

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

Evangelist W. Paul Redmond Sr.

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Are You Ready for the Rapture? (Part 7)

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Last month we began to look at the third part of this message—**The Elements of the Rapture**. Looking at I Thessalonians 4, you cannot help but notice The Sounds that occur as the Rapture takes place. While we are to be looking with our eyes, we are also to be listening with our ears. There are three sounds that are mentioned in this passage, but the first is the most precious of them all. It is the sound *Of the Master*.

I Thessalonians 4:16 begins with these marvelous words: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.”* We have already talked about this, but it is so precious that it deserves to be repeated again. The Lord Himself is coming back for us. Some have tried to say that an angel is coming for us. Michael is mentioned in this passage, and we will talk about his part in just a little bit, but he is not the first character mentioned in this passage. Notice again the language of the verse—*the Lord himself*. I will admit that I could not complain if the Lord did send someone else, but He does not. As no bridegroom would have sent anyone else for his bride, so Jesus Christ will not send anyone else for His own bride.

We talked for some time how the language in Scripture is describing the Jewish marriage preparation and ceremony. Here it is doing so again. Remember the bride would be left while the bridegroom was preparing everything for her. When he was finished, he would come for her. That is exactly what Jesus is doing. He is preparing the marriage supper and everything else for us. When He is finished with all of the preparation, He will come for us. The bridegroom never sent his best friend, his father, or anyone else for the bride. He went to get the bride. Likewise, Jesus will not send

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anyone else. He will come for us Himself. What a glorious, wonderful, amazing thought that is! Jesus Himself is coming back to take us out of this world to be with Him. No greater thought could ever come across our minds. No wonder the early church was so excited about serving Christ. They really believed that He was coming back to receive them unto Himself. If the truth of Christ’s coming for us ever became real to us, then we would serve Him just as faithfully as they did. They may have thought, “The governments do not accept our preaching. That is okay because Jesus Himself is coming for us.” Concerning the reaction of the Jews, they may have thought, “The religious crowd is mocking and tormenting us. That is all right because Jesus is coming back for us. It could be today! I will be faithful unto Him. Jesus Himself is coming back for me.” Everything can be and is all right in this world, no matter what may be happening, because Jesus is coming back for us.

Jesus Himself is coming back for us, but notice what happens when He comes back. I Thessalonians 4:16 says, *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.”* Think about that word shout for a moment. It does not refer to just an expression of excitement although that would be very appropriate. There is excitement, but it is much more than that. It means “command.” The word is used in many ways in secular writing. “It is used of the cry made by a ship’s master to its rowers; it is used by a military officer to his soldiers; it is used by a hunter to his hounds; lastly, it is used by a charioteer to his horses. When used to direct military or navy personnel, it was a battle cry. The word denotes a loud, authoritative cry, often uttered in a thick of great excitement.” What a perfect word to use in this passage! There is no greater excitement than a bridegroom coming for his bride.

But what exactly does Jesus cry out? The Bible is not specific in this passage, but as we compare Scripture with Scripture, I think we can have a good idea. Revelation 4:1 says, *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come*

up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” I believe that Jesus will say what was said to John as he was called to heaven. When Jesus steps out of Heaven into the clouds, I believe that all believers will hear him say, “Come up hither.” What will happen? We will talk about this more in just a little bit, but the dead in Christ will no longer be dead. The same voice that called out to the dead body of Lazarus will call out to the dead bodies of all believers. To Lazarus, He said, “*Lazarus, come forth.*” His voice was so powerful and His power so real that the result was the resurrection of Lazarus. John 11:44 says, “*And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*” The power of Jesus was so great that although Lazarus had been dead four days, at the very command (shout) of Jesus, his body was made alive again. I get a thrill every time I read John 11:43 and 44. Jesus commanded Lazarus to come forth—and Lazarus came forth. There is great power in the voice of Jesus. Other examples of the power of His voice are when He calmed the wind and sea by saying “*Peace, be still,*” (Matthew 4:39) and when He spoke to the soldiers who came to arrest Him. He asked them whom they were seeking and they said that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth. He replied with just three words, “*I am he.*” The declaration of His deity was so great that the men went backward and fell to the ground (John 18:4-6).

Scoffers will laugh and say that it is impossible to speak someone back to life. Let them laugh. I believe the Bible, and the Bible says everything that I have just mentioned. Besides, this is the same voice that spoke all things into existence. In Genesis 1 you have the record of Creation. God spoke and everything came into existence. John 1:3 says that Jesus made all things. If He could speak everything into existence, and He did, then He can make the dead bodies of believers alive again. He did it to Lazarus, and He will call all believers out of the grave.

That shout/command will also make all believers who are alive

begin to rise. Right now we are held to this earth by gravity. We call it a law, and it cannot be broken for very long. Occasionally great athletes can defy gravity for just a few seconds when they jump in the air. But even the greatest athletes can only jump up from the earth for a few seconds. No matter how high one jumps, he will always come down. One can ride in an airplane and fly through the air across the United States or around the world. But it is only for a little while and the plane comes down. No matter what man can do, he cannot stop the law of gravity. But the voice of Jesus is so powerful that gravity will no longer hold believers to the ground. When He says, “*Come up hither,*” the dead in Christ will be resurrected, and then all believers will rise up through the air to be with Him. Are you ready?

The first sound is of the Master Himself. But notice the second sound. It is the sound *Of the Messenger*. The second part of I Thessalonians 4:16 says, “*With the voice of the archangel.*” The term archangel is only used two times in the Bible—in this passage and also in Jude 9. In Jude he is identified as Michael the archangel. So why is Michael included in this passage describing the rapture? We can only speculate, and to do so we have to consider the other times that Michael is mentioned in Scripture. Michael the archangel is mentioned by name five times. In three of those passages, he is said to be fighting. Daniel 10:13 says, “*Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.*” Michael fought against the devils who were hindering this angel in coming to Daniel. Jude 9 records that Michael contended with the devil about the body of Moses. The final time Michael is recorded as fighting is in Revelation 12:7-8. These verses say, “*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*” It is not my purpose to comment any more on these verses other than to say that Michael is the head angel (archangel), and he leads other angels in fighting against Satan and his demons.

The other two passages that mention Michael are in Daniel. We referred to one of them briefly earlier in the message. Now we will

focus a little more intently on it. The first of them is Daniel 10:21. It says, *“But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.”* The part I want to emphasize is *“Michael your prince.”* This is not referring to Daniel alone, but the entire nation of Israel. Earlier in Daniel 10:14, the other angel is speaking and says, *“Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.”* Daniel is directly addressed in verse 21 but only as the representative for the whole nation as expressed in verse 14. From these two verses, we can see that Michael has a special relationship with the nation of Israel.

That relationship between Michael and Israel is also expressed in Daniel 12:1. There we read, *“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”* Notice that Michael stands for the children of thy people (Israel). We will continue with Michael’s part in the rapture next month. Until then, are you ready?