

STILL

Not Left Behind

HERE

A NOVEL BY

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DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
May Your Name be honored above all.

INTRODUCTION

Maybe we don't need this book. Maybe we're not even still here to read it if the Church is raptured before the seven-year tribulation begins. Or maybe not. Maybe we are *Still Here*, and many don't know why. What is happening? Have we been left behind? How will we ever get out of here? Is God even real?

If that is the case, it may now be time to read this book and see what the Bible has to say about the 70th week of Daniel. I'm not an expert on this. But I have researched quite a few "experts" to see what they teach about the rapture of the Church.

We probably won't get to the bottom of it all until we are lifted up above it all. But honestly, I believe our time is short. I'm not date-setting. I'm event-watching. If we aren't raptured soon, there might be a lot of confusion and fear happening in the Church that has been taught a pre-tribulation rapture. Maybe this book can be of some help if we are *Still Here* and *Not Left Behind*.

If not, oh well. See you on the way up! You can explain it to me then.

The end of December 2019 was shaping up to be a good year for Doug and Janice. They recently moved into a new home and were enjoying the grandchildren that God was blessing them with. Just as the sun started to peek through the bedroom window on Christmas morning, Janice stretched, reaching over to see if Doug was still in bed. She wasn't surprised to find him gone. He frequently got up early for a before-sunrise cup of coffee in the living room.

Lingering in a bed for just a bit longer, Janice listened to the silence. Her heart ached a bit as she remembered back on so many Christmas mornings when their children were young. The excitement of the day was evident as the children made excuses to come into their room and crawl into their bed. This morning was different...they were in their own homes with their own children. It wasn't a sad ache Janice felt—just an ache from all the changes that the years bring. With just the two of them now, there were still many good years ahead. But so many amazing years filled with memories were behind them. Not perfect years, but blessings beyond measure for sure.

Walking into the master bathroom, Janice washed her face and ran a brush through her hair before going to find out if Doug wanted some breakfast. They might just want to wait until they arrived at the kids' home later to eat with them. Looking in the mirror, the years were too evident, Janice thought to herself. The wisdom highlights in her hair were not just here and there, they were everywhere. The wrinkles, or laugh lines, as she liked to call them, were deeper each year it seemed. The sixties weren't as kind as the fifties had been. Age was now

becoming more of a factor in the physical things she would like to keep doing. Yes, a little weight loss and a little more exercise would surely help. But that wasn't really happening. Janice preferred reading and playing with the grandkids to working out in the local gym. It was a different season in life. One she was enjoying, if truth be told.

Janice didn't smell coffee brewing as she made her way down the hall toward the kitchen. She wondered if Doug was asleep in his chair. That wouldn't be unusual for him if he'd had a rough night. She was used to making her way quietly into the kitchen and fixing the coffee for him when that happened. Entering the kitchen, the coffee pot sat there empty and cold. She tried not to make much noise while getting it ready. She didn't want to wake Doug if he wasn't ready. Remembering the joke about either waking up grumpy or letting him sleep went through her mind. She chuckled to herself; also thinking how it applied to her more than him because she was usually the grumpster in the morning.

After accidentally banging a cup on the counter, Doug didn't call out from the other room. She was glad it didn't wake him up. Janice got out some creamer and a spoon for Doug. Jan liked hers black. She placed a couple English muffins in the toaster, figuring just a bite to eat before going to the kids' wouldn't hurt. They might end up eating later than expected with the grandkids absorbed in opening their presents.

With still no sound from the living room, Janice peeked around the corner to see if Doug was still asleep, and to her surprise he wasn't in his usual spot. His chair was empty, and his blanket from the night before looked like it was in the same place it had been left when they went to bed. That was puzzling, but not startling. Maybe he had heard her getting the coffee going and got up to use the bathroom.

With two cups in hand, Janice went to sit in her chair in the living room. She figured Doug would return soon. It would be a peaceful start to their Christmas morning. That was the way it had been 45 years earlier on their first Christmas together as newlyweds. She remembered it well, although they didn't drink coffee then, but it was quiet like this morning. Being used to a large family, on both sides, it made them a bit uncomfortable that first year. They couldn't wait to open the few gifts they had given each other and then go "home" for Christmas. They lived in an apartment then, which they were happy to do. But that first Christmas was a bit strange for both of them.

