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Sermon Notes

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The Rapture of the Elect

Matthew 24:31, 40-41

My most vivid dream:

All my life I have been captivated by the dream of flight... I have been fascinated by the power that birds of prey in particular have to soar on thermals without ever flapping their wings... When I was at Acadia National Park, I saw hawks fly like that in lazy spirals ascending ever higher over Echo Lake until they passed high over my head and flew beyond me out of view; I saw eagles do the same at the Grand Canyon... and I let my imagination soar with them... how wonderful it would be to fly, to soar through the air without any fear

One night, when I was a teenager, I had the most vivid dream of my life... in that dream I was standing on the parapet of some ancient castle in the Alps... perhaps it was in the Bavarian Alps, I don't know. Moved by a sudden impulse, I cast myself from the castle wall, but instead of plummeting to my death, I glided on the air, soaring free and fast; I was able to control the flight and go wherever I wanted; I was flying over some perfectly blue Alpine Lake, looking down at the sailboats that were sailing there. It was the most vivid, breathtaking dream of my life... I was bitterly disappointed when I awoke and found out that it had only been a dream

Perhaps you've had a dream like that! The Bible says in the Book of Ecclesiastes that God has set eternity in the hearts of men... I think in a similar way, He has set flight in the hearts of men as well... we all want to live forever, and I think we all want to fly

Ancient Greek myths tell the story of Daedalus and Icarus, who dared to fly too high on their own man-made wings until the heat of the sun god, Helios, melted the wax that held their wings together

Throughout history, human beings have tried to imitate the birds in flight; between the years 1000 and 1010 AD, a Benedictine monk in England named Eilmer of Malmesbury flew about 250 yards in a glider he had devised, but he crashed and suffered injuries; Leonardo da Vinci sketched many gliders and primitive helicopters, including one he called an aerial screw... but he never built any of them

Living here in North Carolina, we are all familiar with the exploits of Orville and Wilbur Wright, the two brothers from Dayton Ohio that conquered heavier-than-air flight on the sands of Kitty Hawk in 1903. The twentieth-century saw an astonishing development of flight from that point until the conquest of space travel.

But flying in machines doesn't actually come close to my dream... soaring silently and freely without the drone of a motor or the shroud of an aluminum wall around me

The closest thing I've ever seen to it was a You Tube video of some insane BASE jumpers who use an aerodynamic wingsuit fashioned like the webbing of flying squirrels... these insane young people have special parachutes that they throw out from behind them to keep from killing themselves; The video shows them perched high on the cliffs of some breathtaking fjords in Norway... they throw themselves off the cliffs and start to plummet... the air fills their webbed flying suits and they begin to glide, streaking at 120 mph within fingertip reach of the rocky fjord walls... plummeting in a controlled glide until they finally deploy their parachutes and touch down safely somewhere. The video doesn't tell us, however, how many of these daredevils die from their sport of BASE jumping every year

No... I dream of soaring up from the ground, free as a bird, soaring through the clouds... the earth getting ever smaller... until I can see the beauty and radiance of the sunlight illuminating the clouds... I want to do it with absolutely no fear whatsoever

When the space shuttle Challenger blew up, Ronald Reagan quoted a poem...

"slipped the surly bounds of earth and touched the face of God"

I want to fly through the air and NOT perish in the trip... I want to slip the surly bounds of earth and touch the face of God

Amazingly, I think the Bible promises me that, as part of the salvation package, I will have at least one such flight... at the moment that Jesus returns, I will have an angel dispatched to snatch me from the surface of the ground and carry me through the atmosphere... far above this troubled, sin-cursed globe, soaring freely and at last to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air... suspended above the surface of the earth, the most vivid dream of my childhood fulfilled at the same time as the most fervent desire of my adulthood is also fulfilled: to see the face of Jesus, my Lord

Today, we come to the issue of what is called commonly "the RAPTURE"... the catching-up of the elect of Christ to meet the Lord in the air

Matthew 24:30-31 At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

The topic of the rapture is one of the most poignant and fertile themes of the study of the end of the world... and I believe it is fraught with many misunderstandings

The purpose of this sermon is to unfold our future reunion with Christ in the clouds of the air... to distinguish truth from error... and to anticipate eagerly the blessings God has stored up for us in this—the most thrilling ride you will ever take in your life!!

