

The Rapture of The Church

When we speak of the rapture you will get a variety of opinions, but the word rapture comes from the Greek word '*Harpazo*' or the Latin word '*Rapere*', both of which mean to be 'caught up' or 'taken away suddenly'. It refers to the sudden removal of God's people on earth. In the twinkling of an eye, born again Christians will suddenly be transformed out of our human bodies and will be taken up into the air to join Christ Jesus the Messiah. Many believers are afraid to speak of such things, and deep down they feel anxious about the prospect of being snatched away in the twinkling of an eye to be with the Lord they love, worship and have given their lives to. They may even fear being labeled or criticized for believing in a hope that through the ages many have had; a hope that God fully intended for us to have. As the Bible informs us:

“Do not quench the Spirit” and “Do not despise Prophecies”. “Test Everything, hold on to what is good, abstain from every form of evil.” (1 Thess 5:19-22)

There is a very good reason that Yeshua warned His end-time believers 13 times not to be deceived, and to watch and pray and be ready. He wants us to get excited about His glorious appearing. Because Satan is the master deceiver he does not want us to get excited about this glorious event. He wants us to listen to the skeptics instead of what the Bible teaches us about being ready and about preparing for the bridegroom, and he will send many skeptical people and spirits to deceive us and play down this glorious event.

For all those who believe the bible has the truth, it's very plain to see it has already laid down a foundation for us to expect a rapture of the church.

[Enoch](#) was taken up from this life so that he would not experience death in Gen 5:24 and Heb 11:5 informs us:

“By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away, for before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God, and without faith it's impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must first believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

[Elijah](#) was taken up in a whirlwind in 2 Kings 2:11-12:

“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to Heaven in a whirlwind.”

[Yeshua](#) Himself was taken up in Acts 1:10:

“And while they looked steadfastly towards Heaven as He went up behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into Heaven, will so come as you have seen Him go into Heaven.'”

So when will the church be raptured?

The Bible teaches that His coming is immanent, which means He could come at anytime. But the evidence is all around us as we look at the state of the world. In Matt 24:11-14 we

can see what Jesus told us would happen: we have the rise of many false prophets, the love of many believers going cold, and the Gospel has been preached to just about every nation in the world. So at the very least we are definitely in the final throws of this world as we know it before the Tribulation begins.

Many biblical scholars feel that the rapture will occur prior to the Tribulation period, and thus God will spare His church from the terrible time that is to come upon the world. Then will rise a world leader known as the Antichrist, who will persecute believers wherever they are in the world, and many will be martyred for their faith. That is why God will spare His church from this great wrath. So, you might ask, who will suffer then? All those who did not believe or take notice of the gospel and receive the Holy Spirit. Those who realise it's too late will be left when the church is gone, and will suffer martyrdom for their faith. Now I know that there are different views on these events, but I am persuaded that the biblical view is the pre-tribulational view and that is the one we are talking about. But what's to say that I'm right?

Well, the Bible in Jeremiah 30:7 informs us that this Tribulation is called '[The Time of Jacob's Trouble](#)' and of course we know that Jacob is Israel. So this is the time when God will convince the Jewish people that Yeshua is their Lord also.

We can also read in Revelation 3:10 these words:

“Because you have kept the word of my Patience, I also will keep you from the great Tribulation that shall try the whole earth.”

This verse is a promise made by Yeshua to one of the seven churches, the church of Philadelphia. The hour of trial that Yeshua speaks of in this verse is the period of time that our Lord calls **“The Great Tribulation such as has never been since the beginning of the world until this time no nor, ever shall be”** (Matt 24:21).

