

# Making Our Way



A McMAHON / CHEYNE PODCAST

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# Visions of Rapture

# Our Hosts

**Janet Cheyne McMahon** is a lover of family, dogs, nature, travel, books, and music. Born south of the Mason-Dixon line, she left after 9 months for parts north, landing eventually in Michigan, which will always be “where I’m from.”

Love of learning led Jan to a Bachelor of Arts (History, Political Science) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (Go Blue), and a Master of Arts (Library and Information Science) at the University of South Florida. Amid all that, studied for a time with Rob at Colorado State University, a pivotal time in their lives.

Worked at the U of M-Dearborn Library, and then The Salvation Army Florida Divisional Headquarters, with the greatest reward being in serving as the Divisional Librarian. A librarian is who Jan is “in my soul.”

Jan and Rob have made our home in Florida since 1983, and live now in retirement with their dog, Skye, who makes it all the best adventure. They travel as much as possible, spending time in nature and in diverse places on this amazing planet. It has all been, and continues to be a fascinating journey, with hope of making a difference, in small ways, by being brave enough to speak and act on behalf of others.

**Rob McMahon** is a native Michigander, born in Saginaw and raised in the suburbs of Detroit. Rob attended Michigan State University, graduating in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He did graduate studies at the University of Michigan and the University of South Florida. Rob is retired, having spent 36 years in public education teaching both high school chemistry and biology and middle school science. He worked as a total quality management trainer for the Pinellas County School District and served four years as the president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. Rob cofounded a non-profit total quality management training center, The Learning Co-op, for Teacher Unions interested in applying the W. Edwards Deming continuous improvement principles to their day-to-day operations. He worked with teacher unions in Colorado, Maryland, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas and Michigan. He also worked in a similar capacity with Jim Shipley & Associates. In retirement Rob has written a series of science related children’s books, and enjoys traveling with his wife, Jan, and their Black Labrador Retriever, Skye.

**Deanna Cheyne**, born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Toronto (1996), studying with such luminaries as Elmer Eisler, Doreen Rao, Greta Kraus, Lois Marshall, and Rosemarie Landry.

Dee taught music at Mississauga Christian Academy, served as music director for Meadowvale Bible Baptist Church (Mississauga, Ontario), served as Assistant Divisional Music Director for The Salvation Army in Florida, is a former member of Tampa’s Master Chorale, and, for the past 18 years, has been a public school teacher.

Dee has visit 36 of the 50 U.S. states, and 12 countries. Her favorite destinations include France, Prague, New Orleans, National Parks, & Hawaii.

Dee & Jim live in Florida with Brigus (Golden Retriever) and Pip (Teacup Yorkie).

**James Cheyne**, born in Galesburg, Illinois, earned a Bachelor of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from Michigan State University (1978); and a Master of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from the University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign (1981), studying with David Liptak, Salvatore Martirano, and Ben Johnston.

Jim has served as music director for The Salvation Army in Central Illinois & Eastern Iowa, Orlando Area Command, and the Florida Division, served as a pastor with The Salvation Army, and was a public school teacher for 17 years.

In travel so far, Jim has visited 50 states and 27 countries. His favorite travel destinations include National Parks, New Orleans, Newfoundland, Argentina, Prague, & France.

Jim continues to write music and support Dee’s musical endeavors, and cooks whenever absolutely necessary. Jim & Dee live in Florida with their dogs Brigus & Pip.



L-R: Brigus, Jim, Deanna, Skye, Jan, Rob.  
Inset: Pip

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# Visions of Rapture

#87 - Season 3; Episode 26

3/10/2026

Host: Jim.

Jim discusses the Rapture, its scriptural foundation, John Nelson Darby, the Scofield Reference Bible, Paul & the Thessalonians, what Paul really meant, Apocalypse as genre, The Late Great Planet Earth, Left Behind, and why the Rapture shouldn't even get off the ground.