This Christmas morning for two felt like home. The kids had been married quite a few years. Weekend mornings together were a part of their routine. Doug was still working. Janice had retired already from her job. They didn't need the income, and she wanted to be more available for the grandchildren. The little ones were growing up so quickly, she didn't want to miss the times with them.

Janice was getting a bit concerned when Doug seemed to be taking longer than usual. Was he not feeling well? She sat his coffee cup down next to his chair and took her usual spot in her chair next to his while she waited. She didn't hear any sound coming from down the hall. After waiting a bit longer, Janice grew a bit more anxious and went to find out if Doug was okay.

Upon entering the bedroom, Janice saw that the bathroom door was just the way she left it when she came out. Janice's heart sort of took on an extra beat at that point, something seemed odd. Had Doug moved into the guest room in the middle of the night? Maybe he hadn't been sleeping well and didn't want to disturb her. Thoughts started flooding Janice's mind, and they were strange thoughts that made their way down a winding road that quickly settled into a sort of fear. They even went so far as to think RAPTURE. Could it be?

When Janice got to the guestroom door, she was apprehensive to open it. What if Doug wasn't there? No, he had to be. Their home wasn't that big. There weren't many other places he could be. Slowly opening the door and glancing at the bed, she could see it hadn't been touched. It was still neatly made and ready for any visitor that might come to stay.

Her thoughts increased in intensity...where is my husband? Is he okay? Is he here somewhere? Have I actually missed the rapture? From what they learned in church, and from a popular series of books and a movie from years ago, this is how it happens. People will suddenly just disappear, and there will be chaos! Planes will fall out of the sky, cars will be without drivers and run into buildings, clothes will be abandoned as well as jewelry while bodies are supernaturally transported into the air to meet Jesus. This was feeling like that to Janice, and on Christmas morning of all times. Well, why not? Why wouldn't Jesus come for His Bride, the Church, on Christmas morning? But, what about her? She believed in Jesus, didn't she? She thought she did. Had she done something wrong? Missed something along the way? Not understood the Bible correctly. Had Doug truly

been raptured and she not? It was amazing how fast all those thoughts could go through her mind.

Janice called out, “Doug!? Doug, are you here? Where are you, Doug? Don’t be playing silly games with me. This isn’t funny!” But there was no answer. Had he fallen somewhere? Gotten hurt and couldn’t answer? This wasn’t making sense.

Janice pulled her robe more tightly around her. Her heart was beating more wildly now as she looked in every area she hadn’t checked before. Maybe they had just gone around a wall in opposite directions and missed each other. That had happened before, and they laughed about it. Janice wasn’t laughing now. If Doug was playing a trick on her, she wasn’t enjoying it. She was getting more upset as her concern as to his whereabouts increased. If she had missed the rapture, hard times were coming, and she wouldn’t have Doug here with her. What had he understood and believed in that she hadn’t? Her mind was filling full of a multitude of thoughts as she searched each closet wondering why in the world she even should. He wouldn’t be in a closet. Unless he had had a stroke or some other mind-debilitating event that caused him to act irrationally. But she found nothing in her searching...he was nowhere in their home.

There was only one place left to look. Janice walked quickly out to the garage where Doug parked his work truck. When she opened the garage door, the panic, the fear, and the unknown suddenly seemed answered. Doug’s truck was gone. For whatever reason, he was at work. Why hadn’t she thought about that before? Why had her mind gone down so many dark rabbit trails first? Maybe because of how quickly it all happened.

Janice went back into the house and called Doug on his cellphone. He answered. And when she told him the panic she had worked herself into, they laughed about it together. He assured her he was still here. Doug told her that he would not be leaving in the rapture without her. They would be going together. He simply had a job he wanted to get done early. Now he wouldn’t have to go out later and interrupt time with the family. Doug thought he would be back before Janice even knew he was gone. But the job took a little longer than expected.

The mystery had been solved. Doug returned home about an hour later. Janice poured him a fresh cup of coffee, and they began their Christmas morning the way Janice expected it to have gone from the start, with one big difference...the subject of the rapture was now

something Janice wanted to investigate. She wondered if this is the way it would be for so many. Would thousands, if not millions, of people suddenly disappear? Would the rest of the world be left in chaos and panic as a result? Were those movies true? Were those books, right? What does the Bible really say about the rapture of the Church? Janice wanted to know more than ever how to prepare for that day. She wanted to know what it would look like and if there would be any warning signs that help us know the time is drawing near. What did Jesus tell us about it? What information could we find in our Bibles? Janice was determined not to get caught up in something like this again. She wanted to be sure that her faith in Jesus Christ was a saving grace she could truly depend upon for her eternal future.

