

THE SNATCHING AWAY

Being raised under the influence of the Baptist denomination, I was fully aware of the “snatching away” from the age of seven on. During those early years in the faith, I also believed Hell was a place of literal fire where all the unbelievers spent eternity. I pictured people trying to climb on top of one another in an attempt to get out of the scorching heat of what I thought was a literal lake of fire. I didn’t know the true evangel which states that God is the Savior of “all mankind”. Therefore, being ignorant of what the word of God really states concerning God’s purpose of the eons, it was absolutely vital that I and my loved ones be included in the “rapture”. Looking back, I now see that it was a selfish expectation.

The film “A Thief in the Night” also made a big impact on me as a child. As is evident by the title, the producers of this film were mixing the rapture with the “Day of the Lord” when Christ returns for faithful Israel. The gist of the film is that the rapture is going to take place as a thief, yet untold thousands will die as a result. For example, if the pilot of a plane and the driver of an automobile are believers at the moment of the rapture, they will be caught up in the air, but the plane and the automobile will crash, killing several people instantly. Now imagine that happening worldwide. Such was my understanding of the “snatching away” and “Hell” in the Baptist denomination.

I am thankful that God, through His spirit and dedicated teachers, has enabled me to see much of the false teachings concerning this very important event.

In this paper, I’d like to address three aspects of the snatching away:

- 1) To show that there was a secret, hidden from all men until it was revealed by the apostle Paul,
- 2) To elaborate on the event itself, and
- 3) To explain when it will occur in relation to other futuristic events.

A SECRET

Acts 13:2 states that Paul and Barnabas are severed by the holy spirit for a special work. Immediately after this we read that a Jew is blinded for a period of time and a Gentile perceiving what has occurred, believes (13:11-12).

Acts is a book of transition. On one hand it shows the decline of the ministry of the twelve apostles which primarily involved the testimony of Christ (Acts 1:8). It was also a message of repentance to the Jews (11:19) for the erasure of their sins so that seasons of refreshing should be coming upon them (2:36-38, 3:17-21). Following these things, the times of restoration of all which God speaks through His holy prophets occur, and then Christ finally returns and reigns as their King for a thousand years. Such was the message in the first half of Acts.

The twelve didn’t know when these things would transpire, but surely the powers given to them to perform miracles must have been signs to the Jews in general that the seasons of refreshing were near.

Eventually though, something else was being observed. Gentiles, non-Israelites, were being saved **apart** from the ministry of the twelve. In fact, the unit of twelve no longer existed for the apostle James was killed (Acts 12). From the accounts pertaining to the event of Acts chapters

15 and 21, it would appear that James, who was the Lord's brother in the flesh, now had the authority among the Jewish ecclesias (see also Gal. 2:11-14). Yet apart from these developments within Israel, riches were being given to the nations from Christ in his resurrected, exalted position at the right hand of God. The instrument through which this was being manifested was the apostle Paul. All of these riches then, are indeed untraceable because no one knew of this particular saving work among the nations, nor did anyone know the future glorious ramifications of the calling. **It was a secret concealed from the eons in God** (Eph. 3:1-9).

This little incident in Acts chapter 13 then, is a mini-picture of this important administration of the grace of God that was entrusted to the apostle Paul. In Acts, it is only hinted at; the details are supplied in Paul's letters.

The writer of the book of Hebrews and those to whom he was writing were aware of this transition. In 11:3, he says it this way: *"By faith, we are apprehending the eons to adjust to a declaration of God, so that what is being observed has not come out of what is appearing."*

These Hebrews were "mentally perceiving" that one administration had been put on hold while another was being revealed. And this new administration did not logically come out of what was appearing. In other words, the ministry of Paul in announcing the celestial calling of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles was not the logical outcome of our Lord's ministry on earth where He was confirming the patriarchal promises, nor was it of the apostles' ministry beginning at Pentecost.

I would imagine most of the Jews in that day would not have had this understanding, but these Hebrews did.

Rom. 11:25 supports the passage from the book of Hebrews. Paul writes: *"For I am not willing you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren, lest you may be passing for prudent among yourselves, that callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering."*

Israel's offense is the world's riches; their casting away is the conciliation of the world. (Rom. 11: 12, 15)

All of these passages confirm the picture in Acts 13: 11-12. God is performing a work among a people never before in view while the favored nation is set aside.

Col. 1:24 -- *"I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and am filling up in my flesh, in His stead, the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ, for His body, which is the ecclesia of which I became a dispenser, in accord with the administration of God, which is granted to me for you, to complete the word of God - **the secret which has been concealed from the eons...**"*

Paul's ministry comes out of nowhere, yet it was planned by God from the very beginning. And the secrets that Paul unfolds - - these complete the word of God.

