



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” MARK 16:15

December 2018

## FROM US TO YOU

It's the Christmas season, and we Christians have much to be joyful about! But our joy is in the Lord and what He has done for us. It is certainly not in the carnal things of this world (1 John 2:15-17). Have you noticed how many times the devil tries to distract us from Christ at Christmas? Santa Claus, a fictional character, usually gets more honor than Christ. Sometimes that even includes churches. It has become a time of gift giving, which on the surface, is not wrong, unless it becomes the sole focus of the event. Advertisers, manufacturers, and retailers love it. Little thought is given to the gift God gave to us humans! Nevertheless, with all the sin of mankind, God still loved us enough to sacrifice "...His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17 KJV).

The Old Testament account of Abraham and Isaac is a real life metaphor for God's gift to us. Abraham had a child born through a slave woman, the ordinary way. But the child God promised him would be born legitimately and miraculously, through his wife Sarah (Galatians 4:22-31). However, God waited until Abraham was one hundred years old before giving him the son of promise (Genesis 17:15-19). Abraham had longed for that child for so very long. And he loved his son more than words can describe. Father and son worked together and made plans, like any father and son would. Then one day the Lord told Abraham that he would have to sacrifice his only legitimately born son as a burnt offering to God. How many human fathers would be willing to slaughter a human son that they had waited for most of their life? Well, Abraham was! Because, as much as he loved his son, Isaac, he loved God more! "Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you'" (Genesis 22:3-5 NIV). There was no hesitation in his actions or words. Abraham was going to obey God in something that would drive most fathers mad.

When they got to their destination, "Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham answered, 'God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together" (Genesis 22:7-8 NIV. Also, see John 1:29). Bible scholars have speculated that Isaac was somewhere between the ages of 18 to 33 years old. So it seems unlikely that he was a child. And as an adult male, he would easily have been able to resist his elderly father, if he had chosen to. Being younger and stronger, Isaac probably carried the

fire wood on his back, as Christ carried the cross on His back. The point is Abraham was willing to sacrifice his beloved son for God. And the son was willing to allow his father to bind him, start a fire to roast him on, and slaughter him for God. How like God the Father, and God the Son. For Christ was a willing sacrifice for our sin.

When you read the words that our Redeemer spoke through Solomon you get some sense of how much God the Father and God the Son loved one another. He said, "*The LORD brought Me forth as the first of His works, before His deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before He made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when He set the heavens in place, when*

*He marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when He gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep His command, and when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at His side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in mankind"* (Proverbs 8:22-31 NIV).

One gets the feeling reading it that God the Father did not always have a son. However, it occurred somewhere back, long before God ever created the universe for us. God took part of Himself and His Own deity and gave Himself a Son. Verses 22 thru 24 use phrases like "*the Lord brought Me forth as the first of His deeds*" and "*I was appointed from eternity... before the world began.*" This makes it easier to understand how much the story of Abraham and Isaac is like God the Father and God the Son. God the Father was the architect of creation. But God the Son was the one who actually did the work, like a builder. He is also known as "the Word of God." The Bible is the written word of God. However, Christ is the living Word of God. "*Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made*" (John 1:3 NIV).

Jesus didn't have to pay for our sin. He could have avoided all the humiliation and agony. He told Peter, "*Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?*" (Matthew 26:53-54 NIV). Jesus suffered and died because He loves you and us so very much. How many fathers would be joyful that the son they love was about to enter a place where he would die in agony for someone else's crime? All Heaven was joyful about God's holy gift to us. This Christmas, let's remember His great love for us and give Him the love and worship He deserves!

