

I was 8 years old when I shouted: “I see him Grandpa! He’s coming!” I was pointing to the eastern sky and I looked at Grandpa’s Timex watch and it was 5:20 pm on Saturday, March 13, 1976. I found myself looking to the eastern sky with amazing anticipation. We were at West Wilkes High School and the President of the United States was coming.

It was such an exciting time. There were throngs of people on the football field, in the stands, and on the hills...cars were parked everywhere. I remember we walked a long way from where Grandpa had parked the car. The anticipation in the crowd was growing and finally we heard something. It was the faint whirring (initially) of a helicopter. But, as the moments passed, it was getting louder and louder and suddenly in the eastern sky I saw what was only a dot a few seconds earlier, now coming at us faster and faster. It was the President’s helicopter.

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Chill bumps ran up my down my arms and the hair stood up on the back of my neck. Grandpa had lifted me up to get a better view! I was mesmerized. The chopper got closer and the crowd noise was almost hushed by the thundering of the helicopter blades as the chopper finally touched down. The side door opened and there he was, the 38<sup>th</sup> Gerald R. Ford, the President of the United States.

Now, you may ask, “Pastor Kevin, how can you be so accurate in offering the time of 5:20 pm for an event that took place some 42 years ago?” Simple. I’ve got the proof from the President’s own White House log called the “Daily Diary.” See it on the screens:

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THE WHITE HOUSE		THE DAILY DIARY OF PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD	
PLACE DAY BEGAN CHICAGO MARRIOTT INN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS		DATE (Mo., Day, Yr.) MARCH 13, 1976	
		TIME DAY 5:06 p.m. SATURDAY	
TIME		PHONE	ACTIVITY
In	Out	Placed R-Rec'd	
5:06	5:41		The President flew by helicopter from the Boulton Park helipad to West High School, Miller's Creek, Wilkes County, North Carolina. For a list of passengers, see <u>APPENDIX "D."</u>
5:41			The President was greeted by: Congressman James T. Broyhill (R-North Carolina) Mrs. James T. Broyhill Bill Anderson, Sheriff of Wilkes County, North Carolina and Chairman of the Wilkes County PFC Mrs. Bill Anderson E.H. "Hal" Green, Principal of West High School Mrs. E.H. "Hal" Green  The President was presented with a Bicentennial rifle by Ivy Moore, a direct descendant of Daniel Boone.
5:45			The President, escorted by Mr. Anderson, went to the holding room.
6:10			The President went to the offstage announcement area.
6:15			The President went to the platform in the gymnasium. For a list of platform guests, see <u>APPENDIX "H."</u>
6:17			The President was introduced by Governor Holshouser.
6:24	7:02		The President participated in a question and answer session with approximately 2,000 local business and civic leaders, students and the general public.
7:20			The President returned to his helicopter.
7:20	7:53		The President flew by helicopter from West High School to Greensboro High Point Airport. For a list of passengers, see <u>APPENDIX "D."</u>
8:04	8:45		The President flew by the "Spirit of '76" from Greensboro High Point Airport to Andrews AFB, Maryland. For a list of passengers, see <u>APPENDIX "I."</u>
8:55	9:06		The President flew by helicopter from Andrews AFB to the South Grounds of the White House. For a list of passengers, see <u>APPENDIX "D."</u>
9:08			The President went to the second floor Residence. SY/EJ 5/3/76

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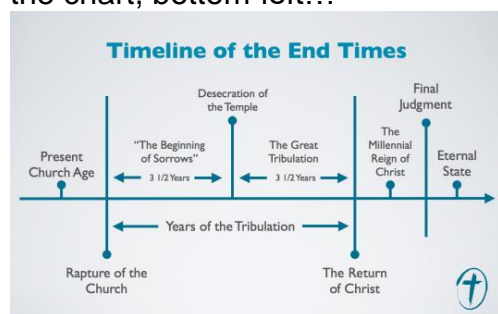


