

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Our February issue of *The Living Waters Newsletter* ended with the words “continued next month.” The subject was “The Sound of Silence” dealing with the fact that where the Scripture is *silent* on many subjects the *sound* of interpretations, commentaries, creeds, sermons and arguments by Christians who have never taken the time to search the Scriptures themselves, but take the word of these self-appointed experts, is blatantly loud. We are dealing with subjects that are not mentioned in Scripture but are questionable to many Christians. Noted British scholar, John Stott in his book *Authentic Christianity* wrote: “It is only when we are brave and humble enough to allow the Spirit of God, through the word of God, to call in question our most cherished opinions that we are likely to find fresh unity through fresh understanding.” We continue with “The Sound of Silence.”

The Silence: The Rapture of the church.

The Sound:

The “rapture” was not taught by the church until 1830. What brought it all about was a young Scottish girl, Margaret McDonald, went into a trance and described a vision in which she claimed to have seen the saints leaving the earth at the return of the Lord. Prior to this time the church, all the way back to the Apostles, had never preached an “escape rapture theory.” It was from this the modern doctrine arose. A preacher by the name of Edward Irving preached the doctrine to the Plymouth Brethren where John Darby, along with three other preachers, Clarence Larkin, C.H. Mackintosh and C. I. Scofield (whose Bible notes popularized the new theory and is still relied upon today as proof of the rapture) endorsed his view. Darby and Scofield, along with Larkin and his charts, began to teach this new theory. In the early 1900’s it reached a peak in popularity, and has been a part of the religious scene since. It is very popular among Fundamentalists and Prophecy preachers. The heretical *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye is a prime example. The term “rapture of the church” or “rapture of the saints” is not found in Scripture. In fact the word “rapture” never means the removal of Christians from the earth. The word for rapture is “*harpazo*” which means “snatch up” or to be “caught away” and is used 14 times in the New Testament, but never applied to the “snatching away of the church” as taught by Rapturists.

Let’s give particular attention where the word is used one time in reference to the saints being caught up to meet the Lord in the air (I Thessalonians 4:13-17). Verses 16 and 17 reads: “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up (*harpazo*) together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” There are many opinions among those who advocate a rapture theory, but one thing they all have in common is that the church will be raptured (caught up) out of the world into heaven where we will join all the saints who have died and gone to heaven. A popular theory is that we will stay with the Lord in heaven for

seven years, while the earth goes through “the great tribulation” under the reign of the anti-Christ, then Jesus will return with them, destroy the anti-Christ, and set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and reign on earth for a thousand years. This means there is a whole theological system built around the doctrine of the rapture. Note this one point in I Thessalonians 4:17 which destroys this whole doctrine. Paul, in the last phrase of the verse, says “and thus shall we always be with the Lord.” He says nothing about being taken into heaven for seven years, or taken into heaven at all. Any other Scripture used to try to prove this is twisted to try to prove the rapture. He simply says that from the time of his coming and our being caught up to meet him we will be with him. Now note that he says we will be caught up “to meet the Lord in the air.” It simply says we are going to meet him in the air, not be taken away with him. Just because we “meet” a person does not mean we are going away with them. This meeting the Lord in the air is what Paul refers to in Colossians 3:4: “When Christ is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.” This takes place “in a moment in the twinkling of an eye” (I Cor. 15:52). We are his body (Eph. 1:22, 23) so naturally when he (the head of the body) appears in glory his body will appear with him.

But what about those whom “God will bring with him who have fallen asleep in Jesus” (I Thess. 4:14)? Are they not those who have died and gone to heaven and the ones raptured into heaven for seven years? Notice the words “even so.” This connects “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again” with “God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” That is if we believe Jesus rose again, even so, in the very same way God brought him from the dead, He will bring with him (Christ) those who are asleep in Jesus. This interpretation is proven by noting the term “even so” is used to mean “in the same way” in other passages...More on this at the end of this article.

The Silence: The Immortality of the soul

The Sound:

The soul that sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4,20). “He poured out his soul unto death” (Isaiah 53:12). “Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen nor can see” (I Timothy 6:16).

The common belief is that man is made up of soul and body. Paul, however, states: “and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:23). This echoes the statement in Genesis 2:7: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” This means man does not “have” a soul, he “is” a soul who has a spirit. The French theologian and scientist Arthur C. Custance in *The Seed of the Woman* stated: “many attempts have been made to distinguish between the terms *soul* and *spirit* as used in the Bible. The simplest summary statement is expressed most effectively in the observation that man has a body and *has* a spirit and *is* a soul. In effect, the soul is the person, the individual, the whole man. Unfortunately

theologians have not always respected this relationship and have spoken (and continue to speak) imprecisely, sometimes using the word *soul* where *spirit* is proper and sometimes *spirit* where the word *soul* would be more correct.”