[Music]

**JIM:** There was an old bumper sticker that read, "Warning! In case of Rapture, this car will be unmanned." It was popular back in the late great 70s. "In case of Rapture, this car will be unmanned." And I always wanted to put another bumper sticker right next to it that read, "But you've seen the way I drive, what possible difference could it make?"

[Music]

If you're listening to this, it means you either missed or somehow survived the second coming of Christ predicted for 1843, and again for 1844, and for 1874, and 1914, and 1918, and on and on and do you remember 2025? Doomsday prophets have endured a great number of disappointments, reaching all the way back to the first century. Thing is, all those predictions were based on well-researched Bible calculations - calculations so convincing that many arranged all of their personal and financial affairs around them. Now this episode is not about the second coming and eschatology. That's a big topic. We would need several episodes and all four horsemen for that apocalypse. I'll get Jan, Rob, and Dee to join me here soon. I promise. Today, though, it's the Rapture, just one talking point in a long list of end times topics.

The Rapture is, well, what is it? The Rapture is the sudden disappearance of the chosen, the saved, who are snatched away up in the clouds to be with Jesus just before all tribulation breaks loose on earth. Two are working in the field; one is taken suddenly, and one is left behind. Two are grinding meal; one is taken suddenly, and one is left behind. To be honest, the only time I think about the Rapture these days, though - outside of this podcast - is when I've lost track of Deanna. Maybe I've lost her in a crowd at Disney. Maybe she's longer than expected at the Dollar Store - sorry, at Nordstrom. If either of us is Rapture-worthy, it's Dee. I know this.

But if the Rapture is in the Bible, shouldn't I pay more attention to it? And that's my point. Is the Rapture in the Bible? And that gets us to talk about John Nelson Darby.

John Nelson Darby was a Bible teacher, early nineteenth century, England, connected with the Brethren. Darby took a long view of human history, or rather of Judeo-Christian history, and he noted some key markers along the way. In order: the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, Abraham, Moses, Christ, the Church, the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom. These are obvious markers to all, but one of them is not like the others. It's the one Darby

himself invented: the Rapture. As far as I know, Darby was the first person to mention a Rapture, and that was less than 200 years ago. You might think that Darby's idea would have landed in obscurity, maybe a curiosity someone might find in an old dusty book one day. Instead, his idea took hold and spread, thanks in large part to another book, the Scofield Reference Bible. This is the Bible Cyrus Scofield published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a very popular edition that combined the King James Version of the Bible text with a running commentary. His Bible contained copious cross-references. It was the first Bible to include Bishop Ussher's date of 4004 B. C. as the Creation. And it also included Darby's scheme of history, what's called dispensationalism. That was the chronological structure Scofield used.

But where did Darby get his idea about the Rapture in the first place? For that, we head to Greece.

The year is 50 of the Common Era. Paul is in Corinth, we think; maybe Athens. We know he has just welcomed Timothy back from a visit to Thessalonica, or Thessaloniki, if you've been there. Timothy has just shared a good report about the growth of the Christian community there, a community Paul himself had established. There are concerns, though, questions one might expect from a Christian community that, as far as we know, have no written documents to consult about matters of the faith. So Paul is writing a response to them, to reassure them, and in so doing, Paul is authoring what could very well be the earliest Christian document we have. We meet him in chapter 4.

Quoting:

*"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do, who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord Himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage one another with these words."*

That sounds like a pastor, doesn't it? It also sounds bizarre. People, both living and dead, meeting Jesus up in the air? Well, that's the part Darby will call the Rapture. If you believe in the Rapture, this is your launching point. Go up in the air to be with Jesus, and then off to heaven you go. What could be clearer? But is that what Paul means?

Since the time that Christ ascended to heaven, Christians had been looking forward to his return to establish his kingdom here on earth. Over time, though, some of those Christians had died, and the Thessalonians worried about what would happen to them. "If they are in the grave, will our loved ones miss out?" Paul assures them, "Absolutely not. Not only will they not miss out, they'll be at the front of the line to greet Jesus." "Okay, but up in the air?" Yep, and this is where Darby trips up.