Now as exciting and momentous as that occasion was some 42 years ago, I want to tell you something this morning...it won't hold a candle to the awe and amazement for the inhabitants of this earth when (NOT THE PRESIDENT) comes in the sky...but, the Lord Jesus Christ, back to this earth. **Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 24:29**

We've been studying in the Gospel of Matthew what is called the "Olivet Discourse," (the teaching of Jesus to His disciples about His Second Coming). And what He has been describing was nothing less than earth-shattering for these disciples. You see, they had expected Jesus to set up His kingdom while He was here the first time, but He's not doing that. Instead, He's talking about the destruction of the Temple and the coming of a man called the Antichrist and horrible, horrible things that are going to happen on the earth when the Antichrist reveals his true colors.

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What Jesus is describing is what is going to happen on earth after Jesus takes us, His Church, off of the earth in what is known as the harpazo, the Rapture...the snatching away of the Church. See the chart, bottom-left...



You see, one day this "Present Church Age" is coming to an end. Jesus is going to come back in the sky and take His Church off the earth and that will usher in a season of time (7 years), known as the TRIBULATION PERIOD. And Jesus told us (last week) that there's an event coming which would be the sign for the people to run to the hills. Do you remember the sign? It's when the Antichrist will set up an image of himself in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem and he will say, "You must worship me and take my mark, or you will die." What's the mark?

**666**

Church family, when that happens, the inhabitants of this earth are going to then endure a season of cataclysmic catastrophe unlike anything the world has ever seen or known. And that will last for 3 1/2 years and then Jesus said, "I'm coming back to this earth." Watch...

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### **Matthew 24:29-31**

<sup>29</sup> "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

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How many of you have ever seen a falling star or shooting star?

