



A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

The second coming of Jesus has long been the burning desire of His people, and the great theme of the Bible writers. The promise of Jesus to come again to receive His people (John 14:1-3) has brought hope and comfort to millions over the years. However, since the devil could not destroy the Bible teaching of this "glorious appearing" he has attempted to weaken its significance through a perversion of it. Notice that when He comes that "every eye shall see Him", and not just a select few.

We are told by some today that when Jesus comes it will be a "secret rapture" which no one will even be aware of until they begin to notice people are missing. People will then have another opportunity to make amends and prepare for their second chance at heaven after the end of seven years. However, Scripture is clear that there is no second chance when Jesus comes, nor will the event be a secret. The Lord tells us clearly that when He comes His reward is with Him to give "every man" according to his works (Revelation 22:12). He further informs us His coming will be as visible as the lightning, and "with power and great glory." He will also be accompanied by His mighty angels, and trumpets will be blowing as His people are gathered to Him (Matthew 24:30-31).

As He descends to this earth amid all this commotion and excitement graves burst open and the righteous dead are brought to life. Then, they, along with the living righteous, rise "to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The wicked receive no second chance at this time for they are destroyed by "the brightness of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Regardless of what some today teach, the coming of Jesus will not be secret, for "the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard" (Isaiah 24:20) and "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 16:20). As the earth seems about to burst at the seams the wicked see Jesus coming with all His holy angels and flee in terror seeking a means of hiding and escape, for they realize that "the great day of his wrath is come" (Revelation 6:14-17). Yet the righteous cry out "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).

Do not be deceived, His coming is not going to be a secret, nor shall any have a second chance beyond that glorious event; for "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

This devilish doctrine of a secret rapture, seven year tribulation, second chance, is based solely upon the twisted theories and fanciful speculations of man. Very few are even aware of the origin of this "cunningly devised fable". It was not until the first half of the last century that this great deception began to creep into Christianity. In 1830, in Scotland, a woman by the name of Margaret McDonald, a member of Edward Irving's church, supposedly had a vision in which she was shown that Jesus was going to secretly return to this earth to take a few Christians to heaven leaving others to go through a period of tribulation. This fanciful conjecture was totally rejected by Irving and the members of his church as being a devilish delusion. They concluded, and rightly so, that there was no biblical evidence to support her prediction. However, a few years later, at the infamous Powerscourt meetings, this speculative theory was accepted, apart from any biblical evidence, and thus a search was begun to find anything in the Scriptures that would add credibility to this premise.

John Nelson Darby, a Church of the Brethren preacher, gave it a tremendous boost as it began to spread to America between 1850 and 1860. However, Charles Ingerson Scofield did as much as any other person to promote this error in the English speaking world with the introduction of *The Scofield Bible*. His numerous notes were soon accepted as if they were a part of the Bible itself. His comments on Jesus coming as a "thief" were lifted from their context and made to imply that this meant His coming would be secret. Scofield, and all other promoters of a "secret rapture", completely ignore the biblical qualification of this term. For example: "*If* therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief" (Revelation 3:3), or "that day should not overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4) indicates that what is being stressed here is not secrecy, but rather unexpectedness. This becomes even more evident when we consider that when referring to His coming "as a thief in the night" it says "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then shall *sudden destruction* cometh upon them (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3). Furthermore, Scripture is very clear that "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." Does this sound as if this will be a secret, or that there will be a second chance after this glorious event?

Another passage that the "rapturists" contort to support their erroneous position is Matthew 24:37-41. They wrest this passage from its original meaning and attempt to make it say that when Jesus comes one will be taken to heaven and one will be left on this earth to go through a tribulation. A brief examination of these verses shows that one would have to be an extremely superficial reader to accept such an absurd premise as this. First of all, where does it say anything about a tribulation, and second, notice who were taken and who were left. Verse 39 states clearly that it was the wicked upon whom "the flood came, and *took* them all away" and only the eight righteous were *left* when the flood was over; "so also shall the coming of the Son of man be." This is clarified even more when we compare the parallel passage in Luke 17:26-37. Here we find that where Matthew said "the flood came, and *took* them all away" Luke states that "the flood came, and *destroyed* them all" (verse 29). Thus, we can again see that the ones taken are the ones destroyed, and the ones left are the ones left alive, or the righteous. Jesus also uses Lot, and the city of Sodom, to illustrate this; by showing that only Lot and his family were left alive after fire fell upon the wicked "and destroyed them all". He then continues by declaring that "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:29, 30). Remember, there was nothing secret about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or this world by a flood; and neither will there be anything secret about the "blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).