

The Rapture: The Church's Position In The Great Tribulation

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What Is The Rapture?

Lesson 1

What Is The Rapture

- [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#), [2 Thessalonians 2:1-12](#), [1 Corinthians 15:51-53](#)
- The 'Rapture' is God removing His people from the earth.
 - Many Christian faiths believe and teach about a future, end-times event when all true believers, those who are still alive before the end of the world and those who have previously died, will be taken from the earth by God into heaven. The term describing this event is "the Rapture."
- Those who accept the Rapture theory believe that all non-believers on the earth at the time will be left behind for the tribulation period.
- The word "rapture" comes from Paul's "caught up" remark in verse 17. The words "caught up" are translated from the Greek word *harpazo*, which means "to carry off," "snatch up," or "grasp hastily." The translation from *harpazo* to "rapture" involved two steps: first, *harpazo* became the Latin word *raptus*; second, *raptus* became the English word "rapture."

Basic Question #4

An Overview Of The Rapture

- Most complete and 'Classic' teaching of the Rapture
- These are new Christians and Paul only spent a few weeks instructing them on faith and doctrine before moving on to his next Mission field.
- Paul now turns his attention to another area of deficiency in the Thessalonians' understanding. In this book, Paul has already mentioned the future in [1:10](#), [2:12](#), [19](#), [3:13](#) but wants to provide considerable instructions on Christ's return and the resurrection, essentially addressing the heart of the great 'hope' of our Christian faith.
- The subject of the rest of this chapter is the relationship of the Lord's return to believers who had died.
- Paul teaches in such a fashion that provides no guilt for their lack of knowledge (new in the faith)
- Those who fall asleep are Christians who died. This is not sleep of the soul; however, because Paul wrote elsewhere that a Christian who is absent from the body is present with the Lord ([2 Corinthians 5:8](#), [Philippians 1:23](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:10](#))
- It is rather the sleep of the body in the earth until the resurrection, changed into a glorious body, and reunited with the soul
- Paul wanted the Thessalonians to be neither ignorant or grieving like unbelievers. It is normal for Christians to grieve at another's death; but the grief of Christians differs from that of unbelievers who have no hope of bodily resurrection to glorify with Christ.
- So let's examine each verse for its meaning and see if there are 'clues' to the timing of the Rapture. More importantly you will learn what the future is for you, personally as a Church Age saint.

An Overview Of The Rapture (2)

- The primary Scripture passage on the rapture is [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#).
 - It states that all living believers, along with all believers who have died, will meet the Lord Jesus in the air and will be with Him forever.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul says, “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The book of Revelation, which deals primarily with the time period of the tribulation, is a prophetic message of how God will pour out His wrath upon the earth during the tribulation.
 - It seems inconsistent for God to promise believers that they will not suffer wrath and then leave them on the earth to suffer through the wrath of the tribulation. The fact that God promises to deliver Christians from wrath shortly after promising to remove His people from the earth seems to link those two events together.
- Another crucial passage on the timing of the rapture is [Revelation 3:10](#), in which Christ promises to deliver believers from the “hour of trial” that is going to come upon the earth. This could mean two things.
 - Either Christ will protect believers in the midst of the trials, or
 - He will deliver believers out of the trials.
 - Both are valid meanings of the Greek word translated “from.” However, it is important to recognize what believers are promised to be kept from. It is not just the trial, but the “hour” of trial. Christ is promising to keep believers from the very time period that contains the trials, namely the tribulation.
- The purpose of the tribulation, the purpose of the rapture, the meaning of [1 Thessalonians 5:9](#), and the interpretation of [Revelation 3:10](#) all give clear support to the pre-tribulation position. If the Bible is interpreted literally and consistently, the pre-tribulation position is the most biblically-based interpretation.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

