

By Golda Chimere-Dan

**The Rapture** is a publication of The Rapture Force of Gauteng, South Africa. The editor is Ms Golda Chimere-Dan. Her husband, Prof. D. Chimere-Dan, heads up the Chimere-Dan Ministries. The following are excerpts from the first edition of **The Rapture** magazine (various Scriptures have been quoted from The Living Bible):

### Certainty of the rapture

The rapture is the event in which the Lord Jesus Christ will appear in the cloud at the voice of the archangel and the last trumpet sound to take all Bible believing, born again Christians away from the surface of this earth before the Almighty God unleashes his anger on a sinful, unrepentant and Christ-rejecting world.

The rapture is an event that will take place very soon and very suddenly. It will be the most astonishing event in the history of the world which will turn the entire planet on its head. The Bible teaches this very clearly and it is the hope of every believer in the Lordship of Jesus Christ to be among those who experience the rapture.

The rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ will be the first in a series of events on God's calendar which will signal the end of time as we know it and will climax into the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish his Kingdom on earth. After the rapture it will, by any stretch of the imagination, no longer be 'business as usual' on the face of this planet for those left behind.

A major event of such magnitude deserves the attention of everyone:

- The rapture is going to strike without warning.
- The rapture will happen suddenly.
- The rapture will be one of the most startling events to ever occur in the history of man.

Are you ready to be raptured?

### Confusion about the rapture

Are you confused about the rapture? Don't be, Satan is not. In fact, Satan and his demons know very well that the rapture is a sure event that will take place soon. He is not arguing it. He knows what the rapture implies for his reign of terror on humanity. So he has been busy intensifying the operation of his Ministry of Misinformation. He is going about setting up his lying machines like never before, producing and circulating counterfeit information about the truth and the messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ who preach and teach the truth.

All the enemy's efforts are designed for no other reason but to confuse you about the truth of the rapture. Satan doesn't care what you believe about the rapture as long as what you believe is not the truth. Anything he does to keep you from eagerly expecting the Lord Jesus Christ in the rapture is a success for him. If he can stop you from knowing the truth about it, be careful that he does not also stop you from going in the rapture. If he can stop you from allowing the thought about the rapture to influence the way you live your life today, watch out lest he also stops you from being among those raptured.

### What is the rapture?

If you are not familiar with the word or the idea, you must be wondering what on earth we mean by Rapture. Rapture is a word used to describe that sudden moment, one of these days, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in mid air (the atmosphere just above our planet earth) and takes His followers away from the face of this earth to heaven where he lives. According to John 14:1-3 in the Bible, the Lord Jesus said to His followers:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Did you notice the words "receive you unto myself?" This is really what the rapture is all about. The Lord Jesus

Himself will come to receive His own people unto Himself. These people received the Lord into their hearts as their Saviour while it was an unpopular thing to do here on earth. They believed in His name and were washed in His blood and received the authority or the right to be the children of God (John 1:12). They lived their lives in obedience to His word ♦ some even doing so while facing mockery, torture and death.

The Bible tells us that one day, the Lord Jesus will appear in the clouds above us and snatch these people away from the earth to take them to heaven where He has prepared mansions for them so that from then on, they will be with Him wherever he is, beholding the glory which His Father has given Him (John 17:24). This is the rapture. The act of 'snatching away' is the rapture. The expression "caught up" is found in the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonian Christians (1Thess 4:13-18). Look at what he says there:

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. 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. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command ("Come up hither" in Revelations 4:1), with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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 shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore encourage (or comfort) each other with these words."

The word rapture comes from the root word for "caught up". The root word for "caught up" in the Greek language is **harpazo**, which means "to snatch away" or to take away suddenly. In the Latin Vulgate Bible, the words "caught up" are translated as **rapturo**. Christians have since chosen to describe this soon-coming event of the Lord suddenly snatching away His true followers from the earth as the **rapture**.