In the Lord's service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*



# The Rapture Of The Church

By Anne Kaestner

While the holiday season is a joyful time of year for many people, it is a sad and lonely time for others. This is especially true if there has been a death in the family, severe financial problems, or you are away from the people you love. However, it is not the Lord's will for His loved ones to become gloomy and despondent. We who love and serve Jesus Christ have so much to look forward to! Looking down at a problem will always cause gloom. The secret is to remember the reason for the season and keep your eyes on Christ. The Lord's disciples were new believers, just like many of you. Simon Peter seemed to be the most impetuous of the group. One evening it was getting very late, the fourth watch of the night. That is after 3:00 am. Earlier that day, Jesus had fed more than five thousand people with just five loaves of bread and two fish.

After feeding the crowd Jesus told His disciples to take their boat to the other side of the sea and He would join them later. *"After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it"* (Matthew 14:23-24 NIV). I'm sure, at that hour, the disciples were all tired and worried about the weather, when they saw someone walking on the water toward them. In fact, *"...they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'* 'Lord, if it's You,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to You on the water.' 'Come,' He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' He said, 'why did you doubt?' And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down" (Matthew 14:26-32 NIV).



That is a lesson for all of us to learn.

When the storms of life are at their worst and we wonder how we will make it, look up. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Have faith in Him and ask for His help, with contrition and trust (Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 3:5-6). He will always be there for you if you love Him. You may go through many valleys in life. But your Good Shepherd will still be there, watching over you (Psalm 23:4), as long as you keep your eyes on Christ and trust Him. We have so much to be joyful about at Christmas time. We know that this world is not our permanent home. Heaven is! If you love and serve the Lord, no matter what happens to you in this world, you have a glorious future to look forward to! The Apostle Paul said, *"... 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him'—but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit..."* (1 Corinthians 2:9-10 NIV). One of the greatest promises of Jesus is to come back to get us and bring us to His home in Heaven, to be there with Him forever! He said, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And... I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am"* (John 14:1-3 NIV).

The late Cass Elliot used to sing a song called, "[There's A New World Coming](#)." It's a song I have always liked because it's a reminder to me of the second coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. Frankly, I don't think Cass Elliot, or Nina Simone, the composer, actually new the significance of the song. They were both worldly women. Yet the

song sounded so optimistic that it became popular. Another inspiring song, "This World Is Not My Home" was written by Albert E. Brumley (1905-1977). The words are: "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door. And I can't feel at home in this world anymore. Oh lord you know I have no friend like you. If heaven's not my home then Lord what will I do? The angels beckon me from heaven's open door. And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

Actually, we don't even have to wait for the second coming. That will be when Jesus comes back as "King Of Kings And Lord Of Lords." At that time He will return as a mighty conqueror. He will defeat the Antichrist (1 John 2:18) and destroy the devil's kingdom on this earth. At that time He will take back control of the earth that God gave to Adam and Satan finagled away from him. And we, beloved, will be following Christ on horses, and will fight the powers of evil with Him. But Jesus Christ will win the battle for us, whom He loves so much! We will be a part of the army of Heaven. *"The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS"* (Revelation 19:14-16 NIV).

Treading the wine press of the fury of God's wrath refers to His enemy's blood. Jesus compared Himself to a vine (John 15:1-6), most likely a grape vine. He produces "good fruit" for those Christians who remain in Him (see Galatians 5:22-23). That's because they get their spiritual nourishment through the Vine, Christ. Those who don't **remain** in the Vine, produce bad fruit (Matthew 3:10), meaning their sinful words and actions (Galatians 5:19-21). The bad fruit will be destroyed. Like grapes, God's enemies will be *"...trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs"* (Revelation 14:20 KJV).

Of course we won't be in our earthly bodies. *"...Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable"* (1 Corinthians 15:50 NIV). We will have glorified, resurrected bodies, like Jesus had after He was crucified and rose again! Remember the tomb was empty! The angel told Mary, *"He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay"* (Matthew 28:6 NIV). Eric and I were in the Lord's tomb when we were in Israel in 1983. And it was empty! Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection in His new glorified body. Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus at that time. When she saw His tomb was empty and two men sitting where He had laid she was upset. I suppose she didn't realize that they were angels. She started to cry. Then Jesus appeared to her, but she was weeping so hard that she didn't know it was Him. When she finally realized who it was she ran to Him and threw her arms around Him, and she *"...cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!'* (which means Teacher). Jesus said, *'Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God'"* (John 20:16-17 NIV). Mary ran and told the disciples that she had seen Jesus. But they were skeptical.