I. Popular Views of the “Secret Rapture”

A. Left Behind: A Worldwide Phenomenon

1. Rayford Steele, 747 Pilot flying across the Atlantic; middle of the night walks back in the cabin; Hattie Durham, the attractive flight attendant he’s had his eyes on for a while grabs him in a panic... “People are missing” she sobs, in near hysterics... “A whole bunch of people... just gone!”
2. All over the plane... the rumpled piles of clothing gave mute evidence to the sudden disappearance of dozens of people... the staccato cries of loved ones as they discovered they’d been left behind pierced the darkness of the 747s cabin...
3. This was the worldwide phenomenon of the rapture... the catching up of Christ’s Bride, the church, in secret, in the darkness of the night for half the globe...
4. The people left behind are all unbelievers in Christ... and so begins the seven-year tribulation, the final act of human history
5. At least, that’s what Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, the authors of the blockbuster *Left Behind* series
6. They claim that, while the series is fiction, it is based on absolute biblical fact—solid theology resting on sound exegesis of key passages of Scripture
7. They have added some vivid details that cannot be supported by any passage of Scripture: for example the rumpled piles of clothing... the jewelry, like necklaces, in gentle curves in the bed where a believing woman was laying when the Lord called her out
8. It seems best for us to step back on solid ground this morning... with actual passages of Scripture under our feet: Matthew 24:31, 40-41; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

B. Hal Lindsey: Late Great Planet Earth

C. The “Secret Rapture”: a New Addition to Theology

II. The Rapture Described

Matthew 24:29-31 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." 30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They

will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

A. The Word “Rapture”

1. The word “rapture” is not found in the English Bible
2. However, it comes from the following passage in 1 Thessalonians 4

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 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. ¹⁷ 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.

3. The “rapture” is Latin for “caught up” ... the “catching up” of the church

Rapture is an English word that means "snatched up" or "caught up." It comes from the same Latin root as "raptor," the kind of birds such as eagles who "snatch up" their prey.

4. The Greek word translated “caught up” is passive... implying that those who are still alive and left at the Second Coming of Christ will have something happen to them... they will be passive while something comes to seize them or snatch them up... the word implies a SUDDEN snatching or seizing

B. Matthew 24:31 Gives The Agents of the Rapture: ANGELS

1. The Bible says that Christ, returning in His glory will be surrounded by the host of heaven... myriads of angels

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.

Mark 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

2. Even Enoch, seven generations removed from Adam, knew of the Second Coming of Christ and of the holy angels that would come with Him

Jude 14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones

3. Daniel 7 implies that there are more than a hundred million angels in heaven ready to serve God and His Son
4. Revelation 19 makes it plain that Christ is returning at the head of an immense army of angels

Revelation 19:11, 14 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. ... The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

C. The Dispatch of Christ: Rescue My People

Vs. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

1. Christ is coming for the sake of His elect, to rescue them in every way
2. The word “elect” means “chosen ones”... chosen OUT from the world; now He has come to rescue them OUT from the clutches of Satan and of His Antichrist
3. The word “elect” is mentioned THREE TIMES in this chapter

Matthew 24:22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Matthew 24:24 false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-- if that were possible.

