

CAUGHT UP



F. E. MARSH

Caught up! caught up! no wing required.
Caught up to Him by love inspired,
 To meet Him in the air!
Spurning the earth, with upward bound,
Nor casting a single glance around,
Nor listing a single earth-born sound,
 Caught up in the radiant air!

Caught up, with rapture and surprise,
“**Caught up**,” our fond affections rise,
 Our coming Lord to meet;
Hearing the trumpets’ glorious sound,
Soaring to join the rising crowd,
Gazing beyond the parted cloud,
 Beneath His pierced feet!

O blessed, O thrice-blessed word!
To be for ever with the Lord
 In heavenly beauty fair!
Up, up! we long to hear the cry;
Up, up! our absent Lord draws nigh,
Yes, in the twinkling of an eye,
 Caught up in the radiant sky!

CAUGHT UP

THE SURE, SECRET, SUDDEN, AND SATISFYING
SNATCHING AWAY OF MILLIONS OF SAVED
MEN AND WOMEN FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN

AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH

By DR. F. E. MARSH

IN the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, iv. 17, we shall find the two words "caught up." There are some words in the Bible that lay hold of us in a peculiar manner as we read the Scriptures, and stick to us as the burrs do to the clothes as we go through a copse. Many of you, no doubt, have noticed some particular expression that has occurred in some one epistle—for instance, the "much mores" in the Epistle to the Romans. In the fifth chapter Paul speaks several times of the "much mores." In Corinthians we are impressed with the sentence, which occurs again and again, "Know ye not?" The epistle reminds the saints of several things that were their common privilege, and which they ought to know. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that God dwelleth in you?" is a case in point. In reading the Epistle to the Galatians we are struck with the contrast that the Holy Spirit draws between the flesh and the spirit. We turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians, and are impressed at once with the words "in Christ," "in Christ Jesus." We turn to the Epistle to the Colossians, and are impressed with the sentence, "with Christ," "with Him." We turn to the epistle to the church at Philippi, and find that we are reminded again and again that it is the privilege of every child of God to be rejoicing, so that no less than eighteen times we come across such words as these, "joy" and "rejoice." Not once do we find the word sin in that epistle of Christian experience. Although this is an epistle of Christian experience, it does not necessarily bring

out what is the experience of Christians. Christian experience is one thing, and the experience of the Christian is another. Christian experience is what God says the experience should be; but the experience of a Christian may be very different from what God says it should be. In the Epistle of John we are impressed with the words "we know." In the Epistle to the Thessalonians we are reminded again and again of the coming of the Lord Jesus. In the first chapter of the epistle we read, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." There are seven references to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in this First Epistle to the Thessalonians alone.

Not only are we impressed with some one sentence, but we are also impressed with the very words that go to make up the sentences. For instance, we take the words "in Christ." *Christ* reminds us of the person spoken of. *In Christ* of the position we have as believers. We are in Christ, not merely saved by Christ. In the circle of His protecting presence, protected by what He is, and surrounded by what He has done.

And so with this expression in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, in relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus. We are told that "we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air." It was these words, "caught up," that specially arrested my attention in thinking of this theme, and in asking God for a message for it. This word that we have here translated "caught up" is a very forcible one. The Greek word *harpazō* translated "caught up," means to take away by force, as when a wild beast seizes and carries off its prey, or as when one snatches a thing from another. It is of interest to notice where the same word occurs in the New Testament. In Matthew xi. 12 it is "*take by force*," in speaking of the violent taking the kingdom of heaven; in Matthew xiii. 19 the word is rendered "*catcheth away*," where it speaks of the wicked one catching away the seed; in John vi. 15 the same term is given, "*take by force*," where reference is made to the Jews, who would make Christ a king; in John x. 12 the word is given "*catcheth*," in speaking of the wolf catching the sheep, through the cowardice of the hireling shepherd; in John x. 28, 29, the word is rendered "*pluck*," where the believer is reminded that no one is able to snatch him out of the hand of Christ and the hand of the Father; in Acts viii. 39 the

word is translated "*caught away*," in speaking of Philip being caught away by the Holy Spirit after he had been speaking to the Eunuch; in Acts xxiii. 10 the word is again given "*take by force*," when the chief captain commanded his soldiers to forcibly protect Paul from the rabble, and to bring him into the castle; twice the word is given "*caught up*" in 2 Corinthians xii. 2-4, in referring to the apostle being caught up to the third heaven; in Jude 23 the word is "*pulling*," in exhorting the Christian worker to pull the unsaved out of the fire; and in Revelation xii. 5 the term is rendered "*caught up*." From these references we see at once the forcible meaning of the word, which really means "*to snatch away*." When the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His own, we read that He is going to snatch us away and take us to Himself.

There are many things that are suggested to us in thinking of the subject of the coming of the Lord Jesus. The subject is so vast that the difficulty is to know where to begin and where to stop. There are over 380 references to the coming of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament alone. We thus see how frequently the subject is brought before us, and also the importance of it, and anyone that can read the Bible without seeing this truth certainly needs to read it again.