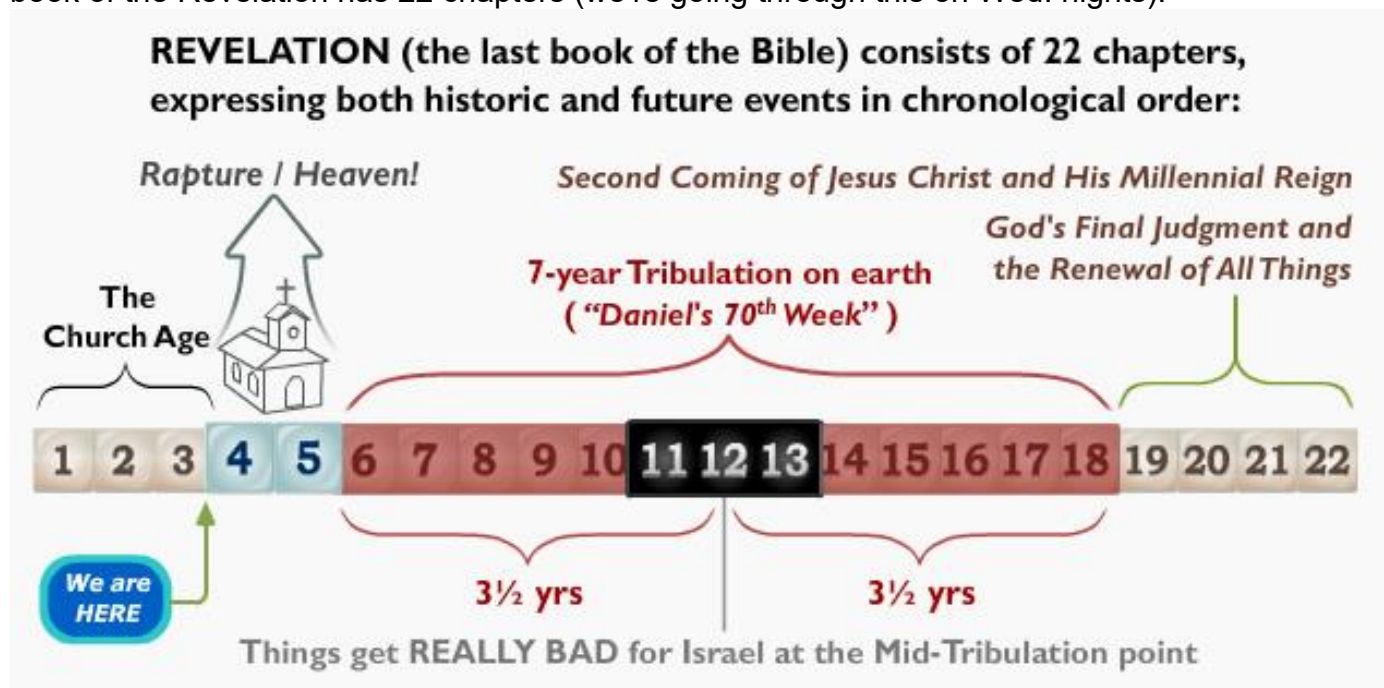


Did you know that “shooting stars” are most often not stars? Instead, what we see floating in the sky is space debris and what is most common is the debris from a meteor that’s breaking up. Seldom do these meteors reach the ground, because they often completely burn up in the atmosphere. However, when a part of a meteor reaches the earth intact, it is called a meteorite. BUT church family, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, during the Tribulation Period, the COSMIC ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE is going to break down. All that God has put in place to order the orbits of stars, planets, moons and even the behavior of the sun is going to break down. We just read it...

### **Matthew 24:29**

**29** “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Listen, by the time we get to the end of the 7 years of Tribulation, the cosmos are going to be falling apart. Remember, we’ve read about this from the Book of the Revelation. Let me show you this chart and explain something about the devastation that’s going to occur on this earth. The book of the Revelation has 22 chapters (we’re going through this on Wed. nights):



The first three chapters describe the Church Age...that’s where we are now (SEE IN BLUE). Then chapters 4 and 5 describe heaven...and that’s where we’re going to be on Wed. night when we see what we’re going to do in heaven after the Rapture.

Then chapters 6 through 18 describe what is known as Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week or the season of “Jacob or Israel’s Troubles” and it’s when things get really bad for those left behind on this earth. It’s during these chapters that we see God’s wrath being poured out the Antichrist and upon those who rejected His Son. **Do you remember Revelation 16 from a few weeks ago?** The judgments described there are part of what are called the “Bowl Judgments” of God.

### **Revelation 16:8-11**

<sup>8</sup>The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. <sup>9</sup>They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory. <sup>10</sup>The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish <sup>11</sup>and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

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The Sun is breaking down and it's popping Solar Flares like has never been seen before and the fierce heat is scorching people. And as the sun is burning out, it's growing dark. The Antichrist's kingdom is plunged into darkness. And by the time we get to the end of the 7 years of Tribulation, it's dark. **And here's the thing I want us to understand...** All of this has been prophesied. Did you know that? It's been foretold hundreds of years EVEN before Jesus was on the earth. Watch the screens now for a couple of minutes as I show you a three of these prophecies.

**Joel, chapter 2, verses 30-31 were prophesied 600 years before Jesus was born.**

### **Joel 2:30-31**

<sup>30</sup>“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. <sup>31</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

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### **Joel 3:15-16**

<sup>15</sup>The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. <sup>16</sup>The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

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Remember, this seven years of Tribulation is known as the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble” and Jesus has been warning those who will read the Bible during the Tribulation that they need to leave Judea and run for the hills (vs. 16)...don't turn back for even your coat (vs 18), run for your lives!

Watch again...Isaiah's prophecy 750 years before Jesus was born:

### **Isaiah 13:6-13**

<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! <sup>7</sup>Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. <sup>8</sup>They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame. <sup>9</sup>Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. <sup>10</sup>For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. <sup>11</sup>I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.

<sup>12</sup>I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.

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Why is the Lord pouring out His wrath? Because they have rejected this... HIS SON!!!



Listen, (I've said this several times, but hear it again), Jesus came the first time as a Lamb...meek and mild to die for the sins of the world...but, when He comes back the Second Time...He's coming as the ROARING LION of JUDAH and every eye will see him.