- Were the Thessalonians merely ignorant of the *time* of the resurrection in relation to other end-time events? Or were they entirely ignorant of the *fact* of the resurrection?
- Keep in mind, they were sorrowing as those who have "no hope." *No hope*—this is the key.
- The Thessalonians were entirely ignorant of the fact of the resurrection.
 - There is no reason to assume they had *some hope*, when the text plainly states they had "no hope."
 - They had no hope *even as unbelievers*. Unbelievers do not believe in a resurrection at all!
- Paul uses the identical argument to combat the error both in [1 Thessalonians 4](#) and in [1 Corinthians 15](#). His argument rests on Christ's resurrection. If Christ was raised, he says, then those who belong to Christ will also be raised.
- Now if merely the *order* of resurrection were the question, then there would be no point in Paul's basing his answer in the resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrection proves the *fact*, but it proves nothing about the *order*.
- Paul's identical answer in both chapters implies an identical question. A common solution, without evidence to the contrary, implies an identical problem. The problem was not believing in a resurrection at all.

1 Thessalonians 4:14

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

- There are two primary reasons Christians should not grieve like unbelievers
 - Christians have a revelation from God that gives them hope
 - They have a glorious future with Christ
 - As proof, just as certain as Jesus died and was resurrected by the Father, so God will unite the resurrected dead in Christ with their savior at His coming.
- The prophecy of the Rapture is as sure to be fulfilled as the prophecies of Christ's death and resurrection

1 Thessalonians 4:15

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

- The revelation of this prophecy came from Jesus Christ
- The bodies of dead Christians will be resurrected immediately before living Christians are conveyed upward.
- Paul believed that he and his Thessalonian readers might well be alive when the Lord returned. This truth of imminency brought comfort
- Thus Paul believed the Rapture was imminent, that it could take place at any moment ([1 Corinthians 7:29](#), [Philippians 4:5](#))

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

- Jesus Christ now sits at the right hand of God in Heaven ([Rom 8:34](#), [Eph 1:20](#), [Col 3:1](#), [Hebrews 1:3](#))
- Jesus will leave this position and descend to the earth.
 - This will be the same Jesus who had ascended through the clouds ([Acts 1:11](#))
 - Who will voice the loud shout? Jesus (John 11:43), Archangel Michael ([Daniel 10:13](#), [Jude 9](#)), or another angel?
 - Is this a literal trumpet call, or was Paul speaking figuratively ([1 Corinthians 15:52](#))
 - These three phenomena may all refer to the same thing, but probably they are three separate almost simultaneous forceful and dramatic announcements heralding Christ's return
- And then the dead in Christ will be resurrected
 - The phrase "in Christ" means Church Age believers. Those who have already died are resurrected first at this moment.
 - The living Church Age believers then rise to meet Christ in the air.
 - Old Testament saints will evidently be raised at the end of the Great Tribulation ([Daniel 12:2](#))

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

- After the bodies of the dead ‘in Christ’ have been raised than those living ‘in Christ’ will be ‘caught up’
- Only a moment separates the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living. ([1 Corinthians 15:51-52](#))
- The events described here and in [1 Corinthians 15](#), differ considerably from those that will accompany Christ’s return to the earth to set up the earthly kingdom ([Revelation 19:11-21](#)). This difference substantiates the distinction between the Rapture and the Second Coming.
- From this time forward forever, the Rapture saints will be with the Lord. He will take them to a place he has prepared. ([John 14:2-3](#))