Christmas had been a wonderful time together for the Clarkson family. The excitement of the grandchildren always brought such joy to Doug and Janice. Seeing how well and lovingly their own children provided for the next generation warmed their hearts. It wasn't just materialistically. The time they spent as family was the greatest gift on that day, as was the celebration of Jesus' birth and all that He brought to the world. Janice was thankful that Jesus' life, His death, His burial, His resurrection, and His coming again truly was the blessed Hope they all lived in.

Looking over at Doug late in the afternoon on Christmas day, Janice was appreciating the man she had been married to for so many years. After the shock of the morning and having Doug missing for a time, Janice knew she needed to research more about Jesus' return. She didn't want to just rest on what she thought she knew anymore. She needed to rest on total Truth. Who had she been listening to? What had their pastor been teaching them? And how does all of it line up with the Word of God? She wasn't exactly sure. But she was determined to find out.

As the week after Christmas and into the New Year flew by, Janice didn't have much time to investigate the things she wanted to. But when everyone made their New Year's resolutions, she made hers. It usually wasn't a big thing to her...making a resolution to lose weight hadn't ever really been that successful. Or to go to the gym more...that would last a month or two. But this year, it was to be different. Janice's resolution was to study the Word of God as never before. To learn

things she might not even know the Bible contained. How much would there be? She had no idea. But she knew that she had not given it the time and effort she should have in previous years—especially concerning the rapture, the second coming of Christ, and what those who believe in Jesus should be looking and waiting for. It was time. Janice was thankful for the shock of Christmas morning 2019. Her prayer for 2020 now was that that shock would lead her into new horizons of knowledge, helping her to know her Savior more, and gaining a new understanding of Jesus' words about what was to come. She wanted what Peter described in 2 Peter 1. She wanted to make every effort to add to her faith excellence, and to excellence, knowledge.

Waking early on January 2nd, Doug was getting ready for work. He wasn't aware of Janice's resolution. But he knew something was brewing in his wife. Janice was a bit quiet, and she seemed reflective. He hoped she was feeling okay. Janice had struggled with some depression in the past. Doug wanted to make sure she wasn't growing melancholy as they moved into this new year. Upon asking her, Janice assured him she was fine. She was just mentally preparing to begin on a new quest, and it was going to take some quiet time in the Word and in prayer. She hoped he would be understanding of that. Doug said he would be and let her know he was just concerned about her well-being. Once that was settled, Doug gave Janice a kiss good-bye and left her to her day, whatever that might look like.

Janice wasn't sure where to begin that first morning. Thankfully, she didn't have to go to a bookshelf full of encyclopedias anymore. Oh, those days were long gone when she would have research to do for school. She would look to the small shelf made especially for the Encyclopedia Britannica set that her family owned. She remembered the large brown books that her parents bought from a salesman at the door. He convinced them if they really loved their children, they would provide them with these invaluable tools for learning. Janice had to admit, they came in quite handy during those years. There really wasn't anything else other than going to the library and checking out the resources there.

On this day in January, Janice had the whole world at her fingertips. The internet sat waiting and willing to help. But where should she start? Who was telling the truth? Who was to be trusted with so many differing opinions about everything? Janice knew what she had to do.

She got out the pillow she recently purchased from a woman at church, a prayer pillow, and she placed it on the floor beside her desk. She got down on her knees and talked to her Father in Heaven. She knew there was no better place to begin. It was on her knees where God revealed things most unexpected, as He did on that very day. He brought to her memory the verses where Jesus spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives. She wasn't sure where it was in the Bible, so she typed in the question on her laptop. It said it could be found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. But which one should she read first?

Before even opening her Bible, Janice did a bit more research online about the Olivet Discourse, as it was called. She'd heard about it but wasn't very knowledgeable about exactly what it contained. Janice stopped there and smiled to herself. Hadn't she just been in 2 Peter praying about adding to her faith excellence and to excellence knowledge? It seemed good to be on her way...

Janice read about how the Olivet Discourse was the name given to the extended teaching Jesus Christ spoke about when He was on the Mount of Olives with His disciples. The subject matter was end times on that day with His friends. That struck a chord with Janice. The rapture is certainly what she would consider end times! As she read on, she found out that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are parallel passages, and that Matthew's account was the most extensive. That seemed like the best place to start then.