The reality of the rapture, the knowledge that this is an event that will certainly take place, has a comforting effect on the believer. It is a source of encouragement to him. It is the hope of every believer (Colossians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 15:19). The thought of the rapture and the expectation of it purifies the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ (1John 3:3). The enemy and his agents will ridicule it, make it appear irrelevant to your daily living and seek to prevent you from thinking about, thereby, denying you its present comfort and its future bliss. Don't let him.

The rapture is the event that answers the prayer of our Lord Jesus which he prayed in John 17:24, "Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world."

But to the unbeliever, this knowledge can only provoke fear and horror. And he can respond by either deciding to give up his resistance to inviting the Lord Jesus into his life, or by postponing this decision or even completely discarding the whole message and the prompting of the Holy Spirit to yield to God, as a non-issue that would disappear from his mind after a while. **Whichever,** make sure you are not one of those trapped in non-response to the plea to make peace with God after you have heard the message of the rapture.

"Therefore, you also must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:44).

### The imminence of the rapture

The Oxford dictionary defines the word *imminent* as "...an event about to happen." It is an event "likely to happen very soon" without warning, unexpectedly, catching people by surprise. So, when we say that the

rapture is imminent, we mean that the return of our Lord Jesus Christ for His Church is an event that can happen at any moment, without any warning. There are no warning signs or indications of a short-term countdown.

As Christians, we are required to remain on a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week alert. If anyone therefore tells you not to bother about it, do not listen to him. Paying attention to such advice has caused many not-too-well-established believers to make a shipwreck of their faith. The rapture will take place very soon, very suddenly and without warning. Jesus will come in the air, catch up his Church (born again Christians) from the earth, and then return to heaven with them.

Does the Bible teach the imminence of the rapture? Listen to the Lord Himself in Luke 21:34-35, "Watch out! Don't let my sudden coming catch you unawares; don't let me find you living in careless ease, carousing and drinking, and occupied with the problems of this life, like all the rest of the world." The Lord makes it clear in those words that the rapture will take place suddenly, catching people unawares. It will be like the surprise attack of a thief in the night. The suddenness of his coming and the unpredictability of its timing provides the basis for the warning on the imminence of His return.

### Timing of the rapture

Although the rapture of the Church is imminent, the Lord has chosen to keep us from knowing the exact date and hour when it will take place. The Lord Jesus Himself made it absolutely clear that: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36). Paul puts it this way in chapter 5 of his first letter to the Thessalonian Christians: "Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1Thess 5:1-2).

The rapture will occur when no one is expecting it. However, it is sufficient for us to know that as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be when the rapture takes place. According to the Lord, "The world will be at ease ♦ banquets and parties and weddings ♦ just as it was in Noah's time before the sudden coming of the flood; people wouldn't believe what was going to happen until the flood actually arrived and took them all away. So shall My coming be. Two men will be working together in the fields, and one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be going about their household tasks, one will be taken, the other left. So be prepared, for you don't know what day your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:37-42).

"The world will be as indifferent to the things of God as the people were in Noah's day. They ate and drank and married, everything just as usual right up to the day when Noah went into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot: people went about their daily business ♦ eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the hour of my return" (Luke 17:26-35).

People will be living as normal: working, partying, buying and selling, planting and building. And just like in the days of Noah, they will not take notice of all the cries by their fellow men to repent and make peace with God. Then, out of nowhere and without any warning, millions of men, women and children will disappear, throwing the entire world into an unbelievable magnitude of chaos. People's lives will be characterised by selfishness, love and worship of the good things of life, and a lack of interest in anything concerning God except where it promotes and encourages their selfishness and material needs. Does this look like the days we live in? I think it does.

Jesus Christ said: "And since you don't know when it will happen, stay alert. Be on the watch out for my return."

### How should we live in times like this?

There is no question that no one can predict the timing of the rapture just as there is no doubt about the surprise which this

event will be to the majority of people living in the world when it happens. Seeing that the rapture is imminent but the timing unpredictable, how should we be living our lives? There is a lot of warning about how we should live and how we should not live as we wait for the rapture of the Church to take place.

