

Into the air

THE SNATCHING AWAY IS AS PRACTICAL AS CAN BE

Many of you may already know that I used to believe in the Christian rapture. This was in the early '80s. By 1984, I'd been talked out of it by seemingly spiritual people who told me that the rapture was escapism. They told me: "The 144,000 go through the tribulation. They're sealed by God. There is also a vast throng. No escapism for these people, Martin. Be tough. Spiritual people don't escape."

I wanted to be tough, like the spiritual people.



It was not until 1986 that I learned to distinguish the gospel of Paul from that of the Circumcision. The 144,000 were Israelite believers whose destiny was to become a nation of priests and rule upon the earth (Rev. 5:10). The earth! Why would these folks be snatched away to heaven? The body of Christ believers, on the other hand, were to display God's grace among the celestials (Eph. 2:6-7). Why wouldn't Christ take these folks to the place of their ministry?

Flying at warp speed into the third heaven—ain't that tough enough? ■

Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

The medicine of imminent escape

Okay, I'm about to become a big hypocrite. At the Chicago Conference last September, I delivered a message called, "Snatched Toward Christ." My text, of course, was 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Yes, this is the famous "rapture" passage. Wait a minute. Do I actually believe that Jesus Christ is literally going to descend out of heaven, raise the literal dead, and then literally snatch us up from this Earth so that we *literally* meet Him in the literal air so that we may then spend the rest of our literal lives with Him in a literal heaven?

Yes. For more information on this "crazy" belief of mine, please see the sidebar at left.

The focus of my Chicago delivery was the word, "snatched." Here is the pertinent passage from 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18:

"Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. So that, console one another with these words."

There is no such thing as a Rapture. "Rapture" is the name of a Blondie song. The Greek word Paul used here, *harpazo*, is correctly translated "snatched away" in the Concordant Version. It means "to seize with a sudden grasp and carry away, as a wolf its prey." In fact, the word describes the action of a wolf in John 10:12—

"I am the Shepherd ideal. The ideal shepherd is laying down his soul for the sake of the sheep. Yet the hireling, not also being shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, is beholding the wolf coming, and is leaving the sheep and fleeing. And the wolf is snatching them (*harpazo*) and is scattering the sheep."

My point in Chicago was that *harpazo* addresses the hunger of the Snatch-er, rather than the snatch-ee. We desire Him, yes, but His desire



transcends ours. He knows a heck of a lot more than we do about our new home. Compared to Him, we're only mildly interested in our celestial destiny. Christ's longing for us to be with Him is such that He's hungry like the wolf. We don't often think this way. We don't often think of the snatching away from Christ's perspective. We tend to think that it's no big deal to Him; just another day at the Office. Hum. He's not hungry, He just ate a celestial sandwich. Not so! He has been waiting 2000 years for this meeting in the air. *And how long have you been waiting?*

My emphasis in Chicago was, "Don't think of this event so much as an escape from the world, but rather as a going toward Christ. We are not teaching escapism, but *towardism*. That should be our emphasis."

Wasn't that a holy thought? Was that not a profound and wise and selfless disposition? The snatching away is not about me, but about Christ. I want the best for *Him*. Is my halo showing? I am so outside myself.

Until this morning. Everything I just said is still true, but this morning, in an ecstasy of expectation, I'm jumping onto the other side of the teeter-totter. This morning, I *am* thinking about myself. This morning, it *is* about me. It's

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...the medicine of imminent escape

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not *all* about me, but a good chunk of it is Zendercentric. I *want* to fly away from Earth; I *want* to defy gravity; I *want* to feel good forever; I *want* to look Jesus Christ in the face and behold His glowing garments with all the new colors; I *want* to hear celestial music and see the Beings Who created the universe, through Christ; I *want* to be constantly awake and never tired; I *want* permanently delivered from doom, disease, disappointment, and death.



Oh—and if the glory of long-exploded galaxies fills my newly anointed eyes, so be it.

I want the peripheral vision of an owl.

Are you with me? I thought so. Surprisingly, so is Paul. Here's how he introduces our coming transformation:

“Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are reposing, lest you may sorrow according as the rest, also, who have no expectation.”

Note: It is still true that we ought to consider the snatching away from Christ's perspective for a change. It is good to occasionally go outside oneself and think of Christ fully satisfied after all His suffering. Yet look at how Paul prefaces this teaching. He paints it as the antidote to personal suffering. He applies

the balm of Christ's coming to a human wound, specifically, bereavement.

If I may paraphrase him:

“I know you're grieving because of your dearly departed loved ones, but our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is about to reverse that feeling and thrill your heart, not only with the resurrection of your loved ones, but with the vivification of your own mortal bodies.”

It is about us! I love how Paul wraps it up, verse 18:

“So that, console one another with these words.”

It is more than right to pull personal consolation from this great teaching. So sit back, get selfish, and enjoy it.

I have a theory. My theory is that, prior to the snatching away, God will ensure that each of His saints is in some way suffering acutely. I have traveled much lately, and I also correspond with many of you, and I find suffering all around. God is going to put each one in a particular pinch so that the deliverance of the body will be such an astounding contrast that we will perhaps literally jump out of our terrestrial skin.