Janice loved the questions she found in Matthew 24:3 from the disciples. They asked Jesus, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Those were Janice's questions, too. Tell me, Jesus, what is going to happen, and will there be any signs ahead of time? Janice felt like she had struck gold! Could it really be this simple to find an answer in the Bible about such a seemingly obscure subject? It seemed so.

Janice was comforted to find out that over 2,000 years ago these men had the same questions on their minds as she did today in 2020. And they were able to actually sit with Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords and ask Him directly. It says they came to Him privately. What a privilege that must have been! Then it dawned on Janice. She could come to Jesus privately, too...just her, and her prayer pillow placed under her aging knees. Janice's heart filled with a joy in that moment of realization. Her God was extremely personal even today. She could go right into the Throne Room of God Almighty and speak

with her Father privately. Jesus was sitting there at His right hand. She recognized what an amazing privilege believers have.

Janice knew there was a lot of work ahead of her. Just getting a good grip on all that Jesus seemed to be telling His disciples on the mountain that day was going to take some time. But she was willing. Janice wanted to be sure she understood it correctly. She didn't remember much of it. It seemed rarely spoken about. She thought most every Christian must know there will be a rapture. But how many know what it will look like? What will come before it? What will come after it? Christmas morning 2019 had increased that interest now for Janice.

She understood that faith, which is trust in the Word of God, was going to be important on this journey. She recently memorized a saying that Voddie Baucham shared in one of his sermons. To get warmed up to the task ahead of her, she spoke it out loud...

"I choose to believe the Bible because it's a reliable collection of historical documents written by eyewitnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. They report supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies and claim that their writings are divine rather than human in origin."

That is what was happening in the Olivet Discourse, Janice thought to herself. The disciples were eyewitnesses to what Jesus was doing and saying. Their words were written during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. To an unbelieving world, it could make their writings so much more reliable because the other people who were there could have proven the writers to be liars. But they didn't. To the skeptical, it could give more credence to their writings.

Janice wasn't quite ready to dive into the Bible yet, so she continued searching on the internet. It told her more about what she would be reading concerning the last days. It told her this discourse could also be found in Daniel nine and Revelation six. They refer to the 70th week of Daniel as Jesus was—how this would bring an end to rebellion and bring sin to completion. That sounded like a very important week to Janice. She did know it better when called the seven-year tribulation. That's how she'd usually heard it described.

The sites Janice was looking at said it would be a time when God would complete His work on earth, chastising and purifying Israel, and judging the whole world. That's what Janice didn't want to be around for—all that purifying and judgment stuff. That's why she hoped what she knew about the rapture, that we would be taken out of this world

Still Here

before the really bad stuff started to happen, was true. Janice enjoyed the movies that showed us getting out of here. But she had to ask herself if it was true? She had to find out for herself how it would go down, or better yet, how we would go up. She didn't want another morning of wondering if it had happened. She wanted to be prepared and knowledgeable for whatever would come.

A few weeks later, it was family dinner night in the Clarkson home. The kids and grandkids were coming over, so Janice didn't have much time to dig into her research that day. But all that she was studying was surely on her mind. When she looked at her family around the table, she wondered if they ever thought about such things. Her heart was burdened for them. They were busy young families, as she and Doug had been, with seemingly little time to do the research she was now doing. Not that that was a good excuse. But it was her experience, too. She understood. In those years when the kids were young, there were errands to run, schoolwork to make sure got done, ball games to go to and coach...and on it went. How were young people supposed to have time to investigate all this? Janice wondered if maybe that was her job now. Maybe like Pastors who mine for the gold in God's Word to deliver a message to their congregants each week, Janice was now to mine for this rapture gold to pass on to her family and friends. If so, she didn't want to neglect her duties.

At dinner, everyone seemed to be having a good time together. With some teenagers now in the group, as well as the younger ones, Janice noticed they weren't speaking a language she totally understood. Their parents seemed to get it. They laughed at it and joined in from time to time. Janice mostly remained quiet and listened. Doug seemed to be doing the same. There were songs being sung, jokes being told, and dances being performed that made everyone laugh. Janice laughed along but she was hoping deep inside that this wasn't all there was in their lives. She hoped they sometimes thought about the things of

God...if even just a little bit.