I would like to say seven things about this "catching away." It will be select as to the individuals taken; it is sure as to its occurrence; it is secret in the method; it is sudden in its operation; it is saving in its issue; it is satisfying in its outcome, and it is separating as it is believed.

First of all, this catching away is

SELECT AS TO THE INDIVIDUALS TAKEN.

Notice what the apostle says in *v.* 14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Here the apostle is not speaking to the world, but to Christians. In the same way He speaks to the church at Corinth, when He says, "We shall not all sleep," etc. He is writing to those who are called "saints." That is not a position we are to struggle to be in, but it is a position to which we are called by God. A Christian is a saint, and as a saint he has to do certain things; hence we are told to do this or that "as becometh saints." The apostle in all the epistle is writing to Christians, and when he speaks of "If we believe," and "our gathering

together unto Christ," common sense as well as Scriptures will tell us that the Spirit of God is speaking of the fact that it is only believers who will be taken away when Christ comes again. Again, remember the words that were spoken to the disciples when Christ went away, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven; this same Jesus shall so come as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Who saw Him go into heaven? The last sight the world had of Christ was upon the cross. They said, "Away with Him, and crucify Him," and that is the end of Him as far as the world was concerned. We find the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians i. 15, giving a list of those to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection. Just as the disciples saw Jesus go into heaven, so only believers, when He comes back to the air, will see Him. You say, "You are making two comings." No, I am not; but two stages in the one coming. There were two stages in the first coming. He came to the manger, and then to the cross; first to Bethlehem, and then to Calvary. First of all He comes to the air for His people, and then He comes to the earth with them, according to Zechariah xiv. I cannot believe, as some do, that only the watchful ones will be taken away. I believe every child of God will be caught away, for the whole argument is based upon, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again," then certain consequences will ensue. We believe that Jesus died for our sins. We cannot be Christians without. We believe that Christ was crucified for our offences, and was raised again on account of our justification.

In the next place, this catching away is

SURE AS TO ITS OCCURRENCE.

The last word of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible is this, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly." The Greek word *nai* rendered "surely" is an affirmation, meaning certainly. It is translated "*Even so*" in Matthew xi. 26, and "*Verily*" in Luke xi. 51. "Even so," Jesus said, in speaking to His Father, in noting how He had revealed the truth not to the learned and the wise, but to the babes, "even so, Father"—surely, certainly—"for so it seemed good in Thy sight." So the Lord Jesus, in speaking of His return, says, "Surely, I come quickly." The world says such and such a thing is as sure as death; but a Christian should not

speak in that manner, because the most unlikely thing for a Christian is to die. Read with me Hebrews ix. 27, a passage which is often misunderstood. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Death and judgment are the common lot of men because of sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come and died the death and borne the judgment, so that we are looking neither for the one nor for the other, but the coming of our Lord Jesus. Death and judgment are behind us; grace and glory are before. Dear friends, we are on the resurrection side. We should not be looking for death, but for the coming of our Lord. You say, "We may die." We may, truly, but the Lord does not say we shall, and I pray you not to look upon death as a certainty.

In the third place this catching away is

SECRET IN ITS METHOD.

There is a terrible time coming which is spoken of in the Old Testament as the "time of Jacob's trouble," and in the New Testament as "the great tribulation." We read of those who shall be saved out of it, for before that time the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His people and takes them away. I think we have that illustrated in Rev. xii. We read there was a wonder in the heaven—"a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Then a great red dragon appeared in heaven. We read of the woman that she brought forth a man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child "was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand and two hundred and threescore days." If the days are reckoned up it will be found that they answer to the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. One thousand two hundred and sixty days answers to the three years and a half of the last half of the 70th week of Daniel's 70 weeks of years. The prophetic year is 360 days. Three times 360 is 1080, and half 360 is 180, corresponding to the "time, and times, and the dividing of time" of Daniel vii. 35. In the second Psalm we read that Christ shall dash in pieces the rebellious ones, like a potter's vessel, and in Rev. xix.

we read, "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." What is said of Christ is also said of Christ's. I cannot conceive a believer not being an overcomer. Unless we are overcomers how can we be believers? Our faith is the victory which overcometh the world. The very expression that refers to Christ's rule and power in putting down opposing forces being applied to this man-child, seems to me to identify the man-child not only with Christ but with His people; not only with the personal Christ, but it takes in what we understand as the mystical Christ, which is Christ and His members, and the connection you will see at once is this, that before the time of the woman's persecution—the woman represents Israel—the man-child is caught up to God and to His throne. I gather from this that we who are believers shall be saved from that great tribulation, and which, in the Old Testament, specially identifying it with Israel, is called "the time of Jacob's trouble." This is a very solemn matter. Some day the world will wake up and find that every Christian has been taken out of it. Some ungodly, unconverted husband will wake up and find that his godly wife has gone. The very thought that Jesus is coming, and that all who are in Christ will be taken away, should fill the unsaved with solemn awe.

Then, in the fourth place, this catching away will be

SUDDEN IN ITS OPERATION.

