to be a part of. I heard the Lord say, "I'm not your God; your church is." Well, that certainly caused an earthquake in me, because I thought they were one

and the same. The voice of the Lord that night began to reveal the cracks in my foundational teachings and the shakings began. I was a student of the written word, but always read it through doctrinally-tinted glasses. I really didn't read the words on the page. I read the interpretation of the words according to what I had been taught. The Holy Spirit has to shake all that can be shaken, so that which **cannot** be shaken may remain.

Shortly after this happened, we were visiting my father-in-law, and were having a discussion about the end-times. He was sharing about how soon Jesus was coming and that the great tribulation was near. His view was that we, as Christians, would be here for three and one-half years of the tribulation, and then would be raptured after that. The Lord would take His Holy Spirit out of the world along with the saints; the lost, the Jews and the backslidden Christians would be left to go through the last three and one-half years of unspeakable torment. Well, I had been taught that the righteous had not been appointed to wrath and there was no way that we would be here for any of that stuff. I tried to stay calm while I informed him that we would be in heaven at the marriage supper, which would last seven years. My father-in-law said, "Well, if you can prove this to me in the scripture, I'm willing to listen." Well, in my

estimation that was going to be very easy so I came home and started my search.

The Lord had set the stage for a major earthquake, at the magnitude of 8.0, in my “earth”, and I soon realized that the previous one was a mere tremor. As I searched for black and white proof to support my doctrine, I discovered that maybe my father-in-law wasn’t right but I couldn’t find any scriptures—no, **not one**—to support my theory (without twisting and presuming) so what was the truth? I began to see that most of what I believed was taught to me by man. I had not known the Holy Spirit to be that inner teacher, who would lead me into all truth.

For six weeks I prayed and fasted several days at a time each week. The fasting was not an act of piety on my part, but as my ‘cup’ was being emptied of all I thought I knew, my heart began to crave the truth more than my necessary food.

This is truly the point to which God must bring His children. He cannot fill a cup that is already full of its own ideas and concepts of Him.

My husband would come home from work day after day and see that this was affecting me like nothing he had ever seen. He said, “Well, don’t fall

apart over this. It doesn't matter if we leave at the first or the middle, as long as we leave." That sure sounded vague to me and I reminded him of the scripture that says we can know the truth and it will make us free. I did not know the truth, and I did not know what it would take to find the truth, but I knew I could never again settle for that which I had in the past. I didn't care about traditions or man's doctrines anymore. It was "Give me the truth lest I die!" I felt all that I had stood for had been shattered. I was being shaken to my very foundation. I said to the Lord one day, "Alright Lord, I know I'm saved and I know you have filled me with your Spirit, but other than that I know nothing." Well finally! God was waiting for this moment.

"I know what I'll do," I thought. "I'll call the General Superintendent of our denomination. He will help me with any scriptures I might have forgotten." As I picked up the phone to call him, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. "*You have no need that any man teach you, but the anointing that abideth within shall teach you of all things*". I had read that scripture many times, but not until this moment did I understand what it meant. Needless to say, I didn't make the call.

As the warm spring sun peaked over the eastern horizon, my husband kissed me good-bye and drove off to work. I woke the older children and by the time they were dressed and had breakfast it was time for them to be off to school. I hugged them and sent them on their way. Amazingly enough, the two younger children were still sleeping and the house was very quiet as I tiptoed to the bedroom with my Bible. As I sat down on the bed my eyes filled with tears, which seemed to be a familiar sight these past few weeks. I opened the Bible almost without thought and looked down as the tears ran down my cheeks and fell on the pages. I had never in all my life felt so empty. The Bible had fallen open to Matthew 13 and I began reading at the 24<sup>th</sup> verse. *"The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. When the blade sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. The servants of the householder came and said unto him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? From whence then hath it tares?" He said unto them, "an enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" But he said, "Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the time of harvest; and in the time*

*of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together **first the tares**, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."* The word **first** in verse 30 jumped out at me. I had never noticed it before. Now, I had always believed that He was going to gather the "righteous wheat" first before He dealt with the tares or the wicked ones. I began to read verses 37-43, which explained the parable. There could be no misunderstanding here as to what He meant. At that moment, it was as if a veil had dropped from my mind. There was, in fact, a veil over my mind, and the Bible says that the veil is taken away when the heart is turned to the Lord.

