



IS THE Rapture REASONABLE?

BY JOHN L. BRAY

According to popular teaching, one day soon Jesus is going to appear in the sky and immediately all the dead are going to be resurrected and rise to meet him, and the living Christians will be caught up in the clouds and the air with them to be with Christ. Some believe that the unsaved will have to wait at least another 1,000 years or more to be resurrected. The teaching is that Christ will come personally, visibly and physically, and that Christians who are caught up will have changed spiritual bodies—though they will still be physical bodies, only dominated by the Spirit.

Some Reflections on the Popular Futuristic, Physical, Bodily Rapture

Let us look at this picture for a moment. Here is what you would have:

In such a Rapture you would have folks caught up into clouds which are water and vapor. The dictionary definition of “cloud” is “a visible mass of vapor, especially one suspended in the sky.” All the

raptured people, both the dead and the living, would be caught up into these masses of vapor floating around in the sky. Billions of them.

I remember several years ago when I first began to think seriously about this. I was sitting in an airplane coming back from Honduras. As I looked out the window, I saw some dark, murky-looking clouds. I knew I was just looking at water, but water in a vapor form, and we were flying right through it. I thought, *What if the Rapture were to take place now?* Billions of people would be caught up in those watery masses of clouds. And the thought hit me really strong—*Surely this can't be what God is talking about in the Bible!* I surely would not want to go floating around in those clouds for any period of time at all. Treading water was always hard enough for me to do, let alone thinking of treading air mixed with water.

I remember when I got home telling my wife, Evelyn, what I had been thinking. And I jokingly commented to her, “Why, you would

get your robe wet up there; and your sandals might fall off and fall back down to the earth.”

Recently, while flying from Europe, I was on a plane which had a screen showing just where the plane was at any given time, plus other factors, such as the temperature outside. While we were flying along at over six miles high, I saw that the temperature outside at one time was -65 degrees. That is, **65 degrees below zero** Fahrenheit! Now, I have preached up in Wisconsin and Minnesota in the winter time when the weather was pretty cold, but I have never been in minus 65 degrees, except in the heated interior of a plane. As I saw that on the screen, I said, “Why, even a polar bear would have a hard time getting along in that kind of temperature!”

Of course, we were above the clouds, and so perhaps the popular teaching is that Christians won't rise any further than the clouds themselves. Even so, it can get pretty cold up there.

But what if Jesus were to return on a cloudless day (if this event is

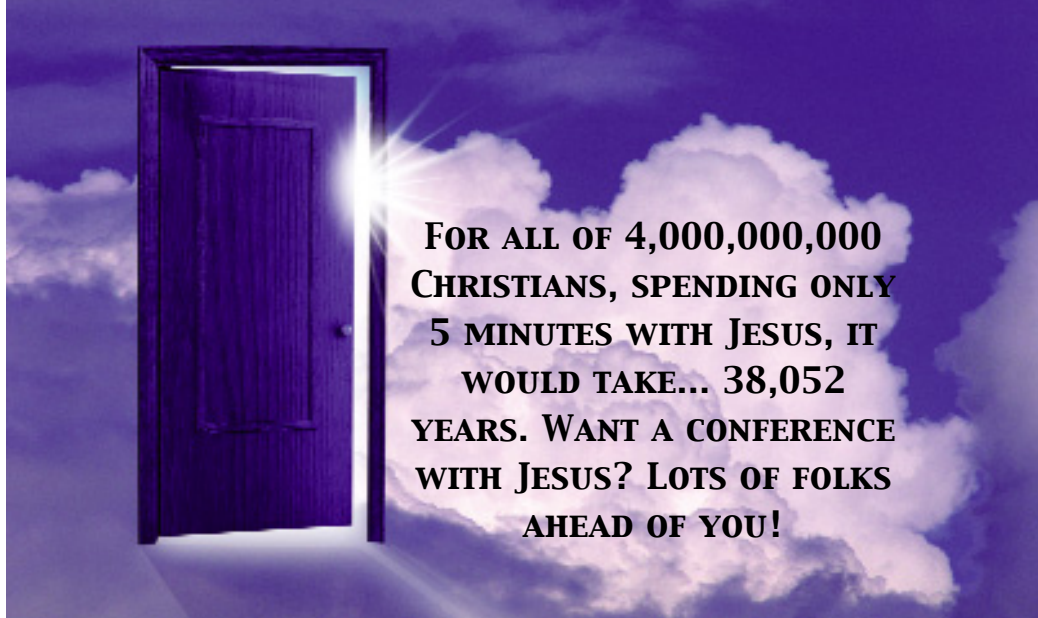
to be literally fulfilled in a naturalistic setting)?

Some time ago my wife and I were traveling in Arizona and Nevada. It was right after hurricane Nora had sideswiped Arizona. For several days the sky was as clear as it could be; there was not a cloud to be seen anywhere. I commented to Evelyn, "If the Rapture were to occur today, then Arizona and Nevada would get left out, because there's not a single cloud into which the people could be caught up!"

Or, what if the Rapture occurred while many planes piloted by unsaved pilots were in the air, and all the Christians would be caught up into the clouds? Would the planes fly into the billions of folks floating around in the air and clouds?