And now here... the elect rescued by angels from the sinking earth

4. These elect were chosen before the creation of the world

Ephesians 1:4-5 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ

5. They are love-gifts from the Father to the Son, and the Son died for them

John 6:37-39 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

6. At the right time, each of them came to faith in Christ... the “day of salvation” has now ended, and ALL the elect have come to faith

7. This is the consummation of Christ's saving work for His elect

The earth will have become more hostile to faith in Christ than at any other time in human history

The Antichrist will have set up His "abomination of desolation"... the inhabitants of Judea will have run for the lives; perhaps they will have been hiding in caves for 1335 days, counting each painful and terrifying day until the Return of Christ

In other nations around the world, life will go on as it has day after day...

Matthew 24:37-39 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

D. The Angelic Mission: "Elect from Every Nation"

1. The angels are dispatched by the commanding general, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords... Jesus Christ
2. They are sent, each angel, to rescue an elect person from his or her surroundings
3. The angels are very specific in their mission, and they make no mistakes
4. Proximity to one of the elect will mean nothing for one of the non-elect

Matthew 24:40-41 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Luke 17:34-35 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵ Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

5. It will be TOO LATE for the ones left behind to believe in Christ at that point... the Lord is coming in glory and every eye will see Him, as we mentioned last week
6. "From the four winds... from one end of the heavens to the other..."
 - a. This is the effect of the world-wide mission of the church

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Revelation 7:9-10 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

Notice: the next verse in Revelation speaks of ALL the angels ALSO there worshipping Christ:

Revelation 7:11-12 *All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"*

Joint worship between saved people and the holy angels!! How awesome!! And it begins for us all with the resurrection and the rapture!

E. Meeting the Lord in the Air

1. The Lord is Returning to the Earth... (more on that in a moment)
2. Our deepest desire is to be with Him and to see His face
3. The rapture enables us to meet Him in the air
4. Jesus comes back with the clouds... surrounded by the awesome turbulence of the winds and the clouds... and we will defy gravity and fly in the grasp of angels to be together with the Lord
5. There are heavenly horses carrying the heavenly army

Revelation 19:14 *The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.*

6. Perhaps the angels come riding on these heavenly steeds and scoop us up and carry us up to meet the Lord in the air

III. The Timing of the Rapture

Matthew 24:29-31 *"Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." ³⁰ "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.

A. At the Second Coming of Christ

1. Matthew 24 makes it plain that the gathering of the elect from the four winds of heaven, from one end of the heavens to the other will happen at the time of the Second Coming of Christ
 - a. Vs. 30 says “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory”... vs. 31 immediately says He will send out His angels to gather the elect
 - b. The whole flow of Matthew 24 implies that the rapture happens as part of the Second Coming of Christ
2. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 teaches the same thing
 - a. It speaks of that mysterious generation of Christians who will still be alive at the “coming of the Lord”
 - b. This word “coming” is “parousia”, the Greek term for the Second Coming
 - c. Vs. 16 of 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of the Second Coming in plain terms...

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

3. Dispensational Premillennialists believe fervently that the Rapture MUST happen before the Tribulation... before the agonies of the earth described in the Book of Revelation, before the Antichrist... etc.... this is a matter of Biblical faithfulness for them, and many of them consider any other view to be a measure of LIBERAL THEOLOGY...of people who don't believe in the literal truth of the Bible
 4. But I think that they have put their overall system ahead of these clear passages of Scripture on the Rapture
- B. At the Same Time as: a Loud Command... the Voice of the Archangel...the Trumpet Call of God
1. The time of the Rapture will include some of the most awesome sounds ever heard

2. The “loud command” I think will be Christ’s command to His angels “GO... BRING FORTH MY ELECT!!!” and the angels will instantly obey;
3. The “voice of the archangel” will be the secondary command of the ruler angels seeking to fulfill Christ’s Kingly command... they will dispatch the angels they are in charge of to go snatch up the church
4. The “trumpet call of God” is linked with the dead in Christ rising...

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- ⁵² 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.

