

# THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Preached by Rev. T. G. Oshokoya  
on August 10, 1982



What we want to speak about is: **The Rapture of the Church of Christ.**

**"Then we which are alive and remain shall 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" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).**

The Rapture of the Church of Christ is what the Christians, those who believe in the whole Word of God, are expecting. It is a lively hope, the hope that inspires us to daily purification. The hope that we, who are alive, will soon be raptured to meet the Lord in the air, is a wonderful thing. It is something which we cannot fully understand, no matter how much it is explained. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and it has not entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for them that love Him. But this is not difficult for the children of God, the redeemed of God, to believe and to expect, even though it may baffle the sinner who thinks about it with his carnal mind. For the children of God, who have Jesus dwelling in their hearts, it is a simple matter. They know that whatever God says, He can do. They know equally that the eternal Power which transformed them from darkness **to** light, in the twinkling of an eye, is able to do anything. That is the promise on which the children of God stand. The choristers have sung for us that they are standing on the promises of God, promises that can never fail. This world may pass away, but God's Word will not go unfulfilled. This is the promise which every born-again Christian is eagerly waiting for. And before long, we shall obtain its fulfillment. The Lord Who said He is coming, will not be slack. The time of His coming is nearer now than before. Is it not good news to you this morning that we shall be caught up into the clouds, in the twinkling of an eye? We shall go to meet the Lord and see Him. Glory be to God on high.

As Jesus Christ the Son of God was speaking with Martha, when Lazarus her brother died, He said:

**"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:**

**"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).**

Paul said that we who are alive when Jesus comes, will not taste death. I pray that He comes very soon, and that we fly like eagles to meet the Lord in the air. We shall bid this wicked world goodbye.

But before it is our turn, some people would have had their turns. These are the born-again Christians who had been washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, whose heart had been purified and who had been filled with the Spirit of God. They had walked in all the light of the Word of God. They had left the world, and their souls are in Paradise. The Bible says that we who are alive, when Jesus comes, will not go before them. Immediately the trumpet sounds, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they will rise with glorified bodies. It is then that we who are alive will be changed, and will meet them in the air.

**"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive**

**and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.**

**"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:**

**"Then we which are alive and remain shall 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.**

**"Wherefore, comfort one another with these words" (1Thessalonians 4:15-18).**

**"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.**

**"Behold, I skew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.**

**"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15 : 50-52).**

We are grateful for the salvation with which God saved us. We are grateful for the purification of heart by which God uprooted that old root of bitterness from our hearts, and made our hearts full of the love of God. We are grateful for the quickening Spirit, the power and might of God, the Spirit of God with which He has filled us for His service. Jesus the Son of God, through these works of grace and spiritual gifts, has made this world like Heaven for us. But still, we are in a body that knows pain. We are still in difficulties and problems through this flesh that we put on. Our bodies have not yet been redeemed, even though our souls have been redeemed. The joy of God has filled our hearts, and there is hope for us. Still, our body is subject to pains, distresses, problems, difficulties and anxieties. But when Christ comes, He will change this vile body, this body of clay, and give us a glorified body, a body like His own. We shall see Him as He is, and we too shall be like Him.

**"BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1John 3:1).**

When Christ comes, and we see Him as He is, we too will be like Him, because He will change our bodies, and we shall go up with Him to Heaven. Paul said:

**"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:50).**

This flesh and blood which we put on cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It needs change. Jesus Christ the Son of God is coming to change it, so that we can put on the heavenly body. It is the earthly body that we are putting on now. Jesus will give us the heavenly body when He comes — the kind of body He put on when He went to His disciples after the resurrection. He entered the room where the door was shut, without anyone opening the door. It was a glorified body which no wall could hinder.

If we meditate for a moment this morning, we shall see that we have some problems in our bodies: some are coughing, some have headache, stomach disorder, pneumonia, backache and so on, We cannot name all. But when we put on the glorified body, there will be no pain or any trouble again. When? How will it be? How many days will it take God to change us?

**"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:27).**

In the twinkling of an eye — as the lightning flashes! We have all seen the lightning flash in the sky, in a moment, from one end to the other. He says that is how His coming will be. Across the whole world, He will pick all His elect without leaving a single one behind.

**"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.**

**"For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her bird, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isaiah 26:20, 21).**

This is the invitation of Jesus Christ to His saints. Those who look for His second coming without sin unto salvation, will receive the invitation: **"Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."** That means after the Rapture of the saints, something will happen. May God not let us be left behind at that time. He says we should hide ourselves, as it were, for a little moment, until the trouble be overpast. It will be a time of great distress after the saints have gone.

When there was trouble in Sodom and Gomorrah in the lifetime of Abraham and Lot, Abraham started to pray for the salvation of the inhabitants of these cities. He started to talk with God, most especially because of his nephew, Lot, who was there. He said unto God, 'Will You destroy the righteous together with the wicked? Never! The righteous Judge must not do so. You don't do that, that is not Your nature. Suppose You find this number of people there?' God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. God will take away the righteous before the evil day. He will take away His people. They will have no share in the punishment of sinners. They will not be there when the antichrist, who will come to torment the world, will come in human form into the world. God would have removed His children.

God took Lot out of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah before He destroyed those cities with fire. God said, **'I cannot do anything until you have left this place,'** and God took him out. It is the children of God that are restraining the judgment of God, because they are still in the world. The Spirit of God, Who is working in the world, is hindering the antichrist who would have been revealed in the world. When the saints are raptured, something will happen.