The Holy Spirit took me to Matthew 24, "As in the days of Noah...one was taken and one was left". Who was taken in Noah's day? The wicked were taken away in the flood of God's judgement, but the righteous were left to inherit the earth. I was reminded of the many scriptures about the saints, which shall inherit the earth. I thought about what I saw as the great tribulation and I said, "Lord, now I know that I'm not going any place, but there is no way that I can ever make it through all those awful trials." He said, "No, you cannot make it; you are not able. But I am, and I shall live it through you."

I did not know what it meant to have a revelation from the Holy Spirit. I got up from the bed and pinched my arm to see if I was still in my body. I know that everyone doesn't have the same exact experience when the Lord gives divine revelation. As we grow in understanding, we receive many revelations from the Holy Spirit in measures maybe not so dramatic, but I was new at this and thank God, He met me where I was.

Before this experience, I always had a great fear of the end-times, but on that day, God's peace that passed my understanding filled my being and never again have I been afraid of the future.

Many scriptures began to fall into place. I didn't have to force them into place. Proverbs 10:30 *"The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inherit the earth.* Proverbs 2:21-22 *"For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.*

Then He took me to I Cor. 15:51-52 *"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..."* What? The **last trump?** It sounds like there is more than one

trumpet. How many are there? The book of Revelation says there are seven.

So, I began to get the picture. It wasn't at all about the **disappearance of the saints**, but about the **coming of the Lord**. A few days later the Lord began to reveal these same things to my husband and we rejoiced together in God's grace toward us.

I asked the Lord why He didn't reveal these things to some of the older brethren I knew who had walked with Him for many years. His answer startled me: *"They have become old wineskins, hardened by the doctrines and traditions of men. I cannot pour this new wine into their vessels for they would be broken and the new wine lost. They have drunk the old so long, even at tasting the new, they say the old is better".* They say, "Give me the ol' time religion."

Most people know by now that the word "rapture" is not in the Bible. The words "catching up" are scriptural, but if you look at this in the natural, what direction is "up"? Since we know that the earth is round, what is "up" to the top of the earth is not "up" to the bottom of the earth. Some would have to be caught "up", some "down" and some "out", depending on where you live.

So maybe we need to see that up in the natural and up in the spiritual are two different things. But, even if we are united together in the air, the scripture doesn't say we are going to **leave the earth**.

We took a trip to Israel a few years ago. I was standing in the back of the plane looking out the window. We were flying at 35,000 feet above the ocean, but looking down from the window, all I could see was white billowy clouds below us and above us was beautiful sunshine. We were flying above the clouds. I said to the man standing next to me (I knew he was a Christian) "Wow! Look at that! If Jesus were to come this minute we would have to be caught **down** to meet Him in the clouds." He looked at me a little strange, and said "Hmm" with some uncertainty and when I walked away I noticed that he was scratching his head.

As I began to do some research, I discovered that the Apostles never taught that the Christians would disappear from the earth, as the bumper stickers say, " In case of rapture this car will be unmanned." They always taught that we should endure hardness as good soldiers. They taught that God always, without exception, takes His people through the fire. He isn't training a mighty army for

complete victory and then retreating before the greatest battle of the ages!

The reason many so easily believe in a rapture is because they do not believe that God can take care of His children. He delivered Daniel from the mouths of hungry lions and three Hebrew men from the midst of the fire. No, those were not parables. They were true accounts of God's power and deliverance. So, is He not able to deliver His own in this hour? Oh my friend, the world has yet to see the glory that shall be revealed in His own ones. There has never been a day like this one in which we live.

If one would be diligent to search God's word, they would find that the Bible never says Jesus will return on the clouds, but in or with clouds. Now there is a big difference between these two small words. If we look at this naturally, Jesus will not be able to return on a beautiful sunny day when there are no clouds. There must be another meaning to clouds other than those fluffy things you see on a cloudy day. What would be the purpose of Jesus coming in natural clouds? He never does anything without a purpose.

Why do we use our natural minds to try to understand the scriptures? The Bible plainly says in

I Cor.2:14 that the natural mind cannot discern spiritual things, for they are *spiritually discerned*.