Then later that day, the *"...disciples were together, with the doors*



locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (John 20:19-20 NIV). In His newly resurrected body, Jesus was able to appear or disappear at will. It was through the power of thought. And there is going to come a time when we, who love Him, will also have resurrected bodies, as He did. Jesus "...is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead..." (Colossians 1:18 NIV). In other words, He was the first to receive the type of glorified, resurrected body that we will have. He was already God the Son in Heaven, and had the glory of His position even before He came to earth. But that was before He temporarily relinquished His own glory and took on the body of human man in order to pay for our sin.

He became the replacement for Adam, who failed us. Only through Christ can we have eternal life (1 Timothy 2:5-6). The result of the first birth, through Adam, brings eternal death (1 Corinthians 15:22). Those who die without Christ will suffer the same fate as the fallen angels (Revelation 12:9) with their master Satan (Revelation 20:10-15). Christ is life. He said, "...I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6 NIV). God the Son gave us life in the first place, when He created mankind. He is called the Word of God (John 1:1-3). "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4 NIV). God the Son and God the Father created the most beautiful and perfect world for us. And they did it with great joy (Proverbs 8:22-31).

That joy was there even though they knew that giving mankind a choice to serve God or not could result in our separation from God, as in fact it did. So the plan of salvation was worked out in Heaven, even before we were created. Imagine having such joy knowing that you might have to suffer a horrible death to pay for our sins. That's how much they loved us! Christ was willing to die for us, His own creation. "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8 NIV). And we, who love Him, will have resurrected bodies just as He did, when Jesus comes back for His church! "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2 NIV). However, that will not happen unless we cling to Christ, as a branch clings to the vine.

Now notice that I didn't say when He comes back as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." I'm not talking about the second coming of Christ to the earth. It's what Christians refer to "The Rapture of the Church." If you love and serve the Lord, you don't have to wait for His second coming. Because the Bible tells us that when a Christian departs this world, all that happens is that their spirit leaves their body. And it returns to the Lord (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Remember the story of Lazarus and the rich man. "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side" (Luke 16:19-23 NIV).

Those who don't really believe the Bible say that it is just a parable. But Jesus never mentions the names of real people in parables. And modern day scientists have proven that the center of this earth contains

liquid fire and sulfur (brimstone). So hell is a real place and the people that were mentioned were real! Jesus had not paid for our sins at that time. So, while the rich man went to Hell, Lazarus was carried by angels to a place called Paradise. It's not there anymore. There's no need for it because those who die in Christ go straight to Heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus mentioned Paradise when He was on the cross. To the thief who defended Him He said, "...I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43 NIV). Shortly after that Jesus died and His Spirit left His body and went down to Paradise. He told those who had waited for Him so long, that He had paid for their sins and He was taking them up to Heaven with Him! What a celebration that must have been!

In fact, Jesus also went over to the section known of as hell "...and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built..." (1 Peter 3:19-20 NIV). Jesus probably called them a bunch of fools. And reminded them that they could have joined the group He was taking up to Heaven, if they had trusted God! None of those who were in Paradise have resurrected bodies yet. However they still have all their five senses. They can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. And the rich man mentioned can feel pain. He is still in torment and he is still thirsty. But imagine the ecstasy when those in past Paradise saw Jesus! "This is why it says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men.' (What does 'He ascended' mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe)" (Ephesians 4:8-10 NIV).



So those whom Jesus took up to Heaven still only have their spirit bodies. Yet at the time of the Rapture, those who died in Christ will get their glorified bodies! And the way things are going in this world, that time isn't far off! The Apostle Paul put it this way, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been

clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (1 Corinthians 15:51-55 NIV). In other words, Jesus will return in the clouds, just as He did when He left this earth (Acts 1:9).