Paul compares Christ's return to a king returning home from a journey. A cry of command, a messenger's announcement, a herald trumpet summoning an entourage from the city to go

out and greet the king and escort him back into the city. This was common practice, and the Thessalonians knew it. Paul is not outlining an escape plan for Christians. He's announcing that the dead in Christ will be the first to rise and greet Christ at his return, to escort him back to earth. It's really that simple.

But why up in the air? And as mundane as this sounds, it's because that's the route Jesus is taking to get here. Paul, aware that people can't fly, says we will be caught up in some divine way. We don't do it ourselves. God does it for us. It's the same thing that happened to Paul in 2 Corinthians when he was caught up to see heaven and paradise. Read this way. The Rapture scene with Christians escaping a coming tribulation evaporates into thin air. I think Darby just misinterpreted Paul's imagery. There is no Rapture here.

But wait, what about the two will be working, one taken and one left behind? Yes, so let's leave Paul and transport ourselves over to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus is speaking. Quoting.

*"As the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away. So too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field, one will be taken, and one will be left. Two will be grinded at meal together, one will be taken, and one will be left."*

See, there it is, one taken, one left, right? Well, who is it exactly that is taken? Jesus compares his coming to Noah's day, when people went about their usual routines without heeding Noah's warning, and then, in the blink of an eye, the flood comes, they are not prepared, and so they are swept away. Did we catch that? Jesus says, it's not the righteous who suddenly went missing. It was the unrighteous, the ones who did not heed the call, the ones who were not prepared. That's the opposite of what the Rapture says.

No, I don't think the Bible supports Darby's idea of a Rapture. It's been one of the talking points for end times discussions. But the Rapture rested on just this one passage from Paul. End Times things are scattered all over the Bible. The big example, of course, is the book that ends it all: Revelation.

Now "revelation" and "apocalypse" - they mean the same thing, one Latin, one Greek. It means to uncover something, to remove the veil, to reveal. And since apocalyptic writing is a well-known literary genre, I'm going to use apocalyptic from now on.

Apocalyptic literature is all about pulling back the curtain to show that the disasters we see around us are simply manifestations of a cosmic conflict. going on behind the scenes between good and evil. And it's not just spectacle. The point is to show the forces of good will prevail. We hear "apocalypse" today and think of disaster of biblical proportions, but apocalypse actually means just the unveiling of events to encourage us that evil will be conquered and the good will prevail. The overriding message is one of hope, at least for those who find themselves on the side of the good.

And it isn't just in that final book. Apocalypses go back centuries before Revelation. In the 8th century BCE, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was under attack from Assyria. So Isaiah writes an apocalypse. In the 6th century BCE, Solomon's temple is destroyed and people

are exiled to Babylon, so Ezekiel writes an apocalypse. In the second century BCE, the Seleucid Empire under Antiochus Epiphanes brings horrors to Jerusalem, the temple, and to the Holy of Holies. The Apocalypse of Daniel emerges. In 70 CE, Rome lays siege to Jerusalem, and therefore the Book of Revelation. In short, when the going gets tough, the tough get busy writing apocalypses.

And here's the thing. An apocalypse is a literary genre. It tells a story in a way with which an audience is familiar. Familiar characters, familiar settings, familiar plot points. It speaks its own language, and therefore provides expectations for how the story should go.

Take Old Westerns as an example. We see a white hat, we see a black hat, and right away we know who's the hero and who's the villain, and then the whole story drives towards a climax in front of the saloon in a shootout. Think Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, Kevin Klein in *Silverado*, Val Kilmer in *Tombstone*. And there might be a twist or two along the way. Who actually was *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*?

The Western genre is well defined. We know the ropes, we know the tropes. But what about apocalyptic literature?