Janice drifted off in thought for a while remembering back to what she was doing at their age...as a teenager, and then as a parent of growing children. She realized they probably aren't thinking about God all that much. They "knew" they had their whole life ahead of them. There would be plenty of time to think about God when they got old like she and Doug were. What they didn't realize was that those years go by so much faster than we expect them to. Just that morning Janice was thinking about her grandparents. For the first time she realized her grandma, who she once thought to be old, was the same age she was now when her husband, Janice's grandpa, died. He was many years older than her grandma, and maybe that made her grandma seem older. But Janice also realized that's how her grandchildren were seeing her...as old.

Janice joined back in, continued to smile, offered seconds on the food, and listened to their antics. But she wanted so much more for them. She realized prayer was the best answer for her family right now. Her grandma had probably been praying the same for her as she sang along with every song on the radio during those teenage years. Janice smiled, remembering how her grandma even commented one time about Janice knowing every word to the songs. They certainly weren't worship songs. They were the hits of the 70's. Janice thought it a strange comment at the time...why wouldn't she know the words? She listened to those songs over and over and over. Where was her focus back then? Not on the Word, that's for sure.

There was one song back then that was very popular. It was called, "Imagine". It was a very nice song, and Janice didn't see anything wrong with it until that changed one night at a church group she was attending. This wasn't a normal evening for Janice, to be with a Christian group of teenagers. She isn't even sure now how she ended up there. But she did. One of the leaders gave a few of them a ride home in his VW. The song, "Imagine" came on the radio and he commented on it. He let them know that the song was not Biblical, and it was not good. The words said, "Imagine there's no heaven, it isn't hard to do. No hell below us, and no religion, too." Without heaven, there is no hope, he told them, as well as other things he pointed out. Janice didn't understand it all at the time. But now she was thankful for this young man who planted a few seeds of Truth in her soul that night. She remembered how a little comment changed

her thinking. As the years went on, Janice understood in greater and greater ways what he was talking about. She wondered if her grandchildren had people in their lives doing the same thing for them now. Was there someone who spoke Truth to them? She surely hoped so. She also hoped she was one of those people.

As the evening came to an end and all good-byes were said, there were hugs all around, and Janice was thankful for the love she witnessed between them. There were a lot of families who couldn't say as much, and Janice knew it was not to be taken for granted. As she and Doug made their way to bed, they talked about the evening, the kids, the grandkids, and how they were all growing and changing so quickly, as was the world they were living in. They wondered how they had become the elders in the group when it seemed it was just yesterday, they were the ones taking their boys to ballgames, and Janice was doing loads and loads of laundry. As they turned back the covers, they laughed about the morning Doug turned 64. Janice woke him up to a Beatles' song, and sang to him, "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?" They'd seen so much of life together. God had truly blessed them through the years.

The next morning, after cleaning up the last of the dinner dishes, Janice began mining for more "gold" about the rapture. She listened to a few different pastors. Most seemed convinced in a pre-tribulation rapture. They believed the church, the believers, would be caught up into the clouds with Jesus before any of the wrath of God began on the earth. Janice was happy to hear that. They sounded so convinced. She could be convinced, too. But did that make it true? That's what she had to find out. She wondered if this is what everyone believes. And more importantly, is this what the Bible says.

As Janice continued to mine, it seemed the pre-tribulation belief was the prevalent teaching on the rapture. That the rapture was imminent, and there would be no signs ahead of time. We would be here one minute and gone the next, in the twinkling of an eye. Two will be working in a field, one will be taken, and one will be left. They preached that is what the Bible says. But something struck Janice a little unusual when she opened her Bible to what Jesus said. When the disciples asked Him what they should be looking for, Jesus actually told them. If there was to be an imminent rapture with no signs, wouldn't Jesus have told them that? If that is how the end of the age was to look, why was He telling them about deception and wars? Why

was He telling them that there would be those who come in His name and mislead many? After listing a few things, Jesus added in that these things would be the beginning of birth pains. Janice remembered the pastors saying there would be no pain—that we would be beamed out of here sort of like Scotty did for the crew on Star Trek. What pain was Jesus talking about?

Janice sat back to remember her own labor and delivery. No woman forgets that experience. It was filled with excitement and apprehension, especially with the first baby. With Janice, it started in the middle of the night. Waking her up, she made her way into the kitchen and remembered something hitting the floor. What was that? Later she was told it was the mucus plug. The plug? Yes. It is expelled, usually before labor begins, she learned. Since Janice's water never broke until the doctor did so, she didn't experience that part of it. But she was surely in labor! After many hours of increasing pain and contractions, she and Doug made their way to the hospital when the contractions were very close together. By that time the ride was more than uncomfortable as every pothole in the road added to the distress she was feeling. That was back in the days of Lamaze, natural childbirth, so there were no drugs administered. Janice was taught to breathe! She followed those instructions until a little baby boy was laid in her arms. Janice wondered if this was what Jesus was talking about? Birth pains ending in a delivery. She read on...

