

SERIES: THE TRUTH ABOUT HEAVEN
SERMON: THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH
8-27-23

OPENER:

The Rapture is perhaps the most important piece of future prophecy for us to understand since it could very well impact us personally. In summary, the Rapture is an event where all who have put their trust in Christ will suddenly be caught up from earth, be joined with Christ in the air, and taken to heaven.

Paul describes the Rapture in.....

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV) I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(Explain scripture)(Explain sleep)

1. THE MEANING OF RAPTURE:

What we call “rapture” - in vs. 17 “*caught up*” is translated from the Greek word “*harpazo*” The Greek word “*harpazo*” occurs fourteen times in the New Testament with four variations of meaning, each of which contributes to our understanding of what Paul is describing in verse 17 “*caught up*”.

> First, *harpazo* can mean “to carry off by force.”

Christ will use His power for this miraculous snatching away of believers.

> Second, *harpazo* can mean “to claim for oneself eagerly.” Christ purchased us with His blood, and He will return to claim those who are His.

> Third, *harpazo* can mean “to snatch away speedily.”

> Fourth, *harpazo* can mean “to rescue from the danger of destruction.”

This meaning supports the idea that the Rapture will save the Church from experiencing the terrors of the seven-year Tribulation.

2. THE RAPTURE IS DIFFERENT FROM CHRIST’S SECOND COMING

MEDIA: Show End Times Timeline Chart
(Explain chart):

First, He'll remove the Church from the world.
Second, seven years later, He'll establish His Kingdom on earth.
The two stages: the Rapture and the Return of Christ, will be separated by a seven-year Tribulation on earth.

NOTE:

For every prophecy in Scripture about the Rapture, there are eight about His second coming. The 260 chapters of the New Testament contain 318 references to the Second Coming of Christ.

The Rapture sets in motion the end-time events leading to Christ's Second Coming.

At the Rapture, Jesus will appear in the clouds and call us to come up. He will NOT return to planet earth.

At the Second Coming, He WILL touch his foot to the earth as He passes judgment on the earth.

Scripture about Christ's Second Coming.....

Revelation 19:11:21(NIV) ¹¹ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." ^p He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.

The purpose of the Rapture is to spare Christ's own from the horrors of the Tribulation according to the message from the Lord to the church in Philadelphia that John received while exiled to the Isle of Patmos.....

Revelation 3:10-11 (NLT) Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.

LET'S TALK IN MORE DETAIL ABOUT THE THE RAPTURE

Three New Testament passages tell us about the Rapture:

First:

John 14:1-3 (NIV) “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back, and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.

Second:

1 Corinthians 15:52 (NLT) It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Third: 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4 that we read

3. THREE REASONS WHY THE RAPURE COULD HAPPEN TODAY

Reason 1: The Rapture is a signless event.

Unlike the Second Coming, no signs will precede the Rapture. The Rapture is imminent; it could happen at any moment. Nothing in God’s prophetic program must take place before the Rapture. Things *may* happen but nothing *must* happen. That means we don’t know when it could happen. It could be today or years from today.

Without any warning, Jesus Christ will return to rapture His saints and take them to heaven to be with Him. We must live to be ready to meet our Savior at any moment.

Reason 2: The Rapture is a surprise event.

While many through the years have predicted the date of the Rapture and Jesus’ Second Coming, Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:36-39 should be taken literally.....

Matthew 24:36-44 (NLT) “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

³⁷ “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. ³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. ³⁹ People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

⁴⁰ “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

⁴² “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was

coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.

No one, including Jesus and the angels, knows the time of His return. Only God the Father knows. Not knowing when Jesus will come for His Church causes us to be ready at all times.

Reason 3: The Rapture is a sudden event.

Paul wrote that the Rapture will take place “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NIV) Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

NOTE:

“Twinkling” likely refers to the amount of time it takes for light, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, to be reflected on the retina of one’s eye. In less than a nanosecond, the Lord will call believers to Himself!