There are many verses in the bible that describe the rapture. Believers in the first century church were so driven by the expectation of the coming of the Lord that they shared their faith everywhere. Paul wrote to the church of the Thessalonians:

“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

This belief in being taken up to meet Yeshua, is the essence of hope. A hope that Satan will fight and challenge with all of his might. We can also read the following in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up into the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

The Lord will shout a loud command as He descends from Heaven, and we will hear the voice of the archangel. It should be an encouragement to all of us in these times of lust, greed, and corruption, self-centeredness and resistance toward God. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed. For this perishable must put on imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

The Greek word here is '*hapadso*' meaning 'snatched up' to be with Christ. When Yeshua comes to set up His earthly Kingdom at the end of the Tribulation, He will come with power and great glory, and the Holy angels to bind Satan. He will also deal with the earthly kings who are gathered together at Jerusalem to oppose Him. When He comes for His church at the time of the rapture, He will leave His Father's house and come in the clouds to call all the dead in Christ and then the living church to 'come up hither' where they will join with each other in the clouds to live with Him. Belief in this kind of resurrection was common among the Jewish people of the day. Martha believed Jesus when He challenged her to understand the importance of the coming resurrection of the dead. She responded to Jesus **“I know that He will rise again in the resurrection in the last days”**.

When the rapture does occur billions of people will be left behind full of surprise and shock at the disappearances of many of their loved ones, friends and acquaintances.

But Paul spells it out in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52:

“Listen, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

Who knows just what explanation the Antichrist will use to explain away the disappearances of millions of believers? But one thing is for certain, with the main obstacle to his plan for the world removed, the way will now be clear for Antichrist to implement his evil plan on the world as has been prophesied in the bible. With the followers of Yeshua gone, few people will stand in the way of a world religion that deifies a man, and a world government that criminalizes belief in God.

Paul's warning echos out in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 6-7:

“Let no one in any way deceive you for it (the day of the Lord) will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed the son of destruction. And you know what restrains him now, so that in this time he may be revealed. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”

The word apostasy used in this text may have two different meanings; The **first** is to fall away from the faith. In our world today many are turning to New Age types of religion. This is faith that vilifies belief in salvation through Messiah Yeshua, and changes the Word of God to fit an inclusive, creedless, self-gratifying religion that requires nothing and promises everything, which even includes godhood. This is a belief that releases us from responsibility, accountability or any consequences in life. And it's becoming more popular

in this humanistic society in which we live, and it will only gain popularity and full acceptance as the end times progress.

The **second** meaning of apostasy is to depart, and this may be a reference to the rapture, as the forces of the Antichrist are being held back by the Holy Spirit, the 'He' mentioned in the previous scripture who **'lets until He be taken away'**. When He goes we go, as we are **"sealed in the Holy Spirit and promise"** (Eph 1:13-14). Now with the church gone, Antichrist is free to set up his one world religion with all its evils. But as this period of time descends upon us we can rejoice; God the Father has promised He will deliver His church from persecutions of the Antichrist and the wrath of God that will follow His rise to power, and the rapture is the fulfillment of that promise.

Again Paul reminds us in 1 Thess 5:4,9-10:

"For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with Him."

Christ will surely return for those who have died, and those who are still living, and deliver us from the wrath to come from the Tribulation and all that Antichrist has in store. Romans 5:9:

"Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

God will come for His church suddenly at a time when we least expect Him. So for this reason He instructs us to be ready, always prepared and on our guard for His coming. As all those around us turn their backs on the idea of God and begin to worship themselves and other gods and beliefs, and listen to false prophets, we instead should be looking up as our redemption draweth nigh! We should have our spiritual lives in order so that we can escape the wrath to come. All around us we see this world falling apart; we see the corruption of our politicians, the climatic and dangerous weather changes as nature itself goes out of control just as the Bible prophesies. So we need to be in prayer!!

Luke 21:34-36:

"Be on your guard that your heart be not weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon the face of the whole earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place and to stand before the Son of Man."

God sees it so important that we remain alert and watchful for His coming that He reminds us several times in scripture:

Matt 24:42:

"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

Matt 24:44:

"For the Son of man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

Matt 24:36:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

It is to our benefit that God didn't tell us the hour in which He is coming. It is an encouragement to live righteously as Yeshua may be coming soon. It is more important than ever to tell your nearest and dearest the good news of the gospel. After the rapture of the church the Tribulation will come upon the whole earth and it will not be like anything we have ever seen on earth before. But we who are His will be with Him.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of this event; Isaiah 26:19-21:

“Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust awake and shout for joy. For your dew is as the dew of the dawn and the earth will give birth to departed spirits. Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while, until the indignation runs its course. For behold the Lord is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed, and will no longer cover her slain.”