Clouds in the scripture symbolize people. Hebrews 12:1 tells us that we are surrounded by a great **cloud of witnesses**. Jude says that some people are **clouds without water** being carried about by every wind. Romans 1:20 tells us that every natural thing that God created is a type and shadow of invisible spiritual things. It says the invisible things are **clearly seen**, through the things that are made. If God's people would get a hold of that one truth it would unlock a whole new realm for them. And by the way, which heaven will they be going to? Paul had already been caught up to the first two heavens with salvation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Now he says in II Cor. 12:2, that he was **caught up** to the third heaven for a time and heard things that would be difficult to explain in human language. Then there is a scripture that says that Jesus ascended far above **all heavens** that He might fill all things. So, which heaven do you want to go to? Now, my reason for giving you these scriptures is not to confuse you, but to provoke you in love to start searching the word and the Holy Spirit will be your faithful guide.

I will not take the time here to cover all of the scriptures on this subject but for a more in-depth study we have other materials available.

I would like to quote here from a pamphlet by the late Bill Britton called, "RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH, What Is It?" *"Perhaps you've heard of the Irvingite movement, known as the Catholic Apostolic Church. The Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 12, 1966 issue, pages 648-649, describe Edward Irving and the controversy over his teachings in Scotland and England in the early 1800's. He was excommunicated by the London presbytery, and in 1833 was condemned and deposed from ministry of the Church of Scotland because of his teachings concerning "the sinfulness of Christ's humanity." He also began to teach the "rapture of the church," after a young Scottish lass by the name of Margaret Macdonald went into a trance and described a vision in which she said she saw the saints leaving the earth at the return of the Lord, before the tribulation. Her trance and vision took place in the spring of 1830, while living in Port-Glasgow, Scotland. Her "revelation" was recorded in a book written by R. N. Norton and printed in London in 1861. Prior to this time, the church, clear back to the time of the Apostles, had always preached that the church would go victoriously through the*

*tribulation. There is no record of the "escape rapture" theory being preached before 1830.*

*It was from this supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and phraseology arose. It came not from the scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God. Irving accepted this teaching, and it was taught at prophetic meetings at Powerscourt House in Ireland, attended much by Plymouth Brethren organizer John Darby. Irvings' views influenced Darby, C.H. Macintosh, and C. I. Scofield whose Bible notes made the new theory popular. So it was the young Scottish girl who originated this idea, and it is so recorded on page 15 of Norton's book on the Catholic Apostolic Church. Darby, Scofield, along with Clarence Larkin and his charts, began to teach this new theory, and in the early 1900's it reached a peak in popularity. Students who read these footnotes assumed they had as much validity as the Bible and believed them to be true.*

*While in a Pentecostal bible school in 1947, we used Larkin's book of charts for a textbook, along with charts promoting the "escape rapture theory." I discovered that our "textbook" also had statements in it denouncing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues in our day as being demon inspired. I was shocked to learn that*

*we were being taught about the coming of the Lord by men who claimed that our Pentecostal experience was of the devil.*

*My reaction was to ask, "Why doesn't God raise up Spirit filled men who can give us true revelation from the scriptures on prophetic events by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit? Praise God, He did!" End of quote.*

It seems that Matthew 24 should have been enough proof for coming events in the order in which it was written. Verses 29-31 make it plain about when the coming of the Lord is. *"Immediately **after** the tribulation of those days...Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven...And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and gather together His **elect**."* We have had to twist the word of God to come up with these doctrines. In this passage, I was taught that the **elect** were the Jews, God's chosen people. All you have to do is get a concordance and find all of the scriptures concerning the elect of God, and see who they are. Here are a few to start with. Romans 8:33, I Peter 1:2, Col. 3:12, and Mark 13:20.

What a plan that the enemy came up with to lull the church to sleep. What is the need to **grow** up if you think you will **go** up? Because of this

teaching, the church has remained in a very immature state.

We have a destiny and have been preserved unto this hour in His great plan. Shrink not back from His cleansing fire. He has promised to fill us with the Holy Ghost and **fire**. We used to think that the fire was the kick and shout, so we could jump higher and shout louder. But some have come to understand that the fire is for purging us until every vestige of the self-life is consumed and we come forth in His likeness and image. These are great and exciting times in which we live. Dear Ones, do not live in fear and apprehension but press forward, for the new day is at hand. Amen!

*Betty Houk*