Should the blessed event occur this morning, I will gladly forgo my second cup of Maxwell House to meet you in the air. ■

Sexual orgasm: microcosm of escape

God has graciously granted us a hint of how it's going to feel when we're finally extricated from the current wicked eon and loosed from the countless hindrances that derail undiluted happiness in this life: the sexual orgasm.

When God anesthetized Adam to create Eve, He simultaneously created the first lack known to humanity: sexual longing. Such a fantastic pull required that one of the sexes draw, and the other be drawn. God removed a part of Adam's anatomy, not his wife's, leaving the man with the greater need. Women have drawn men ever since with a verve unknown to other human arrangements.

To what purpose? With the separation of the sexes God first of all provided humanity and the onlooking angels with a continual example of His drawing power upon the race. In this parable, the woman represents God, and man the race. Even the names of the first couple suggest this, for “Adam” means “humanity,” and Eve, “life.”

Writes A.E. Knoch on page 114 of Vol. 44 of *Unsearchable Riches* magazine:

“The attraction between the sexes probably produces the strongest attachment in hu-

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WHAT A REVELATION!

ARE YOU SURVIVING?
GOOD ENOUGH!

“Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

—1 Thess. 4:17

I catch Paul's drift when he says, “We who are surviving.” He is comparing us, the living, to those who have died, as in, “Mr. and Mrs. Borden are survived by their daughter Lizzy.” But let's tap the literal elements and add color to this monochromatic definition.

The Greek word rendered “survive” here is the cumbersome *perileipomai*, whose English elements are “ABOUT-LACK.” A survivor does not merely live on, but is surrounded by lack. The survivor of a dead spouse lacks the spouse; the survivor of a house fire lacks shelter; the survivor of a plane crash lacks everything—and possibly everyone—he traveled with; most cancer survivors lack a part of their very bodies.



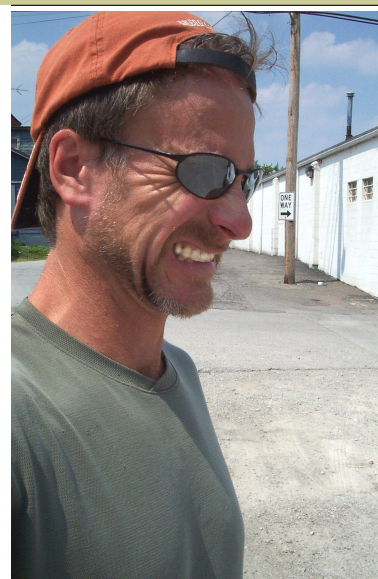
What about we who remain to the coming of Christ? What are we lacking? Oh, not much. *Only everything we need to execute the magnificent, coming change.*

Friends, there is *nothing* in ourselves that can deliver us from this body of death. God is so stripping us of reliance on flesh that it's no wonder we feel as if we've been marooned on a desert island. Christ is returning for the likes of us. He is coming for survivors. Are we “only” surviving? Good enough! He is “our rescuer, out of the coming indignation” (1 Thess. 1:10). ■

Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.

Margaret McDonald; are you kidding me?



One of the common denominators of those who deny the pre-tribulation snatching away (“rapture”) of the body of Christ is, first of all, a failure to distinguish between the body of Christ and Israel. Secondly, it’s Margaret McDonald.

Margaret McDonald was a so-called visionary, born in Scotland in 1815. She dabbled in utterances, visions, and other unspiritual shenanigans. She was only 15 years old, poor kid, when she supposedly envisioned a pre-tribulation rapture and wrote about it. Ever since then, many so-called believers who pooh-pooh the snatching away (and, not co-incidentally, fail to distinguish Paul’s gospel from that given to Israel), blame Margaret McDonald for inventing it. How ridiculous is that? Everybody knows she invented the hamburger. ■

...microcosm of escape

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man experience. This is doubtless intended to give us an experience akin to that between the Creator and the creature.”

The culmination of this attraction is the sexual orgasm, often described as the most pleasurable experience on earth. It is so pleasurable, in fact, so as to be nearly unbearable. What is it? Is it necessary to procreation? No. Is it a useless divine flourish? Of course not.

If sexual attraction is the parable of humanity’s longing for God, then the orgasm is a glorious foretaste of the coming consummation. It is a brief, temporary glimpse into unfathomable bliss. As presently constituted, or bodies could not contain an eonian orgasm.

This is one fantastic reason why we need new bodies. ■



This ministry supported by you, the body of Christ

In last week’s e-mail, I told you that I have been commissioned to write a new book, and that the 3000 print run of my first book is finally gone, and that the Zender/Sheridan radio program enjoys continued success on new radio stations. All of this is wonderfully true—but none of it involves me making money.

The commission to write the book is a moral commission, not a financial one, as in: “Zender! Write a book on the two evangels for God and humanity!” Most of the profits from the “How to Quit Church” books have gone into printing and many other company expenses. As for the radio program, that doesn’t make money, it costs money.

In the meantime, all things Zender are supported by YOU. This is God’s way of doing business; it is freelance, unforced, and miraculous. If you want to help keep this ministry rocking, go to www.martinzender.com and scroll down to “Donate to Martin’s ministry.” You’ll be backing the right horse. And thank you—big time! ■