



# THE EVACUATION PLAN

(THE GAMEPLAN FOR THE RAPTURE)

BY PASTOR SEGUN 'SHEGZ' AIYEBUSI

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WAITING TO GET RAPTURED

So it's been 3 days since the world was supposed to end....uh....that was awkward.

Truth be told, most Bible believing Christians (who actually read the bible) DO NOT & DID NOT share Harold Camping's view about the world ending on May 21, 2013. If we tried applying his mathematical equation of predicting the end of the world to any other area of our lives, we'd end up locked up in a psych ward.

What concerns me however is the reaction Camping's foolishness has stirred among those who were already wary of Christianity. Most non-Christians, and even possibly some Christians, are having a field day with this. They're not only laughing at his failed predictions, but at the whole idea behind the return of Christ, and therein lies the problem.

Camping has managed to turn a serious prophetic Biblical event into a circus, making many dig in their heels to an already-present skepticism of the gospel. It doesn't help matters that as of this morning, (May 24), Camping has updated his apocalyptic prophecy by saying he was off by five months and the Earth actually will be obliterated on October 21, 2011. (Seriously? Can someone give this guy some valium please!)

I guess on some level, this is to be expected. The scriptures do tell us that towards the end of the age, this kind of mockery of the Gospel will happen. In 2 Peter 3:3-4, the apostle Peter says, "Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this

'coming' he promised?" I just never assumed it would be initiated by an 89-year-old failed prophet who sucks at math.

Harold was right about one thing though. Jesus is certainly coming back someday in our future. The scriptures themselves testify to the fact that Jesus Christ will return. Of that day and hour [however], no man knows, not the angels of heaven, certainly not demons, and even the Son of God Himself, [in His humanity], didn't know when that moment would be (Matthew 24:36).

The upside is that we won't be completely blindsided by the end because Jesus said there would be telling signs indicating how near it was (Matthew 24-25). He spoke of wars and rumors of wars, He spoke of an increase in famines and earthquakes, and He spoke of the spreading of the gospel across the earth to unreached places, all of which we are witnessing in our time. Thanks to the Internet and social media that dream has become even more of a reality today!

Jesus also said all these "signs" would only be the beginnings of the end, or the beginning of birth pains. Though we don't know the exact time of the earth's countdown clock, we do know it is near.

So what I want to do in this message is give you some perspective on how the Scriptures tell us our time on this blue ball will pan out. To do that, I want to walk us through the next worldwide historical phenomena the church is looking forward to.

## WHAT'S COMING UP NEXT?

The next item on the prophetic calendar is an event Christians refer to as "THE RAPTURE." You will not find that word in the Bible, but if you have recently been to a Christian bookstore or have read any of the bestseller Left Behind books, then you know it's a term used to describe a supernatural event that will physically unite every Christian on earth

with Jesus Christ in the sky in a single moment.

To be clear, this event is different from the much-anticipated second coming of Jesus Christ. That event precedes the rapture by seven years, and I'll get to the significance of that timeline a little later. One way to help you understand the difference between the rapture and the second coming of Jesus Christ is to view the rapture as a "STEALTH EVENT" in which Christ is seen only by those who have trusted in Him when He calls them to meet with Him in the sky.

The second coming of Jesus Christ however, is different in that it will be a very "PUBLIC EVENT" in which EVERYONE on the face of the planet will see Him. That's the moment Revelation 1:7 refers to when it says, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen."

Another difference between the rapture and the second coming is that in the rapture, everyone who has put their faith in Jesus Christ (dead and living) will instantly be taken back into heaven to be with Christ. In the second coming, Christ is coming down to set up shop on earth and rule from His earthly kingdom in the newly established Jerusalem. One involves being taken away; the other involves settling down and ruling God's kingdom on earth.

The rapture is certainly an intriguing event and there are a few places in the Scripture where this event is discussed.

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 has this to say about that moment: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

The passage most often used to explain the rapture however, comes from the letter to the church in the city of Thessalonica.

If anyone was confused about the rapture and the return of Christ, these folks were! Years after the Church started, a number of its members died and panic set because they assumed their deceased relatives and friends would miss out on the second coming of Christ. As a result, they slipped into a sort of hopeless grief. Furthermore, they had been facing persecution for an extended period and were worried that they were already in the end times but had somehow missed the rapture.

## SO, HOW EXACTLY DOES THE RAPTURE WORK?

So Paul writes this letter to set them straight. Starting in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 he says, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep (have died as Christians), or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. therefore encourage each other with these words."