**Watch out for His return:** The Lord warns: "Don't let my sudden coming catch you unawares; don't let me find you living in careless ease, carousing and drinking, and occupied with the problems of this life, like all the rest of the world. Keep a constant watch." Don't be like the rest of the world who are asleep concerning these matters (1Thess. 5:6). You are not in darkness concerning it so as to allow that day to surprise you like a thief in the night. Instead, always be on the alert. Just as a man can prevent trouble from thieves by keeping watch for them, so you can avoid trouble by always being ready for My unannounced return, says the Lord" (Matthew 24:43-44; Mark 13:32).

**Be on your guard, be on the alert:** Peter warns us to always be self-controlled and alert. The reason is because our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to tear apart (1Peter 5:8). Live your life with a sense of urgency that the Lord could come any time. When we were growing up as Christians, we were taught to live our lives as though the Lord will return today. What a timely advice. That way, you are constantly aware of the temporary nature of your stay here on earth. You realise you are living in borrowed time and ought to make the best use of your time while you still have it.

I always use the illustration of a person who goes shopping at five minutes to closing time. If you are conscious of the fact that the shop closes in five minutes time, you do not start a long conversation with your friend whom you suddenly bumped into at the shop, even if you had not seen him or her for a very long time. You know it is not time to sample all the items displayed on the shelf. That is also no time to start enquiring about the different product ranges on offer. You simply and hurriedly go through the shelves picking up the most important things you need in order to make it on time to the counter before they close. Such practical response to a sense of urgency should characterise your approach to your every spiritual service you are engaged in.

**Stay sober:** Do not spend your life in wanton excesses and extravagance. Be free from inordinate passion. Learn to be quiet. Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do. Always be protected by the armour of faith and love, while wearing as your helmet the happy hope of your salvation.

**Do not be deceived:** Don't let anyone deceive you into believing that you should not be thinking about the rapture or be concerned about it. As Paul said, if we who are abiding in Christ have hope only in this life and that is all, then we are of all people most miserable and to be pitied (1Corinthians 15:19). Whatever else you do here while we wait for the Lord to come for us, the most important thing is to be found ready when He comes. To be found worthy to be raptured should be the most preferred priority in your life.

The thought of the rapture purifies the man who thinks about it. It provokes you into action seeing that you realise that time is short. It draws you closer to the Lord and sharpens your commitment to Him. Thinking about the rapture always provokes a sense of urgency in your attitude to His work and keeps you from being occupied with the problems of this life.

The Lord told His disciples when they were rejoicing that demons were subject to them in His name, that they should rather rejoice that their names were written in heaven. Your heavenly citizenship and your final arrival there should be the source of great joy in your life and the motivation for everything else that you do. It is our glorious hope.

**"Occupy till I come."** This is the attitude the Lord expects us to have as we wait for His coming. While we watch and wait for His coming, we are not to stay idle. We are to do business till He comes. We are to faithfully discharge our responsibilities, inspired by the

knowledge of His coming. The Lord illustrated this point in the story taken from Luke 19:12-27, "A nobleman living in a certain province was called away to the distant capital of the empire to be crowned king of his province. Before he left he called together ten assistants and gave them each \$2000 to invest while he was gone". The Lord has given us talents, gifts and abilities which He expects us to utilise wisely to promote His kingdom on earth till He comes. How are you trading?

"But some of his people hated him and sent him their declaration of independence, stating that they had rebelled and would not acknowledge him as their king". Does this sound like the lifestyle of some people today? I think so. We live in a power-crazy world today. In the mad race for power, everyone wants to be in control, to exercise power over others while recognising no authority over himself. The lust for fame, publicity, celebrity, awards and rewards, have forced many to break the boundary lines, remove the ancient land marks and openly but grotesquely declare themselves as gods. Even in the body of Christ ♦ the Church ♦ a lust for self-importance and self-recognition has resulted in unhealthy rivalry and competition among many leaders, to the extent that one wonders exactly which master they serve. How are you trading?