- C. At the Same Time as the Resurrection of the Dead in Christ
- D. At the Beginning of Our Eternity with Christ

IV. The Secret Rapture Rejected

A. The Secret Rapture Messes with the “Coming of the Lord”

1. It really teaches TWO Second Comings... a secret one that no one sees and a public one that everyone sees
2. But a secret coming of the Lord is vigorously rejected, especially by the language of Matthew 24

Matthew 24:26-27 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

B. The Secret Rapture Is a New Teaching

1. Augustine and the Church Fathers knew nothing of this teaching
2. The Reformers knew nothing of it either...
3. The English Puritans had never heard of it, nor Jonathan Edwards
4. Some history:

In early 1830, a 15 year old Scottish Girl called Margaret McDonald had visions that included a Secret Rapture of believers before the appearance of the Antichrist. Edward Irving (1792-1834) who was her Scottish Presbyterian pastor and forerunner of the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements, attended prophecy conferences that began in Dublin Ireland also in 1830 at Powerscourt Castle where he promoted the doctrine of the Secret Rapture as per her vision.

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) who was a minister of the Church of Ireland later became a member of the Plymouth Brethren and also promoted the Secret Rapture after attending the same Powerscourt Bible Prophecy meeting in 1830 where he learned of Margaret McDonald's supposed vision. Darby modified her views and then taught them under his own name. He developed and organized "futurism" into a system of prophetic teaching called "dispensationalism" with the so-called secret rapture at its centre. He visited Margaret McDonald at her home in Port Glasgow, Scotland and then later visited America several times where this Secret Rapture theology starting gaining a large acceptance in the 1850s and 1860s.

John Nelson Darby who was largely responsible for introducing this new teaching on a large scale also greatly influenced Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921) who also incorporated this false doctrine into the notes of his Scofield Reference Bible, first published by Oxford University Press in 1909. One million copies were printed by 1930, firmly establishing this Futurist theory into different denominations and Bible schools of the United States in the 20th Century.

5. aa

C. The Secret Rapture is Driven by the Desire to Escape the Tribulation

1. They generally teach the Pre-Tribulation of the church, based on one verse early in Revelation

Revelation 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

2. Because of this, they place the Rapture as the way by which the Lord will get us out of the world so as NOT to suffer the Tribulation with the rest of the unbelieving and wicked world
3. However, it is clear that some of Christ's elect WILL go through the Tribulation... even Lahaye and Jenkins speak of "Tribulation Saints," those who come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation... Does Christ love them LESS because He makes them go through that time? At one time ALL OF US were foolish and unbelieving... at the right time we trust in Christ. Are the Tribulation Saints PUNISHED because they didn't come to Christ sooner?
4. Also, Christ's warnings in Matthew 24 seem to imply that His elect will have to go through those terrible days

Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Matthew 24:23-25 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand.

See how all of Christ's words of warning seem to prepare His elect for the Tribulation that is coming?

5. It is very consistent with Christ's usual way of dealing with us NOT to take us out of the trial but to give us strength to bear up under it
6. Revelation also implies that the believers will go through the suffering

Revelation 16:12-15 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East... . "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

- a. Notice that the "thief" statement comes during the judgment on the earth, the sixth bowl drying up the Euphrates
- b. Then we are told that blessed is anyone who stays awake and is ready for the coming of Christ... the Lord will PROTECT them through the Tribulation

D. Someone Will Do a U-Turn... Christ or Us

1. Either Christ descends from heaven in a secret rapture and catches up His saints and then TURNS AROUND and takes them back into heaven... OR the saints leave the earth, ascend with the angels up to meet the Lord in the air and then TURN AROUND and go back with the Lord to the earth to destroy the Antichrist
2. Either way, someone is doing a u-turn
3. It makes more sense for us to JOIN IN with what Christ is doing, rather than have Him turn around and go from the clouds back up into heaven
4. Besides, the word for "meet" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is a technical term for a delegation that goes out of the city to meet an approaching dignitary (like a King from another land) that then turns around and accompanies him back into the city