From this text, we can deduce a few things about the rapture. First of all, we know it isn't some random idea early Christians came up with. Paul says in verse 15 that this revelation came from the Lord's own words, in other words it has divine authority and is not to be taken lightly.

Secondly, there appears to be a sequential order in which the rapture will take place. Paul says it all begins with the shout of an archangel who announces with a loud trumpet call that it's time for followers of Jesus Christ to come home. What is most unique about this "wake-up" call is that only followers of Jesus Christ will hear it and be able to respond to it.

In case that sounds EXCLUSIVE, you should know that Jesus Christ already hinted at it in the gospels when He said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." (John 10:27-28). So if you never knew, didn't obey or heed the voice of Jesus Christ in this life, then you won't be able to hear it, nor respond to it when He comes calling for the next.

But even among the Christians being raptured, there will be an order as to who goes first.

## WAIT YOUR TURN

Paul says when the Lord calls for His followers from the sky, those who have already died, including your close friends, relatives, and everyone who knew Christ, will rise from the grave FIRST to meet with the Lord in the sky. Then those of us still alive will ascend to join them in the sky for a family reunion unlike any we've ever known. That reunion celebration culminates in us all returning to heaven with the Lord.

A question that often comes up at this point is the question of the already-deceased. It goes like this: "Wait, I thought my dead relatives who trusted Jesus were already in heaven, how are they rising from the grave again?" Sure. I'll answer it. At your death, your physical body is put in the ground, but your soul or spirit ascends to be in the presence of Jesus Christ. At the rapture, your physical body is what is resurrected and united with your spirit to create a new glorified body like Jesus'.

That's what Paul is speaking of in the 1 Corinthians 15:40-44 where he says, "There are... heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. 42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." It makes sense that the union of body and spirit results in a glorified body because you would need a new heavenly body to survive in a new heavenly home.

Another question that often comes up is, "What about those folks who were cremated, how are their bodies resurrected?" The Biblical answer to that question is, "God is GOD, and can do any and everything." But an even simpler response is this; if the Lord could create Adam and Eve from the dust of the ground and give them life through breath, then I think it's safe to guess that He can call back and put together the ashes and dust of our loved ones wherever their remains currently are on the earth.

## IT'S HAPPENED BEFORE, IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN

By the way, if thus far the idea of the rapture strikes you as an unreal, pie-in-the-sky, futuristic dream Christians have because they'd rather delude themselves than face reality; then you should know that such occurrences of people being suddenly snatched away into heaven before their physical death has Biblical historical precedence.

In Genesis 5:24 and later in Hebrews 11:5, we are introduced to a man named Enoch whom the Scriptures say, "...By faith,

[Enoch] was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.” Enoch is our first example of what it looked like to be raptured.

In 2 kings 2:11 the prophet Elijah, at the end of his ministry and while in the middle of a conversation, was instantly and suddenly taken up to heaven by God in a whirlwind of chariots of fire. So he never saw death.

The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2 speaks of himself suddenly being caught up into the heavens where he was shown visions of paradise.

In the book of Revelation 4 the apostle John, while he was in prayer and in exile on the island of Patmos, suddenly found himself being called up into heaven and shown visions of the end times.

And lastly, Jesus Himself in the book of Acts 1:10-11, after His resurrection, was physically taken up into the clouds and into heaven in the presence of onlookers.

All that to say the rapture is not something strange that has never occurred. God has often times in history supernaturally rescued His people from impending disaster before it happened. He did it for Rahab when He was going to destroy Jericho. He did it for Lot and his family when He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. He did it for Noah and his family when He sent the flood. And He did it for the entire Israelite nation when He brought them out of Egypt.

Aside from those examples, the Scriptures assure us in Romans 8:1 that not only is “there no condemnation for those in Jesus Christ”, but 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says, “For God did not appoint us (His church) to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...” So, though we don’t know when the exact moment of the rapture will happen, we do know that one generation of Christians will never pass through death’s door because Christ Himself will come for them.

All of that leads to a more pertinent question, “What is the purpose of the rapture? Why the sudden massive evacuation of all the Christians on the planet?”

The answer is somewhat sobering because it’s the same reason any massive evacuation would take place today. The only reason a city, town, or State would order a mass evacuation of all its citizens is if there is an impending horrific devastation about to take place. This holds true for the events that take place right after the rapture. It’s a period where God begins His judgment on earth for everyone who has rejected His offer of grace through Jesus Christ.