### **Matthew 24:30**

<sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

### **Take a look at this chart. JESUS IS COMING BACK... IT'S a Certainty, in fact...**

#### The Certainty of the Second Coming



All but four of the New Testament books contain teachings on the second coming of Jesus Christ.  
Three of those four are single-chapter letters.

Did you know that all but four of the 27 NT books contain teaching on the Second Coming of Jesus? And three of those four were just specific letters to individual people about specific matters.

Oh yes, He's coming back! And it's as certain to happen the second time, just as sure as He came the first time.



You know His first coming was prophesied and it happened! And the next time He comes...not just some shepherds are going to see it... but the whole world. **See verse 30 again...**

But, you may ask, “What is the sign that everyone will see in the sky?”

**Matthew 24:30**

<sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Well, I must tell you, it depends on who you talk to and which commentary you read. Some say what people will see in the sky is the Shekinah Glory of God...the cloud of glory that was in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, representing the presence of God.

Other commentators say that it will be a cross in the sky. But, I find no Scriptural evidence for this. Here’s the deal... We aren’t told what the sign will be...but, I do know this...I believe it will have something to do with light. Remember, Jesus appeared in brilliant white light on the Mount of Transfiguration and I believe in the darkness that will be covering the world at the end of the Tribulation, that the return of Jesus may appear initially as nothing more than a pin-prick of light in that darkness, but then it grows and gets brighter and brighter... I’m convinced it will be like a “heavenly banner” that will emerge in the sky, as Jesus returns. Without question brilliant light will be piercing the darkness.

Now Church family, as I’ve told you before...so often, people get confused when reading Matthew chapters 24 and 25. They see verse 31 for instance, and think it’s the Rapture. That’s not right!

**Matthew 24:31**

<sup>31</sup> And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Take a look in your bulletin or on the screens at this chart...

**15 Differences Between The Rapture & The Glorious Appearing**

Adapted from: *Charting the End Times*, LaHaye & Ice

	<b>Rapture of Church</b>	<b>Jesus’ Second Coming</b>
<b>1</b>	Christ comes <u>for</u> His own	Christ comes <u>with</u> His own to earth
<b>2</b>	“Rapture” of all Christians	No one “caught up”
<b>3</b>	Christians meet Jesus in the air	Jesus comes back to earth
<b>4</b>	No judgment on earth	Christ judges inhabitants of earth
<b>5</b>	Church taken to heaven	Christ sets up His kingdom on earth
<b>6</b>	Could happen at any moment	Cannot occur for at least 7 years
<b>7</b>	No signs	Many signs before His 2nd coming
<b>8</b>	Affects believers only	Affects all humanity
<b>9</b>	Time of joy	Time of mourning
<b>10</b>	Before the Tribulation	Immediately after the Tribulation
<b>11</b>	No mention of Satan	Satan bound 1000 years
<b>12</b>	The Judgment Seat of Christ	No time or place for Judgment Seat
<b>13</b>	Marriage of the Church to Jesus	Bride (Church) descends with Jesus

14	Only His own see Him	Every eye will see Him
15	Tribulation begins	1000-year kingdom of Christ begins

You know, as I think about the Second of Coming of Jesus...it's in a way almost like the sound of that chopper back in 1976 that carried President Ford. I could see that chopper way before I could hear it... It was just a small dot in the sky and then, there he was. But, let me tell you...it won't be just a few people that see Jesus (like just those folks gathered at WWHS that Saturday in 1976), it will be EVERY EYE...when Jesus' returns in power and glory...

**Revelation 1:7**

<sup>7</sup>Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

**Did you catch that part: "The whole earth WILL WAIL on account of him..." and** that's exactly what Jesus said...

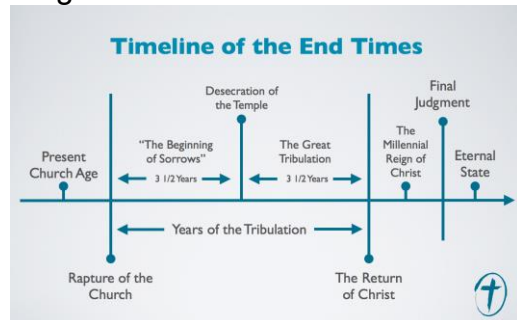
**Matthew 24:30**

<sup>30</sup>Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn.