E. But what about the "Thief in the Night" Passages?

1. Those advocating the Secret Rapture cite the "thief in the night" passages

Matthew 24:43-44 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

2. I will cover those in due time... but I think those passages are only teaching that Jesus will come right into the midst of everyday life, with no further warnings to an unbelieving and therefore unprepared world
3. He is just saying He is not going to give a countdown to the world... true believers will be ready at any moment

F. The Secret Rapture Must Be Rejected

V. The Significance of the Rapture

A. It Demonstrates Christ's Power

1. The Second Coming itself is a display of awesome power

Matthew 24:30 They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

2. Christ will display specifically His power to destroy the devil and his Antichrist servant

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

3. The Rapture then displays His power to rescue His church from Satan's power
4. So also, since the dead in Christ will rise first, it shows the power of Christ to RAISE THE DEAD

1 Thessalonians 4:16 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.

John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

B. It Demonstrates Christ's Love for His Church

1. It seems what motivates Christ the most here is His desire to rescue His elect from the ravages of the Satanic assault in the time of the Antichrist
2. Christ showed His passion for His bride in His statement to Saul of Tarsus
3. The rapture is the RESCUE of the damsel in distress... the church suffering long and patiently
4. Also, the 1 Thessalonians 4 passage ends with these words

1 Thessalonians 4:17 And so we will be with the Lord forever.

5. Remember that this is the VERY THING Christ prayed for in John 17

John 17:24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory

So the rapture is Christ's expression of His desire to have His bride at His side

C. It is a Reward for Faithful and Courageous Service

1. The Book of Revelation speaks specifically of the reward aspect of our being gathered to Christ

Revelation 7:13-17 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes-- who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

2. "He who stands firm to the end will be SAVED... and also REWARDED..."

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me

D. It Enables Us to Accompany Christ to the Earth

1. Christ is coming to destroy the Antichrist and crush Satan once and for all
2. Christ is coming to judge the wicked of the earth
3. Christ is coming to establish His reign over the earth
4. We, His people, should YEARN to be there with Him when He does all these things

5. The rapture is a spectacular way for us to join Christ in what He is coming to the earth to do

E. It Signifies the End of the Old Order of Things

1. Linked with the rapture is the resurrection
2. The dead in Christ are raised first... they are raised incorruptible
3. So also the ones who are still alive and are left till the coming of the Lord will be changed in a twinkling of an eye

1 Corinthians 15:53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

4. This is the way we will be able to be with the Lord forever
5. How this fits into the Millennial Reign of Christ I have NO FINAL EXPLANATION
6. But the “old order of things” will soon pass away

F. It Begins Our Face to Face Fellowship with Christ

G. It Begins Our Perfect Unity with Each Other

1. We cannot precede those who have fallen asleep

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ 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.

2. We are gathered together not only with the Lord but also will ALL the elect from all eras of Redemptive History
3. We will be together with all of them forever
4. The rapture is the first thing everyone who has ever trusted in Christ will experience together at the same time... it is the beginning of our perfect unity together

H. It Fulfills the Lifelong Yearning of Many to Fly

VI. Application

- A. Come to Christ NOW!!!

1. Though there may be many steps before the Rapture, yet you don't know how much longer you may have to live... you might die at any moment, so you need to be prepared constantly

B. Marvel at the Gift of God: A Flight Through the Air to Meet the Lord!

1. Perhaps it will help you to picture it in your mind
2. Christ ascended from the earth, higher and higher, until the clouds hid Him from their sight
3. So also you will be taken from the

C. Delight in the Power of Christ to Protect His Church

D. Relish the Togetherness of the Church... We Will Experience this Together

E. Think Carefully About the Secret Rapture...and Reject It!!

1. The Second Coming of Christ will be a worldwide phenomenon... not a secret thing experienced by only the believers

F. Prepare for the Coming Tribulation

1. "He who stands firm to the end will be saved"... this calls for PATIENT ENDURANCE
2. Learn to stand firm now under the lash of temptation