The bulk of the information concerning the timeline and events following the rapture is found in the book of Revelation 4-18 and Daniel 9-12. I’m not going to look at all those passages in this message, but I will say this; according to Daniel 9 and those other passages in Revelation, the rapture of the church is followed by a period of seven years in which the world will experience economic meltdowns, unbelievable amounts of bloodshed and slaughter, cosmic disturbances, and unnatural disasters unlike any that have been known to date.

## **THE RAPTURE: GOOD FOR SOME, AWFUL FOR OTHERS**

But let’s step back for a moment and consider the impact that an event like the rapture will have on the rest of the world. Think of the physical and psychological devastation such an event would have on everyone left behind, not only in America, but all around the world. Imagine such an event happening during the busiest times in different cities around the world and the emotional trauma that would follow as family members wonder what happened to their loved ones who’ve suddenly gone missing.

Here's what's sadder, the rapture is only the beginning of the end. It actually sets the stage for another significant event that's going to happen on the earth at the time.

At the beginning point of all that confusion and difficulty following the rapture, there will be an outcry among the inhabitants of the earth for SOMEONE to bring peace, SOMEONE to explain away all the disappearances, and SOMEONE to restore things back to order and give the world a sense of hope. That worldwide outcry will be the cue for a figure known as the ANTICHRIST to step on the world stage and become the new ruler of the world as we know it.

## **THE ANTICHRIST WILL FINALLY SHOW HIS FACE**

That tag, "antichrist" has been used to describe everyone from Adolph Hitler, Antiochus Epiphanies, to Barack Obama, to Donald Trump. But when the Scriptures speak of the antichrist, it provides some really helpful insights to help us understand how he will operate.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 Paul refers to him as THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS and says this: "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

So right off the bat, we know that this antichrist IS NOT part of a secret organization or some sort of one-world government network of evil leaders. This antichrist figure will be an individual heavily influenced, empowered, and eventually

indwelt by Satan himself. He's not Satan, but Satan will be the source of his power and influence.

Contrary to popular opinion, this antichrist figure will not rise to power through violence and war; in fact the Scriptures indicate the opposite. When he rises to power, he will come as a beacon of hope, he will be charming, he will possess amazing oratory skills and remarkable negotiation abilities, and people will love him. That's what Paul is hinting at when he says this man will carry out counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders. So not only will he be an appealing figure, but he'll also be granted supernatural abilities to lure people to his side. As a matter of fact, what will quickly endear the antichrist to millions around the world will be his ability to do something that former presidents of the world have been unable to do. He will negotiate a peace treaty to bring to an end all the wars in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbors.

## **THE TEMPLE WILL BE REBUILT**

According to Daniel 9:27 we are told that he (the antichrist) will confirm a covenant (sign a peace treaty) with many for one week (seven years), and for or the first time since it became an official state in 1948, the Israelites will experience a short period of peace and will actually begin and complete the rebuilding of the third temple.

This detail is very important because all the events during the end time period revolve around the Jews and the nation of Israel. It began with them in Genesis and will end with them in Revelation. That's why it's Biblically informative to pay attention to news coming in from Israel, especially talks about rebuilding the third temple.

The first temple was built by king Solomon but destroyed by the Babylonians. The second rebuilding effort took place in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra when they returned from Babylonian captivity in 583



B.C., and was later expanded by king Herod into the temple of Jesus' day. That second temple was destroyed sometime in 70 A.D. when the Romans invaded Jerusalem. Today, an Islamic shrine known as the DOME of Rock sits on the location where the Jews believe the third temple should be built.

Security experts now believe that the temple mount is the most dangerous square mile on the planet because both Jews and Muslims are claiming rights to it. One thing we do know for sure is that during the end time period, the third temple will be built. Architectural plans already exist of what it will look like, and recent digs in Israel have unveiled temple coins used during the second era of the temple. The resources are already set for the rebuilding. The only thing they really is the Ark of the Covenant and something about a red heifer, which I won't go into here. Google it.

While it appears next to impossible right now that a Jewish temple will ever be built, during the end time period, somehow somehow, the antichrist, under false pretenses, will negotiate a deal that allows for the rebuilding of the third temple on this site. We know that this rebuilding effort will happen because according to Daniel's prophecy, halfway through that seven year period the antichrist will show his true evil nature by breaking the peace treaty and gather his armies to attack Israel by FIRST desecrating the temple.