There are two scriptures which specially speak of the suddenness of Christ's coming, one with reference to His coming as the Son of Man, and the other with reference to His coming to complete the redemption of those who believe in Him. In one of these passages the coming of Christ is likened in its suddenness to the lightning flashing across the sky, and the apostle tells us that we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in the twinkling of an eye. In an atom of time, so small that it cannot be reckoned, it cannot be analysed, this momentous change will take place. We may be at some meeting, or we may be in the pursuit of our ordinary daily occupation when the change will come, and mortality will put on immortality. In a moment we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and in that moment we shall be in our glorified state. Some Christians speak of

the departed ones having glorified bodies, but I do not think there is anything in the Scriptures to justify this. Our loved ones are in the conscious presence of Christ; I believe they are consciously happy, but they are not in their glorified state yet. That will not be until the Lord Jesus Christ comes back again. Then we, with them, will be changed. These bodies will be like the glorified body of our Lord. Wherefore we may well cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

In the fifth place, this catching away will be

SAVING IN ITS ISSUE.

"We wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) How the Holy Spirit loves to play upon the personal pronouns that relate to Christ. The following four "Him's" are very precious in their relation:

"Meet Him,"

"See Him,"

"Like Him,"

"With Him."

To meet Him is good, to see Him is better, to be like Him is best, and better than the best is to be with Him, for that ensures the rest. Oh, it will make our heaven heaven to meet Him and see Him, and look into that face which was once marred more than any man's, to see that face lit up with the glory of God, and not only to see Him, but to be with Him; not only to be alongside of Him, but to be like Him; just as Moses and Elijah were transfigured with Him in the mount, so that they were not only with Christ but like Him. It seems to me that Moses and Elijah transfigured are a picture of the coming glory. We have the word of the Holy Ghost for it. In the second epistle to Peter he tells us that what he saw in the holy mount is a type of the coming glory of our Lord. Notice the three persons in the glory. Christ is the central figure; on one side is Moses, on the other is Elijah—Elijah representing those who will be caught away without dying, Moses representing those who have fallen asleep. Our bodies, which has been humiliated by sin, will then be saved and glorified.

Sixth, this snatching away will be

SATISFYING IN ITS OUTCOME.

It is Christ Himself that we long to see. Nothing else will satisfy our hearts. In studying prophecy do not let us forget or lose sight of Him as the central figure. We long to see that lovely One; we long to see Christ face to face, for when we see Him we shall be satisfied, and, more than that, He will be satisfied. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ," was Paul's word to the church at Thessalonica. What is the patience of Christ? The patience that Christ is exercising now in waiting till the Church is complete, and then He will come to take us to Himself. He will not be satisfied until His redeemed are with Him. And we with the Psalmist say, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness."

In Rev. xxii. 3-5 we have seven "shalls."

Perfect holiness. "There shall be no more curse." Nothing more of that which brings the curse, which is sin, and therefore there is perfect holiness.

Perfect rule. "But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." No opposing force.

Perfect service. "His servants shall serve Him." With a perfect service we shall serve Him. We shall not sit and sing ourselves away to everlasting bliss, as the hymn says. We shall serve Him without weariness.

There is *perfect vision* also. "We shall see His face."

Perfect likeness. "His name shall be in their foreheads."

Perfect day. "There shall be no night there."

There shall be *perfect glory*. "They shall reign for ever and ever."

Does not this satisfy the heart? Well may Rutherford say, as he refers to Christ's coming, "I have not a balance to weigh the worth of my Lord Jesus. Heaven, ten heavens, would not be the beam of a balance to weigh Him in. Oh, if that Fair One would take the mask off His fair face, that I might see Him! A kiss of Him through His mask is half an heaven. O day, dawn! O time, run fast! O Bridegroom, post fast, that we may meet! O heaven, cleave in two, that that bright face and head may set itself through the clouds!"

Finally, this catching away will be

SEPARATING AS IT IS BELIEVED.

"Every man that hath this hope in Christ purifieth himself, even as He is pure." No one can believe that the Lord Jesus Christ may come at any moment, without being separate in his life—separated from the world, separate from self, separate from sin, separate from everything that is not of God. He must of necessity be a separated man, who believes that the Lord may return at any time. Let us get away from this smoky world, above it, over it, into the clear vision of God. As Rutherford says, "Stand fast in the hope that you are called unto. Our Master will rend the clouds, and will be upon us quickly, and clear our cause, and bring us all out in black and white. Clean, clean garments in the Bridegroom's eyes are of great worth. Step over this hand-breadth of world's glory into our Lord's new world of grace, and ye will laugh at the feathers that children are chasing in the air. I verily judge that this inn, which men are building their nest in, is not worth a drink of cold water. It is a rainy and smoky house; best come out of it, lest we be choked with the smoke thereof."

Lady Powerscourt used to say that a Christian was not a man who was living on earth and looking up to heaven, but one who was living in heaven and looking down upon the earth. Set your affection, your mind, your undivided heart, upon the things which are above, on Christ; and if Christ has your heart He will have all. Oh that the Lord may keep us watching, waiting, expecting, so that when we see Him we shall not be surprised, but we will gladly say, "Welcome, Lord, we are glad to see Thee"; and if we are thus living we shall not be among the number who will be ashamed before Him at His coming.



He which testifieth these things saith

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