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (Matthew 24:30-31 NIV). Paul elaborated on it more to the Thessalonians. "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, 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 we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage (Continued On Page 4)

## The Rapture Of The Church (Continued From Page 3)

each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NIV).

So a loud trumpet will be heard on the earth. And the graves of all the believers, who remained humble (Luke 18:10-14, Psalm 51:17) and faithful to the Lord will be opened. Then the spirits of those in Heaven will join up with their newly resurrected solid bodies. No matter what the condition of the person’s body was in when they died, they will be glorified. It doesn’t even matter if they were cremated, as many were who were burned at the stake. Their bodies will be like the body of Jesus when He rose from the dead. Then those of us who are redeemed and still alive on the earth will be changed. We, too, will receive our new bodies and will meet Jesus in the air. He will take us up to Heaven with Him. Chances are that the worldly news networks will claim that aliens came from another planet and took the people away.

So, before that happens you will probably hear a lot of talk about people seeing UFO’s and aliens. “For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 NIV). Then things will get worse. The tribulation will begin, which is God’s judgment on the earth. However, we won’t be here at that time! We’ll be in Heaven. Nevertheless, some backsliders will return to God even during the tribulation (Revelation 20:4). They will realize what they missed, but it will be too late for the Rapture. So they will suffer beyond measure during the tribulation. It will be worse than anything this world has ever seen before. Jesus hinted at that when He gave His parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

He said, “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with Him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But He replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matthew 25:1-13 NIV). In the parable, the oil is the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13, Mark 6:13). The lamp is probably the Word of God (Psalm 119:11 and John 8:12).

I remember seeing Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the infamous Atheist, on a television talk show many years ago. The host asked her if she ever read the Bible herself. She replied, “I have read it all from cover to cover.” So just reading the Bible, or knowing scripture, does not make you holy. Satan knows the Bible very well and even quoted part of it to Jesus (Matthew 4:6, Psalm 91:10-12). You need the illumination of the Holy Spirit to really understand it! Jesus said to His followers, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26 NIV). In fact, Jesus specifically spoke in metaphors and figurative language so that those who did not have

the anointing of the Holy Spirit would not understand (Matthew 13:13-15, 7:6, John 16:25).

Although the Lord’s parable of the ten virgins was a metaphor, His language was certainly clear and Christ got more specific when He said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:21-23 NIV).

Jesus spoke a similar warning to the latter day Laodicean church when He said, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of My mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to **buy from Me gold refined in the fire**, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:15-20 NIV).

This world will dangle its bait before us, like the fisherman dangles his worm. However, it’s not any benevolence toward the hungry fish that concerns him. It’s his own hunger! So the answer is to keep our eyes on Christ, as Peter did when he was able to walk on water. We Christians are about to go through some difficult times (see Hebrews 12:26-27). For God wants to refine His people. This Christmas you will see all kinds of glittery paraphernalia dangled before your eyes, including gold. The advertisements will be full of such things. Yet that gold will perish. Yet the gold that God wants from us will be the pure love and trust of His children. Gold in its raw state is just a dirty rock. It is still attached to the ore it was found in. In its natural state

it is not useful to its owner. The refiner has to heat the rock to such a high temperature that the ore is burned off. All that is left is pure gold.

God compares newly reborn believers in Christ to gold in its natural state. We cannot really be useful to Him with all our worldly ore attached. Jesus doesn’t want any lukewarm believers (Revelation 3:16). So the Holy Spirit refines us as gold is refined in the furnace (Isaiah 48:10). Then, when all our carnal desires (1 John 2:15-17) are burnt off through affliction, we emerge pure as liquid gold. Only then can we be placed in whatever mold our heavenly Refiner has for us.

The apostle Peter wrote to the church, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:12-13 NIV). “These have come so that **your faith—of greater worth than gold**, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:7-9 NIV).