That's what Daniel is referring to in the prophecy in chapter 9:27 when he says, "And on a wing of the temple he (the antichrist) will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." In Jewish history a godless ruler named Antiochus Epiphanies desecrated the Jewish temple by sacrificing a pig on its holy altars. The indication is that the antichrist will do something just as repugnant to spite the Jews during that end time period, and ultimately to spite God Himself.

## THINGS ARE GOING TO GET WORSE, MUCH WORSE.

That act will then launch the world into a period known as the GREAT TRIBULATION.

In fact, this is the same event Jesus refers to in Matthew 24:15 when He says, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

So, along with all the cosmic disturbances and unnatural disasters that the book of Revelation speaks of, the antichrist will also cause great destruction, and will make life a living hell for all the followers of Jesus Christ, (all of whom become followers of Christ AFTER the rapture).

Now while all this disaster is taking place, it's also important to note that God is also simultaneously orchestrating a worldwide evangelistic effort to offer people one last chance to turn to Jesus Christ before they are destroyed. Though the church has been removed, the Holy Spirit is still active at work during this period drawing people to Christ through two groups of people.



The first group is referenced in Revelation 7:4 and is a very unique group of 144,000 Jews who have been handpicked by God and sealed by Him. Their survival during this seven-year tribulation period is crucial to the rest of the survivors on earth because they have been commissioned by Christ to be instrumental in the conversion of hundreds of thousands of lives. Most scholars believe that these groups of Jews are a sort of missionary corps who travel throughout the earth preaching the gospel. As a result of their ministry, many will come to faith in Jesus Christ, both among the remaining Jews and Gentiles.

The other group carrying out evangelistic work during this period are the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11:3-6, but their ministry takes place in the front half of the seven year period as they proclaim the gospel to all who will hear. So all hope isn't lost.

## **THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE**

The greatest hope, however, will come at the end of the seven-year period when persecution and destruction is at its worst. After the antichrist and his armies have gathered against Israel and Christians for the final battle we know as ARMAGEDDON, he and his army will notice a very unpleasant surprise in the sky.

Here's how the apostle John records that moment in the book of Revelation 19:11-21: "At that moment... I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True (Jesus Christ). With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God...."

That event John writes about is the actual second return of Christ (I mentioned in the beginning) where He judges the earth and

establishes His millennial kingdom, which in turn launches a new era of peace and prosperity, and we live happily ever after.

So let's bring this all together here. What does this all mean for you and I today?

## **WHY THE RAPTURE MATTERS TO YOU TODAY**

Well for one, we can agree that it is futile to play the guessing game with Jesus' return date. Date setting is the exact thing Jesus instructed us not to do. In fact Jesus warned that if anyone tells you that it is happening over here or over there, don't believe it, they are false prophets! That should probably be your first hint that it ain't Jesus! When Christ returns, it will be as clear as day to those who know Him and those who have rejected Him! I think it was a wise man who said, "Live your life as if Jesus were coming tomorrow, but plan it out as if He weren't coming for another thousand years"

Two, the knowledge of the inevitable return of our king should cause a few things to change in our lives.

First, that knowledge should STIR OUR AFFECTIONS DEEPLY FOR JESUS CHRIST IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT RESULTS IN HOLY INTENTIONAL LIVING. Make every effort today to live a life that pleases God so that when the Son returns, with great joy and anticipation, you can stand before Him and proudly account for how you faithfully managed everything that was entrusted to you. The sweetest moment for you if you do this will be when you stand before Jesus and hear Him say, "WELL DONE MY GOOD and FAITHFUL SERVANT."

Secondly, our knowledge of His return SHOULD STIR IN US A DEEP DESIRE TO SEE PEOPLE FAR FROM GOD COME TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST. Here's the reality,

apart from saving faith in Jesus Christ, the world has no hope!

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been entrusted with a message that not only gives hope, but brings life, and life to the full. We need to tell someone about it. We need to love people in our lives in such a way that it results in them wanting to inquire about our faith, (a reason for the hope in us).

Someday, all the arguments and debates about which religion is true, and whether God is truly good or not, will come to an end, and all that will matter in that moment is if you recognize that your sins have separated you from God. All that will matter in those last moment is your faith in Jesus Christ.

What you do with Jesus Christ in this lifetime will echo for all eternity. So if you're going to do one thing with your life, let it be all about Jesus!

**Love Jesus Christ. Serve His Church. Care for People Far From God.**