In I Cor. 13:2 Paul writes: *"And if I should have prophecy and should be perceiving all secrets and all knowledge."* Paul was perceiving secrets. The work to which he was called by the holy spirit, was now to reveal these secrets.

I think it is appropriate to say then, based on all these verses, **that the entire ministry of the apostle Paul was a secret.** This means the evangel that he called "my evangel" was a secret.

These are trans-administrational truths in this administration, but the body of Christ itself, its calling, blessings, and future position with Christ was a total secret.

In Eph. 3:8-9 Paul writes, *“To me, less than the least of all saints, was granted this grace to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations, and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God.”*

The secret is “Christ among you (the nations), **the expectation of glory.**” (Col. 1:27)

When does the expectation become a reality? It begins when we meet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the air, which some call the “rapture” or “snatching away.” Whatever you call it, Christ is coming for us and we are longing for that day.

This may sound strange to some, but what I’m trying to show is that no one knew of this event before Paul revealed it. It was a secret. The sad thing is (relatively speaking), this event is still a secret to many believers today. Unless we see the distinct calling concerning those of us being saved under the evangel of grace that Paul was severed for, and the purpose for which we’ve been called, then we will continue to lump the snatching away and other aspects of our calling with the terrestrial, traceable riches given to the faithful of Israel under the evangel of the Circumcision.

“Christ among us” produces an “expectation of glory” (Col. 1:27). We cannot find information on this expectation outside of Paul’s writings. The riches that come to us are truly untraceable.

I wonder how many actually contemplate the blessings that are ours under the title, “THE EVANGEL OF THE UNTRACEABLE RICHES OF CHRIST” (Eph. 3:8). One of them is our expectation. This, along with all of the others come to us through our exalted Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. I personally believe He was given this ministry concerning His body after His death, entombment, resurrection, and ascension to the Father’s right hand in the heights. This would have occurred after Acts 1:11. Before this time He was confirming the Patriarchal promises and teaching that which concerned the kingdom. However, unknown to every human, when the time was right He delegated the apostle Paul to reveal the calling of His body. His complement, through which He completes the all in all, thus fulfilling God’s purpose of the eons.

I’ve always liked the expression that “now we are going through boot camp.” Now is a preparation. He is performing a work in us and will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6)

THE EVENT ITSELF

OK, what exactly is this Rapture (Snatching Away)? Through the years I’ve been surprised by the wide variety of teachings concerning this, some denying that it even exists. There is also much discrepancy as to when it takes place. Some feel it already occurred in 70 AD. Others think it will be pre, mid, or post tribulation, and I’m sure there are other ideas as well. For now though, I’d like to consider the event itself.

I Thes. 4:13-18 *“Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are reposing, lest you may sorrow according as the rest, also, who have no expectation. For, if we are believing that Jesus died and rose, thus also, those who are put to repose, will God, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him. For this we are saying to you by the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who are surviving to the presence of the Lord, should by no means outstrip those*

who are put to repose, for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall be rising first. Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. So that, console one another with these words.

To begin with, this passage should bring consolation for it says our loved ones who have died in faith will be raised first, and then together with us who are surviving, shall meet the Lord in the air – and thus shall we always be together with the Lord.

“The Lord Himself will be descending from Heaven...”

Two things here:

- 1) We know when Christ comes back to the earth to set up His kingdom, that He will be accompanied by a heavenly host (Zech. 14:15). Yet in this passage Paul doesn't mention anyone else. He just says, *“The Lord Himself will be descending.”* Regardless if there is anyone else or not, there is a special closeness being brought out here between our Savior and us, His body, the ones He is longing to be with as we are longing to be with Him. This closeness is really emphasized in Eph. 3: 1-9 and 5:22-32.
- 2) He is *“descending from Heaven.”* Currently He is at the right hand of God in the heights (Heb. 1:3). He is beyond the curtain in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitches, not a man (Heb. 8:2). Phil. 3:20 comes to mind: “For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Savior.” **Where He is – we shall be.** There is a place in this celestial country where Christ Himself has a home in light inaccessible (I Tim. 6:16). He is going to leave that place, meet us in the air, and take us home.

“To meet the Lord in the air...” Right now Satan is referred to as the *“Chief of the jurisdiction of the air”* (Eph. 2:2). We are going to have a reunion with our Lord in the midst of Satan's domain.