It is not surprising that there is confusion about the soul. II Corinthians 4:16: “The outer man is perishing and the inner man is being renewed day by day.” This means the soul along with the body is perishing, but our spirit is being renewed day by day. The soul as well as the body can be destroyed (Matt. 10:28). If when God “breathed into man’s nostrils the breath (spirit) of life and man became a living soul” then if that “breath of life” (spirit) is taken away then man is no longer a living soul. James tells us: “the body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26). The person then is not a living soul because the spirit has left the body. “The dust (body) will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). It is the spirit, not the soul that returns to God, not withstanding such popular lights as Billy Graham, David Jeremiah, Charles Stanley and a host of other preacher personalities telling us that the soul and the spirit are the same. Hebrews 4:12 shows that the word of God divides soul and spirit, something most preachers do not do.

The Silence: At death we immediately go to heaven (or hell).

The Sound:

Paul insists that the dead have perished unless there is to be a resurrection (I Cor. 15:18). This is just not true if the souls of the dead are alive in another world (heaven or hell). At funerals we are told the dead have gone to their reward. In Luke 14:14 Jesus taught the dead would be rewarded not at death but “at the resurrection of the just”

Every time Jesus and the Apostles speak of death they call it a “sleep”. The Old Testament when speaking of a person’s death always simply says “he died” or “he slept with his fathers”. Note these Scriptures: Dan. 12:2: “And many of those who *sleep* in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” Matt. 27:52: “and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints, who had *fallen asleep*, were raised.” Luke 8:52,53: “Now they were weeping and lamenting for her; but he said, ‘stop weeping, for she has not died, but is *asleep*’ and they began laughing at him, knowing that she had died.” John 11:11-14: “Our friend Lazarus has *fallen asleep*; but I go that I may awaken him out of *sleep*.” Acts 7:60 (Stoning of Steven) “And having said this, he fell *asleep*.” I Cor. 15: ver. 6: “After that he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have *fallen asleep*.” ver. 18: “Then those also who have *fallen asleep* in Jesus have perished.” ver. 20 “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are *asleep*.” ver. 51: “Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all *sleep* but we shall be changed.” I Thess. 4: ver. 13: “We do not want you to be uninformed about those who are *asleep*.” ver. 15: “We who are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have *fallen asleep*.” II Peter 3:4: “Since the Fathers *fell asleep* all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” In sleep there is no awareness of the passing of time. To fall asleep at death is to wake up in resurrection, even though millennia have passed. The dead

have not passed out of time, they are simply not aware of it. To say the dead are still alive after death is to deny the resurrection.

II Corinthians 5:8 states that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” And Philippians 1:23 the Apostle says: “I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ...” First we must consider the context of II Corinthians 5:8. Chapter five is connected in context with chapter four, the resurrection at the coming of Christ. The same language is used in II Cor. 5 that is used in I Cor. 15. Note: I Cor. 15:54: “But when this perishable will have *put on* the imperishable, and this mortal will have *put on* the immortality, then will come about the saying that is written ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’.” II Cor. 5: 2, 4: “For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, longing to be *clothed* with our dwelling from heaven...For indeed while we are in this tent we groan being burdened not because we do not want to be *unclothed* but to be *clothed*, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” The word *put on* in I Corinthians 15 is the same word as *clothed* in II Corinthians 5. Further: I Cor. 15:54: “then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is *swallowed up* in victory’.” II Cor. 5:4: “We do not want to be *unclothed* but *clothed* in order that what is mortal may be *swallowed up* in life.” I Corinthians 15 shows that being “absent from the body and present with Lord” takes place at the resurrection and not at death.

Philippians 1:23: “But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ.” The key to understanding this passage is the phrase “depart and be with Christ.” The way we should interpret Scripture is to compare Scripture with Scripture. The Scriptures are their own best interpreters. Paul will not write one thing to one church and contradict it by writing something else to another church. In I Thessalonians 4:13-17 Paul says he does “not want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.” He does not comfort them and tell them not to grieve because the souls of loved ones are enjoying conscious bliss with the Lord in heaven. Rather he explains that “those who have fallen asleep” will be resurrected from the dead at the resurrection when the Lord returns. He states that “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, *even so*, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” The popular belief is that those whom “God will bring with him” are the souls of those who have gone on to be with the Lord. Notice the words “*even so*.” This connects “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again” with “God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” That is, if we believe Jesus rose again, *even so*, in the very same way God brought him from the dead He will bring with him (Christ) by resurrection, those who are asleep in Jesus. This interpretation is proven by noting that the term “*even so*” is used to mean “in the same way” in other passages: John 3:14: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, *even so* must the Son of man be lifted up.” John 5:21: “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, *even so* the Son also gives life to whom he wishes.” Gal. 3:6: “*Even so* Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” John 5:26: “Just as the Father has life in Himself, *even so* He gave the Son also to have life in himself.” Rom. 6:10,11: “...the life he lives, he lives to God, *even so* consider yourselves to be dead unto sin but alive to God.”