What would happen to babies of pregnant women at the Rapture? Would there be some fast deliveries? And what if the women were not saved and would be left behind and their unborn babies would be taken in the Rapture? In what way would those babies be released from their mothers' wombs? Would there be some "Rapture births"?

In the traditional futuristic view of a Rapture, Christians will be caught up into the clouds while lost people will be left behind. If a Christian pilot and copilot are flying a plane with hundreds of passengers, they will be caught up out of the plane with any other



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AHEAD OF YOU!**

lines employ only non-Christian pilots to fly their planes, so that in the event of a Rapture the plane can continue on without killing all the other non-Christians on board. This is purely a humanitarian recommendation. The same recommendation would apply for all operators of commercial passenger-carrying vehicles—trains, subways, buses, etc.

In like manner, for the same reason, no Christian should ever drive a car with unsaved members of his family in the car, just in case an imminent Rapture takes place and the whole family gets killed.

If this sounds very silly, remember that this is based on what is *actually interpreted* as the Bible's meaning about a Rapture.

Once, while traveling in Colorado, we were deluged with tor-

clouds, then all around the earth they will be leaving the earth and going in all directions—away from the earth. On the other side of the earth, they would be going "down" (at least away from us). Wherever Jesus appeared, folks on the other side of the earth would be "raptured" away from him if they went "up" into their sky.

What About the Judgment?

Then, if anything else is going to happen, such as a judgment (the sheep and the goats, remember), Jesus is going to take time to separate the saved from the lost out of all those billions of people, all of whom are there before him in the air. I said "take time," for surely if this is a real scene, and there are real physical people by the billions in front of Jesus (and maybe some of them would be in back of him), it will surely take some kind of time to pronounce judgment on these people, or to separate them from one another.

Let us say it would only take 5 SECONDS (I am just guessing, it might take a lot longer than this estimate) to separate the "sheep" from the "goats."

At this rate, just figuring on the basis of 20,000,000,000 people under consideration (scientists say that approximately 20,000,000,000 people have lived on the earth since the dawn of civilization, according to Peter Jennings on ABC News September 20, 1996), it would take 100,000,000,000 sec-

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Christians and the plane will go down in tragic destruction, with all remaining passengers on board. Christians in the air and clouds will see this horrible situation.

So we have a very serious recommendation (tongue-in-cheek) to make to the management of all airlines to consider in view of the foregoing. We recommend that air-

rents of hail so heavy we had to stop and park and feared for the protection of the car we were driving. I thought: *Could a traditional "Rapture" take place in such conditions as this? Would Christians really be physically caught up into all of this if a Rapture took place?*

If Christians are literally and bodily to be caught UP into the

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PHOTO BY LYNNE LANCASTER

to see Jesus at the same time all over the world will be by television. But poor heathen people in the backward parts of Africa and other poor countries of the world do not have and cannot afford to have television sets! But such teaching as this is what people

EVEN THREE YEARS—FOR EVERY EYE TO SEE HIM.

onds, or 1,666,666,666 minutes or 27,777,777 hours or 1,157,407 days or 3,171 YEARS!

That is a long time, if that is the way it is going to happen. When you stop to think about it, this really poses a problem. But the average person doesn't stop to figure any of this out. That's the way it is going to be, we are told, and so that is what we believe.

In the popular teaching, there would be **billions** of Christians (dead and alive) who would all be rising into the clouds at almost the same time. Can that many people literally "be" with Christ at the same time right there in the clouds? Think it through.

Let me illustrate. At two billion **Christians** in the world today, plus say two billion dead in all the years gone by, to stand before Christ (physically and literally), it would take 1,000 square miles (an area more than 30 miles long and 30 miles wide). It would be impossible that they even see Jesus all at one time, let alone have a personal encounter with him.

For all of 4,000,000,000 **Christians** spending only 5 minutes with Jesus, it would take:

20,000,000,000 minutes, or 333,333,333 hours, or 13,888,888 days, or **38,052 years**. Want a conference with Jesus? Lots of folks ahead of you!

These are just a few of the things to think about if the popular version of end-time events is correct. Someone says, "But we are not talking about natural things, but spiritual!" That is right, and so that is what we need to think about.

You see, the common perception is that one day Jesus will appear in the sky—with a fleshly, physical body (yes, that is what is taught, and one creed even says, "in the flesh") and with nail prints in his hands and a spear print in his side. **Everybody** would see him at one time, including ALL the unsaved people of the world, and especially the unsaved Jewish people who would look on those wounds and suddenly be saved! One modern "prophet" indicated that the way everybody will be able

like to listen to on television and radio and to read about in books by the millions. No wonder the Bible says that people are like sheep.

Every Eye Will See Him?

"...every eye shall see him..." is what the Bible says in Revelation 1:7. What does this mean? Does it mean, as mentioned above, that every single person in the world would see him? What about all the dead, or would it mean just the living? If it includes all the dead also, we would have 20,000,000,000 people who would need to see him—actually see the nail prints in his hands and feet, etc.