Jesus told His disciples about persecution, about being handed over to be killed and how they would be hated by all the nations because of His name. Janice was seeing something she had never heard in church before. No wonder the pastors teach a pre-tribulation rapture. They probably didn't want to scare their congregation right out of their pews with all of this! Janice was feeling some fear herself as she read it. But she didn't want to give up on it. This was too important to miss. These were Jesus' own words, and she loved Jesus. She believed Jesus...and she wanted to know the full Truth from Jesus.

Janice read how lawlessness would increase and the love of many would grow cold. She read how we are to endure to the end to be saved. She wondered what we are to endure if we are raptured out before any of this happens? What was Jesus talking about? It wasn't making sense after listening to some of the pastors preaching pre-tribulationism. And what about being taught we will escape all this? How would we endure to the end if we don't expect to see any of what

Jesus is talking about? Won't we all be surprised? In shock? And scared if we are still here? Janice thought that not knowing was so much worse than knowing. Going into her second baby being born, Janice knew what was coming. She knew the pain would only last so long and then there would be a beautiful new baby to hold. What a wonderful way for Jesus to describe these events. They seem like they will be painful, Janice thought. But it will be so worth it when the outcome is being delivered into Heaven if that is how this works. She wasn't sure yet.

Reading on, Jesus then talked about the abomination of desolation. Janice had to stop there. She was not totally familiar with those words. Looking up abomination, she read that it is, "something regarded with disgust or hatred." Then looking up desolation, she read it is, "Devastation; ruin." Continuing then, Janice read how the abomination of desolation spoken about by Daniel would be standing in the Holy Place. She began to understand. This happening in the temple would be such an offense. Someone or something that is not God would go into the Holy Place and be totally out of place. That someone or something would want to be worshiped as God. That would be repulsive. That would be disgraceful.

Looking into this even further, Janice read about the covenant that would be confirmed that would last seven years. Daniel wrote about that in chapter nine verse 27. It will be a covenant with many for one week—seven days meaning seven years. Okay, she was getting that. And in the middle of those seven years, in the middle of that week, there would be an end to the sacrifices and offerings going on in the temple. There would be an abomination, something disgusting, that causes desolation, devastation. This had been done before, she read, when an altar to Zeus was set up in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. He sacrificed a pig on the altar, and it was known as the abomination of desolation. It seemed to Janice, from the little she knew, that Jesus was saying this type of thing would happen again in the future. And it would be done by the Antichrist. In doing so, everyone would know who the Antichrist is at that time. This would begin the worst of the tribulation. The period of time after the abomination of desolation is called the Great Tribulation. That seemed to make sense to Janice. It also seemed a good place to stop her research for that day and get some errands run and some dinner going. With a lot on her mind, Janice left for the grocery store.

Walking up and down the aisles of the grocery store, Janice was thinking about so much more than what kind of fruit she should buy for Doug's lunches. The world in early 2020 seemed mostly calm where they lived. But what if it did change? What if the things she was reading about in Matthew 24 became a part of their everyday life? What would that deception look like? Where would the wars be fought? Would they actually feel the birth pains outside of Israel, all the way over here in America—in the land of the free and the home of the brave? They were so spoiled living in the United States. Other countries suffered to a much greater extent. Even the Christians who were dying for their faith seemed far removed from where they lived. Sometimes Janice would pray for them...but not nearly enough.

Looking into the faces of the other shoppers, they smiled and nodded as they passed by one another. Everyone seemed in a relatively good mood. Christmas was over, and maybe there was some relief after the stress of the season. Janice stopped in one aisle looking for some breadcrumbs. She had trouble finding them and another customer was happy to help her. They stood and had a conversation about their families, Christmas, and even the reason for the season. That was heartwarming. This kind stranger knew Jesus. Janice did wonder though...was the rapture something she understood? They never got to talking about it. Janice knew she wasn't ready to go there yet. Not now, with so many questions left unanswered.

Arriving at the checkout there was a short line. Janice scoured the front covers of the magazines. They were filled with the faces of