Many believers will have read this, and will have heard about the rapture which will occur before the Tribulation and will say “I do not see it that way”, or “it's not taught that way in our church.” But remember the prophecy says that this will not begin until the falling away comes first. The falling away is speaking of the church, you can't fall away from something you have never been a part of, and so it is feasible that your church is part of this falling away. So open your eyes and be ready for the coming of Yeshua.

Also, we must not make the mistake many are now making by saying that the rapture is not in scripture. The problem is they mistake the second coming of the Lord which is spoken of in Acts 1:11 and Zechariah 14:4 with this event which is being spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Reasons for believing a Pre-Tribulation Rapture

In Revelation 7:3, an angel descends to earth and seals the servants of God. Two bits of information about this sealing highly disclaim a post-trib viewpoint. The first item is the number of people sealed: 144,000. The second one is that all those who are sealed are from the 12 tribes of Israel. For the events in Revelation 7:3-8 to be true in a post-trib interpretation, either the Church has turned against God or God has turned against the Church. A post-tribber could write a thousand-word commentary about why the Church doesn't need to be sealed. Instead of trying to argue about why the Church is not mentioned or sealed, because they are sealed already (Eph 1:13-14) a pre-trib proponent could just say, “We're already in heaven.”

When we search the Scriptures and read the passages describing the Lord Jesus' return, we find verses that tell us we won't know the day and hour of that event. Matthew 25:13 says Jesus will return at an unknown time, while Revelation 12:6 indicates that the Jews will have to wait on the Lord 1,260 days, starting when the Antichrist standing in the Temple of God and declares himself to be God (2 Thes 2:4). This event will take place at the mid-point of the seven-year tribulation (Dan 9:27). Note that some people only see a three-and-a-half-year tribulation. In a way, they are correct because the first half of the tribulation will be relatively peaceful compared to the second half because antichrist is coming to power. Nonetheless, peaceful or not, there still remains a seven-year period

called the tribulation. When the Jews flee into the wilderness, they know that all they have to do is wait out those 1,260 days (Mat 24:16). There is no way to apply the phrase "neither the day nor the hour" to this situation. The only way for these two viewpoints to be true is to separate the two distinct events transpiring here: 1) [The rapture of the Church](#), which comes before the tribulation; and 2) [The return of Jesus to the earth, which takes place roughly seven years later after the seven year treaty is signed](#).

The Rapture and the Second Coming are two distinct, separate events

In 1 Thessalonians, we are told that Jesus only returns as far down as the clouds, and pulls His people up to be with Him. Then everyone returns to Heaven. But in the Second Coming, a completely different set of circumstances unfold quite different from that of the Rapture. Revelation 19 tells us that when Jesus returns to the earth in His Second Coming, that it will be an event that everyone worldwide will see all at the same time. There will be no guessing as to what's happening:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him [was] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes [were] as a flame of fire, and on his head [were] many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he [was] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies [which were] in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 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: and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Revelation 19: 11-15)

Now we see Jesus returning to the earth to set up His millennial Kingdom, and who does He return with? It's the people who were raptured back in 1 Thessalonians 4. As you can clearly see in the above-quoted passage, the events of the Rapture and those of the Second Coming are amazingly and markedly different. In the Rapture, believers are called up to the clouds, in the Second Coming, the clouds break open and everyone watches Jesus return to the earth. Things that are different are not the same. Additionally, speaking of the Rapture, the Bible says "But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." But about His Second Coming everyone can know that day, for it will be exactly 1,260 days from the moment that the Antichrist declares himself to be God while sitting the rebuilt Jewish Temple.

The simple truth is the church is not mentioned after Revelations 3 because then John is up in Heaven.