Let us say a person could see Christ from as far away as two miles (and that is certainly stretching it a bit). This would mean that people on both sides of Christ would be as far as four miles apart, so Jesus would have to make many paths around the earth, with each path or space four miles wide, to make sure that everybody in each and every path could see him. Someone said that if he were to travel at the speed of light over the oceans and then slow down to 1,000 miles an hour over the land, and he kept going around the earth making paths four miles wide each time until he had gone around the earth enough times to cover the whole earth so that everybody would have a chance to see him, it would take **one-and-a-half** years for such a second coming to take place! Of course, because half the world is in the darkness of night half the time where no one could see Jesus as he came their way, it would actually take twice as

For Further Reading:

**IT'S NOT THE
END OF THE
WORLD—WHICH
COULD BE A
PROBLEM...**

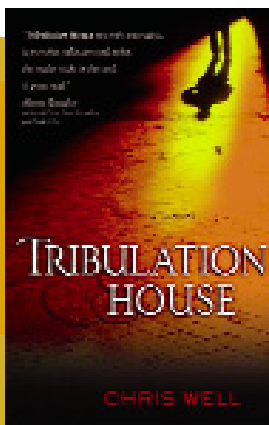
Mark Hogan has it all. The job. The family. A position on the board at church. All he's missing is a boat. Not just any boat—a 2008 Bayliner 192.

When Reverend Daniel Glory announces that the Rapture is taking place on October 17 at 5:51am, Hogan realizes his boat-buying days are numbered. So he does what any man in his situation would do—he borrows a load of money from the mob.

Not that there's any risk involved: After all, when the Rapture comes, Hogan will be long gone. The mob will never find him.

But when Jesus fails to come back on schedule, Mark Hogan finds the mob is in no mood to discuss the finer points of end-times theology...

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long—even **three years**—for every eye to see him. That is, even if absolutely every person on earth would be at some vantage point so that they could be in a position to see Jesus as he went by.

1,000 Years?

Then, according to some, there will be 1,000 years that all the Christians will be on the earth, reigning with Christ. You see, they all come down to the earth after about seven years of being up in those rain clouds (although some say they would go to Heaven first and then come on back down to the earth). There are actually a number of interpretations on this—and some say Christians would be up there 7 years, some say 3½ years, some say 75 days, and some say 45 days, and some others don't know how long it will be, except long enough for God to burn up this old world and make a new world. And those who believe the latter, of course, believe that Christians will be higher up than the clouds, because, they say, even the "heavens" will be on fire.

I was about to forget that others believe that the world won't burn up until **AFTER** the 1,000 years, in which case Christians won't accidentally get their robes singed at the second coming of Christ. Even so, those who believe this would have Christians going through the same process 1,000 years later while the great white throne judgment takes place after heaven and earth "flee away"—in which case, not only all the saved people we

have been talking about, plus all the lost people who are now brought back up out of hell, **PLUS** all who were born during the 1,000 years, will **ALL** at one time be gathered before the **THRONE** which would have to be in **HEAVEN**, for there is no more earth after that. Or heavens either, for they have both fled away. So even though sinners have never wanted to go to Heaven, they are going to have to go there anyway to be judged—even though some have said no sin can ever be in Heaven!

Then with the popular reasoning, surely it is going to take longer to **JUDGE** the entire **UNIVERSE** now—with all the added people from the 1,000 years. Also, it surely will take longer on account of everybody's sins having to be read out of "the books." But let us say we only add another three billion people out of the 1,000 years. I know we cannot get all these figures right, but let's just say now there will be 23,000,000,000 people to face the judgment throne.

If it took only **5 MINUTES** to review the entire life of each individual from "the books," it would take: 115,000,000,000 minutes, or 1,916,666,666 hours, or 79,861,111 days or **218,797 YEARS!**

It would take God that long (218 millennia or more) to judge mankind (over 36 times longer than the world has already existed).

But perhaps that amount of time would only be infinitesimal when compared to the billions and tril-

lions of years and ages of time that poor, lost sinners will spend in a scorching, ever-burning, red-hot hell as they burn and suffer and yell and scream in conscious torment and agony through the endless ages of all eternity. I am telling it like it is, or will be, if the common perception of these things is to be taken seriously.

As you can see, there is something wrong with this kind of reasoning. Not that the numbers are inaccurate. But something is wrong with the whole picture—of a **NATURAL, LITERAL AND PHYSICAL** Rapture, Revelation, Millennium and Judgment Day. Could there possibly be a scriptural alternative to such scenarios that we have just conjured up in our minds? Or does the Bible really teach that it is all going to happen like we have imagined? Or is it possible that we have been brainwashed into believing these things for years without any real study on our part of these issues? □

Taken from the book entitled The Rapture of the Christians by John L. Bray, © 1998. Unfortunately, the book is out of print at this time. Reprinted by permission.

Evangelist John L. Bray is the author of several books, as well as a monthly newsletter, titled Biblical Perspectives. John and his wife, Evelyn, live in Florida. John Bray takes a high view of scripture, respecting God's Word so much that he believes the biblical interpretation offered by end times Rapture teaching is inadequate.

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NATURAL, LITERAL AND PHYSICAL RAPTURE, REVELATION,
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