"Upon his return he called in the men to whom he had given the money, to find out what they had done with it, and what their profits were. The first man reported a tremendous gain ♦ ten times as much as the original amount! 'Fine!' the king exclaimed. 'You are a good man. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, and as your reward, you shall be governor of ten cities'. The next man also reported a splendid gain five times the original amount. 'All right!' his master said. 'You can be governor over five cities♦♦ (Luke 19:15-19)."

The Lord encourages us to make an active investment into our treasury in heaven. By actively pursuing activities that promote the kingdom of God in the lives of other people here on earth, we are doing business for and with the Lord until He returns. And if the business of enriching our heavenly bank accounts appeals to us very strongly, our minds will rightly be preoccupied with and inspired by heaven-driven projects (Luke 12:33-34). This is what will keep us in constant readiness for the coming of our Lord.

**Have your lamp trimmed:** To trim means to put in order. The summary of all we have been saying is that you must be in constant readiness for the coming of the Lord for the Church, His bride. Make sure that everything around you and within you is ready and set to go when the Lord arrives. The Lord Himself illustrated the implications of readiness and unreadiness with the story of the ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. But only five of them were wise enough to fill their lamps with oil, while the other five were foolish and forgot.

So, when the bridegroom was delayed, they lay down to rest until midnight, when they were roused by the shout, 'The bridegroom is coming! Come out and welcome him!' All the girls jumped up and trimmed their lamps. Then the five who hadn't any oil begged the others to share with them, for their lamps were going out. But the others replied, 'We haven't enough. Go instead to the shops and buy some for yourselves'. But while they were gone, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Later, when the other five returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Sir, open the door for us!' But he called back, 'Go away! It is too late!' So stay awake and be prepared, for you do not know the date or moment of My return'.

Do not be like the five foolish virgins who had to go and get oil for their lamps when it was too late. See to it that you are living your life in obedience to the word of God, loving Him passionately and serving Him with adoration with all you are and all you have.

Dear reader, you have to understand that the rapture is only the first phase of the Second Coming of the Lord

Jesus Christ to earth. The first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ took place when He came as the sinless Lamb of God to take away the sins of the whole world. But you know that when He came the first time, the world rejected him. He came unto his own, the Scriptures say, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name (John 1:11-12). During that first visit, He promised to come again. 

This time around, the Lord Jesus Christ is not coming as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the whole world. He is coming as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is coming to take vengeance against his enemies ♦ those who spoke harshly of Him and His people (Jude v. 15), and to establish His Kingdom for a one thousand-year reign on our planet earth.

### A letter from the Rapture Force

Dear Reader,

One of the most profound realities of our time is the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom on earth. This event will be preceded by the rapture, or sudden departure, of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ one of these days from this planet. However, neither the Second Coming of the Lord nor the rapture of the body of believers in Him receives the attention it deserves among Christians today.

Many unbelievers are not aware of what the rapture is all about and some have not even heard of the word, least of all how it will affect them. They are not in any position to appreciate the individual and global implications of the event called the rapture before or when it takes place. More worrying is the fact that many Christians do not know even the most basic things about the rapture. Among some Christians who have heard some form of teaching on the topic, the rapture is considered a controversial and confusing topic which they would rather not discuss. This poor knowledge of a profound event like the rapture is a clear demonstration that Christians are no longer searching the Scriptures as they should (John 5:39; Acts 17:10-11).