1 Thessalonians 4:18

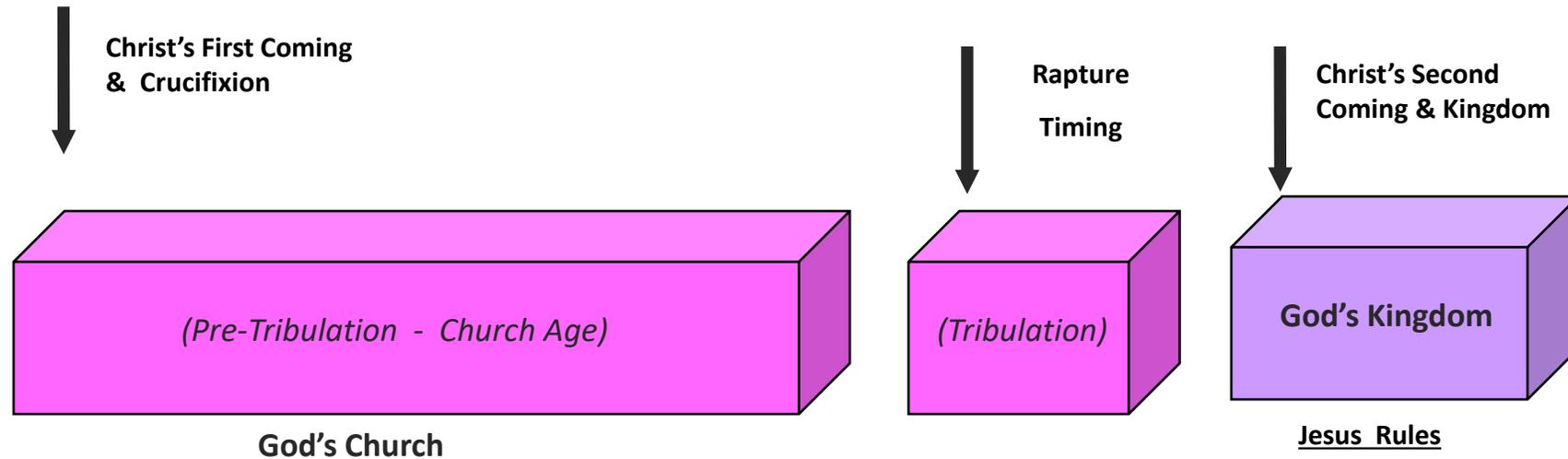
Therefore encourage one another with these words.

- The logical and practical outcome of this revelation is comfort and encouragement.
- Paul called upon his readers to encourage one another with these words.
 - The facts that Christians who have died will be resurrected to join the living saints with the Lord Jesus when He comes, that they will actually precede those who are alive in that day, that those who are alive will be united with them, and that they will all be with the Lord forever, give abundant reasons for rejoicing.
 - Not only do Christians not grieve like unbelievers, but followers of Christ can eagerly look forward to that day.
 - This is the great blessed hope of the church, to see the Lord and be united with him forever. ([Titus 2:13](#))

Foreword on Tribulation Positions

- Unfortunately, most Christians are divided into one of three camps of belief, although this is a non-essential doctrine, the arguments become heated and causes resentment between camps. This is most unfortunate. And it is not loving nor Godly. Where we differ in opinion, we need to agree to disagree.
- I find the arguments between pre-trib and mid-trib to be largely what Christians ‘want to happen,” rather than what the Word of God says. God promised to save his believers from wrath. If the wrath begins half-way through the ‘Great Distress’ than the mid-tribulation position is identical to the pre-trib position. The important focus, as always, is what does God say.
- I will admit early in this ‘Rapture Series’ that I have great difficulties with the post-tribulation position. Try as I might, my studies of their position does not reckon with my understanding of Scriptures. So I will leave you with this thought from [1 Corinthians 13](#). Today I see dimly, but when He returns, I will see clearly.

The Timing Of The Rapture



Visualizing The Rapture

- **Visualize.**
 - List the specific things you see?
 - What do you hear?
 - What action is going on?
- What symbols are being used? Meaning?
- What's the theme of this scene.
- How does the rapture further reveal Christ?
- How would you characterize the rapture?

Only Unanswered Question: When?

- Specific time/date not revealed.
 - Is known by whom?
- Timing within specific sequences of end time events?
- We can know the season of expectation?
 - Signs.....
 - References to Noah
 - References to blossoms on a tree in Spring

To Solve When The Rapture Occurs

There are Basic Questions to Ask

1. What does Jesus say about the rapture?
2. Come Up: What does Revelation 4:1 tell us?
3. Will believers know the day?
4. Who will populate the Millennium?
5. When is the Wedding Of Christ?
6. Luke 17: What was It Like In The Days of Noah & Lot?
7. Does 1 Thessalonians Tell Us *When the Rapture Occurs*?
8. Does 2 Thessalonians: Tell Us *When the Rapture Occurs*?
9. Does Revelation Reveal The Timing Of The Rapture?
10. Matthew 13:30 Which comes first?
11. What does the winepress have to do with the Rapture?
12. Matthew 24: The Olivet Solution