

THE PRE-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE IS THE SIGN FOR ISRAEL

S.L.H.
Soli Deo Gloria!

To the question of His disciples, "And what shall be the sign of thy coming" (Matt24:4), Jesus responded with the Olivet discourse (Matt24:4-41; Mk13:5-37; Luk17:26-37) in which He gave an expanded recounting of Daniel's 70th Week (Dan9:27; which would be greatly expanded by the Apostle John in Revelation 6-19). This recounting, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, ended with an allusion to a mysterious disappearance. Jesus said, "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed [i.e., *night*]; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together [i.e., *morning*]; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field [i.e., *afternoon*]; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Luke 17:34-36).

Dispensationalists have long disputed the proper understanding of **Matthew 24:36-42** and **Luke 17:26-37** which relates a future event in which a multitude of persons around the world instantaneously disappear. On its face, this event would seem to correlate with the Rapture of the Church (cf. 1Cor15:51-52; 1Thess4:13-17), yet the majority of Dispensationalists, especially those adhering to the revised Dispensationalism of Walvoord, Ryrie, and Pentecost, have argued that the Rapture of the Church has no logical place in Jesus' Olivet discourse. Rather, the Olivet discourse pertains only to the nation of Israel and has nothing to do with the Church, which at that time had not yet been revealed. While it is admitted that the birth of the Church had not yet taken place, nor does Jesus refer to it by name, He most certainly referred to its Rapture at the end of the Olivet discourse.

Jesus' Olivet discourse is not about the Church; rather, it is a message to the nation of Israel. But its subject concerns the "sign" for which the nation of Israel should "watch" (cf. Matt24:42; Mk13:33-37) in order to know that the second "coming" of Christ is near (cf. Matt24:4). While Jesus gave numerous signs throughout the discourse (e.g., "wars and rumors of wars", "pestilences", "earthquakes", "the abomination of desolation", and "false Christs, and false prophets"), He concluded the discourse with the ultimate "sign"; it is the "sign" that precedes all the other signs, and one which cannot possibly be missed by the nation of Israel (and the world), which is the unexpected, sudden, and instantaneous disappearance of a multitude of persons all around the world. It awaited the writings of the Apostle Paul to fully reveal the doctrine concerning the Rapture of the Church which ends the parenthetical Dispensation of Grace, a temporary pause in God's prophetic program for the nation of Israel, but the Lord Jesus most certainly pointed to the event as the "sign" to the nation of Israel that the return of Christ was drawing near.

The moment after the Rapture of the Church, no believer will remain on earth. And yet, 144,000 Jews will be converted and used by God to evangelize the whole world during the Tribulation (cf. Matt24:13; Mk13:10; Rev7:1-17). How are these Jews converted? Might not the sudden disappearance of millions of people around the world, for which Jesus exhorted the nation of Israel to watch, be the "sign" that triggers the conversion of the 144,000? Maranatha!