Before God destroyed the first world with the flood, He removed Noah and his family who feared God. In like manner, God will take away all His people from this world before judgment comes. The children of God will be in mid-air for a time. They will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The Word of God says, **"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."**

But the children of God are not going there to receive judgment; (they had sent their sins ahead for judgment) they are there to receive reward for their faithfulness. God will tell them: 'Well done, good servant, you have been faithful over a little, I will make you ruler over many things.' God will tell them: 'You have used your talent well, you have gained many more, you have sung, you have been a teacher, you have been an usher, this is your reward: enter into the joy of your Lord.' May we receive a rich reward before the judgment seat of Christ.

You have done all for the honour and glory of Christ, not for the honour and glory of yourself. You have done all in the name of the Lord Jesus this is the time for the reward. But at the time when the children of God are receiving their reward and are rejoicing, it will be a time of tribulation for the sinners who are left in the world. It is a time of weeping and sorrow equal to none, before then and

after then.

Now is the time of trouble for the children of God, a time when the world is troubling them because they believe in the Lord Jesus; uphold His testimony and consecrate themselves to Him. Some would be beaten, some would be stripped naked, some would be troubled in various ways. What of sickness, problems and so on? It is a time of trial. It is a time of purification for the children of God; **"weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."** Our day of joy will soon come, because Christ will come very soon.

**"NOW we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,**

**"That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by Word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.**

**"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;**

**"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

**"Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?**

**"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.**

**"For the mystery of iniquity (doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:**

**"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,**

**"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**

**"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:**

**"That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).**

If you do not believe all the Word of God that comes forth from this pulpit, if you turn a deaf ear, and pretend not to hear, after some time, you may not understand it any longer. It is a lie that you will believe. You will be speaking contrary to the precious teachings which can save the soul. May God give us a listening ear, a meditating heart, and the spirit of obedience. The Scriptures say, **"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."**

There is no other way to be saved than to believe the Word of God. Bad children become good. Those whom you knew definitely that, at a time in the past, were very wicked, become meek children of the Living God. That is what salvation does. Yet, you have not believed, what then will help you to believe?

It was some two thousand years ago that Paul the Apostle wrote this epistle to the Thessalonians. When the people heard the words of this sermon they zealously sought the salvation of their soul, and God saved them. They tasted of the heavenly gift. He cleansed their hearts, and filled them with the Holy Spirit. They then waited, expecting that Jesus would soon come.

Paul the Apostle told them: 'No, that day won't come except there comes a falling away first.' Those things which he said would happen have occurred already, and continue to happen up till today.

That reveals to us that in this our time, Jesus can come at any time.

He let them know at that time that before Jesus comes, many would depart from the faith, and this has occurred. Many who had upheld the sound doctrine, who had once been on fire for God, who had confessed God, and this had been evident in their lives, had backslidden, they had denied the faith, they had completely departed from the faith.

Jesus said when He returned; would He find faith on earth? He saw many things that would happen by the time He would come. But we thank God that in these last days, God has made us very fortunate. He withdrew the Gospel from the nation of Israel and committed it to the Gentiles. He helped us not to miss it. Now, the Spirit of God stands by us, abides with us, teaches us and guides us. How very fortunate we are! May our fortune not become ill-luck, because if we are under God's guidance, being petted and nurtured, and we are nonchalant, our judgment will be very terrible. He sends to us prophets, teachers, ministers and choristers to tell us His Word, sing it to our hearing, so that we may receive the invitation, repent, and not perish.

We are now in the fullness of the time of the Gentiles. The Word of God says: "**Learn a parable of the fig tree;**" that is, the Children of Israel. When it starts to put forth leaves, we should know that the time is nigh. Israel again became a nation in 1948 but the city of Jerusalem was then not in their possession. But in 1967, the city of Jerusalem fell into their hands, and became their possession. They now have their own government, and are very active. This is telling us that the second coming of Jesus Christ is very near.

The way things are now, we must bear it in mind that Jesus will soon come. Many nations of the world hate them. More than that, the Bible says that it is the Spirit of God and the children of God who are now hindering the antichrist.

The mystery of iniquity is already at work. You too see it. All of us see it. This campground in which we are, is like the City of Heaven, as if something should bring all our families so that we can dwell here, and not go away. There are no abuses and no curses; everything is calm, and peace like a river pervades the environment. We have started to fear that the three weeks of camp meeting are almost expiring and we have to return to the midst of sinners among whom we live in the various towns from where we have come. Why? The mystery of iniquity is already at work. Disobedience and indiscipline are rampant; unthankfulness is without limit — unthankfulness to God, unthankfulness to man.

If you are driving your vehicle, and halt to allow the person driving behind you to pass, if he has no fear of God, when he comes level with you, he would almost spit on you. He would say, "Stupid man, why did you wait? Please get out of the way for me." Yet, you waited to allow him to pass! If you occasionally meet somebody who is appreciative, and says "I am grateful," you wonder that such people still exist in this world, because everything is in utter confusion.

Violence, thuggery, and mass destruction are the general attitudes prevalent in the society. People don't even know what they want! They say, "Let everything collapse, let it crumble without remedy." That is the spirit of the antichrist. It is the mystery of iniquity that is already at work. It is the prayer of the children of God and the Spirit of God that are hindering its manifestation. The government is no longer able to control all the problems; the matter has gone beyond the capacity of the police and even the army. The problems are mounting, everything is tending to anarchy, but the Spirit of God is hindering the antichrist, until the saints are perfected. We still have that delay because the Spirit of God is pleading with the whole world, and the children of God are praying everywhere the sound doctrine is preached. The Spirit of God will leave, the children of God will be raptured. Who then will plead for you, if you are negligent now?

It is for your sake that Jesus has not yet come, and He can come at any time. But you still have the chance today. You can come and pray. Come and tell Jesus. Come and surrender to Him. Come and confess all your iniquities to Him. He is still willing to help you. He is still saving, still sanctifying and filling souls with the Holy Ghost. He is preparing His Bride. You too can be a part of the Bride. My friend, do not delay.