This same secret is described in I Cor. 15:51. *“Lo! a secret to you am I telling! We all, indeed, shall not be put to repose, yet we all shall be changed, in an instant, in the twinkle (tossing) of an eye, at the last trump. For He will be trumpeting, and the dead will be roused incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”* The secret is that we shall not all be put to repose, yet we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the tossing of an eye, at the last trump.

Two things from this verse:

- 1) Notice this experience recorded here is a secret. This means it was not known through any teaching before, which includes all of the Old Testament, Jesus while on the earth, and the ministry of the twelve. In I Thes. 4, Paul is elaborating on this, but he doesn't refer to it as a secret. (Perhaps this is because it was already revealed here, which means I Corinthians may have been written before I Thessalonians. Editor's Note: For more insight on this go to thedifferentiator.net/thess.html)
- 2) In this passage of I Corinthians, Paul is stressing our change. These bodies are going to be changed from corruptible to incorruptible; from mortal to immortality. To put it another

way, let's go back to Phil. 3: 20-21: "*Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform to the body of His glory.*"

II Cor. 5: 1-8 "*For we are aware that, if our terrestrial tabernacle house should be demolished, we have a building of God, a house not made by hands, eonian, in the heavens. For in this also we are groaning, longing to be dressed in our habitation which is out of heaven, if so be that, being dressed also, we shall not be found naked. For we also, who are in the tabernacle, are groaning, being burdened, on which we are not wanting to be stripped, but to be dressed, that the mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He who produces us for this same longing is God, Who is also giving us the earnest of the spirit. Being, then, courageous, always, and aware that, being at home in the body, we are away from home from the Lord (for by faith we are walking, not by perception), yet we are encouraged, and are delighting rather to be away from home out of the body and to be at home with the Lord.*"

From these passages then, we know that these fleshly bodies of humiliation are going to be changed at the snatching away so that we will conform to the body of His glory.

WHEN DOES THE SNATCHING AWAY OCCUR?

This may be surprising to some, but as my first reference I'd like for us to consider Heb. 11: 39-40. "*And these all, being testified through faith, are not requited with the promise of God concerning us (the looking forward is to something better), that, apart from us, they may not be perfected.*"

The body of Christ while being revealed last, is actually the first ones to come into God's blessings. Everything in God's creation was planned around His Son, then the body of Christ. It was a secret hidden, but nonetheless, it was the original plan. Along with His Son, we are at the core of God's plan, and together with Him we are the key of all the others in creation.

Notice also Eph. 1: 9-12. The secret of God's will is to have an administration of the complement of the eras, "*... to head up all in Christ - - both that in the heavens and that on the earth - - In Him in Whom our lot was cast also, being designated beforehand according to the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will, that we should be for the laud of His glory, who are pre-expectant in the Christ.*"

Then, Eph. 1:23 tells us that Christ, being roused and seated at God's right hand among the celestials, is given, "*as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all.*"

From these passages I am convinced that we are first to be united with Christ, and as His complement, will be used by Him to head up all the rest. In essence then, we are really the first ones God chose (Eph. 1:4, II Tim. 1:9, Heb. 12:23)

Rom. 8:18 says, "*For the premonition of the creation is awaiting the unveiling of the sons of God.*" Someday we will be unveiled as the sons of God.

With all of this in mind then, I see the snatching away occurring before the faithful saints of the earthly kingdom are resurrected.

I also see our snatching away occurring before the temple is built because right now God's temple is in each one of us. The believers now "*are being built together for God's dwelling place in spirit.*" (Eph. 2:22)

I Cor. 3:16 says, *"You are a temple of God and the spirit of God is making its home in you."*
(also I Cor. 6:19)

As I said in the introduction, God has set Israel's program aside for the time being while He is administering the secret through the apostle Paul. Before God returns to that former program, He is going to call His ambassadors home. We are like the Thessalonians in that we too, are *"...waiting for His Son out of the heavens, Whom He rouses from among the dead, Jesus, our Rescuer out of the coming indignation (I Thes. 1:10)*. Christ is going to rescue us **out of the coming of** the indignation. We won't be in it. It is coming when we are rescued. It's like saying we are rescued out of the coming storm. We are rescued before its arrival. It's different than being rescued out of the storm.

Therefore, not only do I believe we are snatched away before everyone else, but we are also snatched away **before** the "Day of the Lord."

As for now, we are *"being pressed out of the two (life and death), having a yearning for the solution and to be together with Christ, for it, rather, is much better."* (Phil. 1:23)

*"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, Who loves us, and is **giving us an eonian consolation and a good expectation in grace**, be consoling your hearts and establish you in every good work and word."* (2 Thes. 2:16-17) Amen!

(Author Unknown)