Why will there be mourning? Because those on the earth who have taken the mark of the Antichrist, will know they were wrong. They chose wrongly and they will mourn! Matthew Henry, the great Bible Commentator said this:

**"Sooner or later all sinners will be mourners."** Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator

See the chart... When Jesus returns, He will destroy the Antichrist and He will set up His Kingdom...



See the "RETURN OF CHRIST" bottom-right...right after that is the 1,000 reign. And that will take place after Jesus returns because He will finally set up His kingdom, keeping His promise to the nation of Israel and He will rule and reign from the throne of David in the Temple in Jerusalem, just as prophesied by the OT prophets.

Oh Church family, Jesus is coming back. He's coming back as sure as He came the first time. He's coming back as sure as the prophets foretold His first coming and it happened...He'll come back as the prophets have foretold His Second Coming. He'll come in sky as sure as Gerald Ford came in the sky in that chopper. Are you good with that?

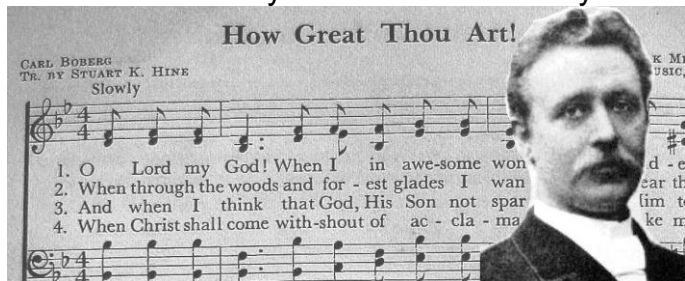
Would you be okay if Jesus were to set off this chain events this afternoon? Would you be okay if Jesus returned in the sky to take His church off the earth and the Tribulation would be ushered in?



I'm at peace with it. I'm at peace because I know Jesus and I know that when He returns in the sky and I hear that trumpet, and the shout that calls us out...I'm going up! But, if you don't know Jesus, you'll be left behind to go through all of this. So, I can't implore you strongly enough, to call on His name today. **And you'll the opportunity to do that in a few moments.**

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Our invitation today will be this familiar hymn...



The image shows a musical score for the hymn "How Great Thou Art". At the top, it says "How Great Thou Art!" in a large, bold font. Below that, it lists the composer "CARL BOBERG" and the translator "TR. BY STUART K. HINE". The tempo is marked "Slowly". The score is in 4/4 time and features a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. To the right of the score is a black and white portrait of Carl Boberg, a man with a mustache, wearing a suit and tie.

"How Great Thou Art" was written by Carl Boberg of Sweden in 1885. It was popularized by George Beverly Shea and Cliff Barrows during the Billy Graham crusades. It ranks second only to "Amazing Grace" on the list of most popular hymns of all time. (*Christianity Today* 2001)

And here's what's interesting. I learned that the inspiration for the song came when Boberg was walking home from church listening to the birds singing and church bells ringing. Then all of a sudden a fierce storm blew up and there were claps of lightning and peals of thunder, wind and rain and hail and he had to run for cover. But, as suddenly as it had come...it was gone and he then noticed a peaceful calm, and a refreshing breeze that was lightly blowing...OH... and the birds were singing again. It was this experience that led Boberg to pen these words:

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### ***How Great Thou Art*** Carl Boberg, 1859 - 1940

#### **Verse 1**

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the world Thy Hand hath made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed;

#### **Verse 2**

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,

#### **Chorus**

Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

#### **Verse 3**

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing;  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin.

**Verse 4**

When Christ shall come, with shouts of acclamation,  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration  
And there proclaim, "My God, how great Thou art!"

**Chorus**

Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

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