Well, that's all about wars and rumors of wars, and plagues and pestilence, and scrolls and bowls, and trumpets and hidden messages, strange animals and monsters and multi-headed creatures coming out of the sea. It's all about fantastic beasts and where to find them.

And some people found them in the 60s and the 70s: The Cold War, the duck-and-cover threat of nuclear annihilation, civil rights unrest, the pill, then the sexual revolution, the drug culture, environmental catastrophes, the Vietnam War, Watergate, the counterculture with its turn on, tune in, drop out. To that chaos came an intriguing and powerful response. A new apocalypse was written. Actually one that was reshaped from the old. Imaginative, clever thinkers sorted through those neglected, obscure Bible passages, snatched them away from their historical roots, co-opted them, repurposed them, into a new relevant revelation. If you read the Bible right, we're told, it has been waiting all along for the climax of its own story. And that's going to happen today, right now, with us.

So there was a song, "I Wish We'd All Been Ready." And there was a movie, "A Thief in the Night." And there was a book, "The Late Great Planet Earth" by Hal Lindsey. Lindsey's book was the best selling nonfiction book of the 1970s, and it stitched together passages from the Bible with the headlines of the newspaper.

You see the rise of the Soviet Union? I see the rise of Gog in Ezekiel.

You see the establishment of Israel in 1948? I see the start of a cosmic countdown to Armageddon.

You see the formation of the European Union. I see the rise of the new Babylon, the new Roman Empire, and of its coming Antichrist.

The end times enterprise seemed to offer explanations for all the anxieties of the time, and it was big business.

Tim LaHaye struck gold in 1995 with "Left Behind, a novel of Earth's Last Days," which led to 15 more novels in the series, plus 40 Left Behind books just for kids.

But there are two sides to that gold coin. One side, yes, comforts us with the hope that all that is happening has been foreseen. The other side, though, has a question: When will these things happen? And that's where things get rocky.

Lindsey had to revise and update his predictions several times to forestall their inevitable lack of fulfillment. And author Edgar C. Whisenant offers another famous example. He wrote a book audaciously titled "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988." That's out on a limb. He wrote it in - I don't have that in my notes. Let's say he wrote that sometime prior to 1988. And he was specific. He put it sometime between September 11<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup>. He said the Rapture would occur, and World War III would begin. Skeptics reminded him that Jesus had said no one knows the day or the hour, not the angels in heaven, not even the Son, but only the Father. And Whisenant agreed. He also did not know the day or the hour, but he did know the year, the month and the week. And after the 13<sup>th</sup>, Whisenant admitted to a miscalculation and updated his prediction to October 3<sup>rd</sup>, after which he confessed to having forgotten there was no year zero, so he recalculated to September of 1989, and then to 1993, and then he passed away in 2001.

Despite predictions from Lindsey and Whisenant and several others, neither the Rapture nor World War III occurred during the 80s, no matter what you might otherwise think about Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

Eschatology, the study of end times, is an expansive topic. Some might say it's a rabbit hole, but it's worth another look sometime in the future. The Rapture part, though, I think we should leave that one behind...

...with one possible exception. Let's say it's your first date together. You want to impress her with your moral rectitude and your evangelistic zeal. Always a turn-on. You suggest going to see a Left Behind movie. She reluctantly agrees. Part way through, she excuses herself to go get some popcorn. You wait, and you wait, and you, my friend, have just been left behind.

*[Music]*

Dee and I were watching Left Behind just last night. "It's for the podcast." That was my sales pitch. We watched the 2014 version with Nicolas Cage, and Nicolas Cage is fine, of course. But the script was confused. It began like a Hallmark Christmas movie, but without all that Christmas stuff. Then, in the blink of an eye, it turned into an airport disaster movie. but without George Kennedy. About halfway through, Dee, yes, pulled the popcorn exit, which leaves me to say thank you for your company today. And please join us again as we continue making our way.

While there's still time.

*[Music ends]*