In Africa, as in the rest of the world, there are about five major categories of responses to the topic of the rapture of the Church. These include:

1. The Christians who have clear knowledge of the rapture, believe what the Scriptures teach about it and live their lives in response to it.
2. The Christians who have never heard about the rapture, or do not have adequate knowledge of it and genuinely want more information to broaden their understanding, but lack access to useful information.
3. The Christians who are confused about the rapture or have been taught wrongly or have been persuaded by thoughtless statements from other Christians that they need not get concerned about the rapture. Consequently, they live their lives in ways that show that they are not expecting the Lord any time soon. To this category of Christians, discussions about the rapture is often seen as a controversial issue which should rather not be discussed in the normal conversations of daily life.
4. The non-Christians who have heard about the rapture but whose knowledge has not yet translated into an invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ into their lives as their Lord and personal Saviour.
5. The unbelievers who have never heard about the rapture.

Much of the indifference on the topic of the rapture among many Christians today is influenced by the invasive materialistic culture which is dictating the tone of society and setting the pace for our daily existence. The materialistic view of life in the world today makes survival and

pleasure-seeking the hallmark of our existence. Any thought or consideration of life beyond here is drowned and perceived as irrelevant or fanatical.

Our aim at The Rapture Force is to actively target people in categories 2, 4 and 5. The reason is quite simple. The majority of the world's population is poor and lacks access to basic information. Although we live in an age of information explosion, the level of ignorance about major events that threaten the very existence of life on earth remains very high among the majority of the world's population. Or put the other way, information is still very poorly circulated with the result that many people are at best ignorant or at worst misinformed about issues that have very grave implications for their lives. Most people are much more preoccupied with how to provide the next meal for their families than to bother with how to get to heaven.

As a result, if the rapture should take place today, the majority of people left behind who would end up taking the mark of the Beast quite easily will be among those living in terrible poverty and those who never heard anything about the rapture before it took place. This latter category of people will be left behind and would be most vulnerable to the lies which the Antichrist would offer as an explanation for what had happened.

Many souls that could truly come to the Lord as a result of the rapture would be denied such opportunities because they did not know in the first place that the rapture was an act of God. Provision of pre-rapture information is an important way of increasing the number of those who could come to the Lord not only before but also after the rapture. We believe that Africa and the rest of the world deserve to have sufficient information on the rapture and the opportunity to decide either to accept or reject the message of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Presently, there are many Christians in Africa who will live their lives differently if they knew the truth about the rapture. But because of the opposition of those who have been lied to about the rapture, attempts to prepare Christians for the rapture have taken a back seat in many Church fellowships. The message of the rapture provokes people who receive it to holy living. Church leaders who want to encourage holy living among their lukewarm members ♦ whose major interest is their economic and social well-being ♦ can easily do so by placing emphasis on the rapture. As a result of the rapture not being taught in our Churches, many Christians depend on hearsay and only a few get access to good literature to improve their knowledge.

The unfortunate result of this poor level of information on the rapture is that many Christians in Africa do not have sufficient understanding of the rapture, or the warm and glorious encouragement that such knowledge provides for our daily walk with the Lord while we wait for Him to rapture us.

The more frightening reality is the people who actively oppose the rapture message in different ways. These are the sales agents of darkness. While Christians are busy arguing about whether the rapture will be a pre-, post- or even mid-tribulation event, these servants of the kingdom of darkness are out in full force dishing out lies and confusing and deceiving a lot more people and persuading them to reject the truth of the rapture.

Wherever the message of these deceivers is preached, it has had the effect of dampening the faith of many believers. They are unrelenting in their assault. You could see the result of their work in action in the lives of once zealous Christians who no longer see the need to contend for the faith. Regular Church attendance is the only shadow of their once vibrant commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Rapture Force will call the attention of all people living on this planet to this soon-to-take-place major event and alert the world to the shortness of time available to make a decision about Jesus Christ ♦ the Son of God. We will assist those who require help to prepare for the rapture.

We will propagate the message of the rapture and harvest souls for the kingdom of God in the process. You are welcome to join our initiatives wherever you are by

telling someone that Jesus is coming very soon. People should give their lives to Jesus, or regret not doing so sooner rather than later.

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