

6/29/97

Rapture Or Regret?

1Thess. 4:15-17

The study of eschatology has to do with the study of end things, those events that will transpire at the close of the church age, till the setting up of the Kingdom for thousand years.

The second coming of Christ is one of the greatest doctrines of the church, Jesus spoke about it constantly. Matt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21

The second coming, is both a promise and a warning; a promise to all who would have a tendency to become weary in well doing waiting for His coming, and a warning, to those who would mock it or make light of it!

1. It is the greatest incentive for holy living.

* “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1Jn. 3:3

2. It is the source of perseverance through difficult times.

* “That you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing.” 1Tim. 6:14

3. It is the heart-beat of spiritual passion that awaits to see Jesus face to face.

* “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” 2Tim. 4:8

The evidence of the second coming in the Scriptures is overwhelming, for 1/5 of Scripture is prophecy, 1/3 of that 1/5 is concerned with the Second Coming. # **5457**

1. There are 1, 845 references to the second coming of Jesus in the Old Testament and a total of seventeen Old Testament books give it prominence.

2. For every prophecy on the First Coming of Christ, there are 8 on Christ's Second Coming

But Jesus also spoke about an event that would remove his church from the earth prior to His wrath being poured out on the earth, it is called the “Rapture” of the church or the “catching away of the saints”, to meet the Lord in the air..

Paul the apostle gives to the Thessalonians three important truths about the rapture. 1Thess. 4:15-17

I. The distinction of the saints, those dead and alive in the Lord. vs. 15

II. The dissension of the Lord from heaven, for His saints. vs. 16

III. The ascension of the saints in the clouds, to the Lord. vs. 17

I am going to deviate from my usual way of deriving my major three points from the given text and only use our text as a reference point for the fact that the rapture was clearly taught by Paul the apostle to the Thessalonians.

What I want to do is give you a wider picture of the end time events and the second coming, while focusing on the rapture of the church by three sources of information.

- I. The various dispensations which are revealed in the Scriptures.
- II. The four different views of the rapture.
- III. The evidence for pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture.

I. The various dispensations which are revealed in the Scriptures.

- A. There is the Old Testament economy.
 - 1. The time period is from Genesis to the prophet Malachi.
 - a. Adam and Eve lived in a probationary period till the fall and lived with the hope of redemption through the Messiah. Gen. 3:15
 - b. God made a covenant with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and promise to make a nation of them called Israel.

- 2. The covenant was a covenant of an earthly Kingdom. Gen. 12:1-3, 7
 - a. The time from Adam to Abraham was two-thousand years.
 - b. The time from Abraham to Jesus was two-thousand years also.
 - * Only people who prosylited into the nation of Israel could enter the covenant, such as Rahab, Ruth, etc!
- B. There is an inter-testamental period of silence.
 - 1. There was no known prophet to speak for God during this four-hundred years of silence from God.
 - a. There was much apocalyptic writings about the doom and gloom of judgment, written in pseudo-pigraphic authorship.
 - b. They would write it in the name of some past prophet, instead of their own.
 - c. But none of them were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. The period of silence was broken by John the Baptist.
 - a. In fact he closed the Old Testament Canon, according to the words of Jesus, "All did prophecy till John the Baptist."

- b. John's message picked up where Malachi left off.
 - 1) Repentance in view of their present sinful life-style.
 - 2) Repentance in view of their Lord's coming to judge sin.
- C. There is the New Testament economy.
- 1. The time period is from the birth of Christ till the rapture of the church.
 - 2. The covenant is a heavenly Kingdom in contrast to the earthly Kingdom promised to Israel.
 - 3. The period is called the age of grace.
 - 4. The combination of Jew and Gentile would make up the body of the church.
- D. There is the time of Tribulation and Great-Tribulation.
- 1. The time is from the rapture of the church to the second coming of Christ to the earth for the purpose of establishing His Kingdom.
 - 2. The period is divided into two halves by three increments so that there can not be any mistake as to the literalness of it.
 - a. The increment of 1260 days. Rev. 11:3
 - b. The increment of forty-two months. Rev. 11:2

- c. The increment of three and a half years. Rev. 12:14
- 3. The period is also divided by the phrases Tribulation and Great-Tribulation.
 - a. The first three and a half years of Tribulation will be a false peace and deception by the Anti-Christ.
 - b. The last three and a half years of Great-Tribulation will be the absolute rule of the Anti-Christ as a tyrant from hell with Satan's authority.
 - 4. The period is called the "Day of God's Wrath". Rev. 6-19
 - a. The seven seals will be opened. Rev. 5-8
 - b. The seven trumpets will be sounded. Rev. 8-10
 - c. The seven bowls will be poured out. Rev. 16
 - 5. The Lord will return with His church and wage war against those who are gathered at Armageddon and then judge the nations.
 - a. We the church will return on horses with Jesus and He will destroy all with the sharp sword coming out of His mouth. Rev. 19:11-16
 - b. Jesus will judge the nations. Math. 25:31-46

E. There is the Millennium period.

1. The thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. Rev. 20:2, 3, 5, 7
 - a. There are those who say we are in the Millennium now, which is hard to substantiate.
 - b. There are others who say it is symbolic and not literal, yet the repetition of the phrase is literal.
2. Satan will be bound for a thousand years. Rev. 20:2-3, 7
 - a. The bottomless pit will be his prison for this set time.
 - b. The bottomless pit is the abusso, pit or shaft.
 - c. The Devil is placed there so he can not deceive the nations any longer till the end of the thousand years.
3. The rule of Jesus will be characterized by a “rode of iron”. Rev. 2:27, 12:5, 19:5
4. The church will rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years here on the earth. Rev. 1:6-7
 - a. Over all those who did not take the mark of the Beast. Rev. 13:8-10
 - b. Over Israel who will occupy all the land promised to them. Math. 25:31-34
5. The nation of Israel will occupy the Kingdom promised to them in the Old Testament. Is. , Jer., Ezk., etc.

- a. They never occupied all the land promised to them.
 - b. They must receive the promise of God.
6. The White Throne judgment will take place after the thousand years, for the non-believer. Rev. 20:11-15
 - a. All who have rejected Christ will be judged according to their works. Rev. 20:13
 - b. All will be cast into the Lake of Fire or Gehenna, the ultimate abode that was made for Satan and his angels. Matt. 25:41
- F. There is the new heaven and new earth for all eternity with the Lord. Rev. 21-22
 1. There will be a new and eternal order.
 2. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem.
 3. There will be no more tears, death or sorrow.
 - * This is all we know about the eternal state, speculation is worthless!

The various dispensations which are revealed in the Scriptures can not be denied!

II. The four different views of the rapture.

- A. There is the teaching that is called “mid-tribulation”, which teaches that the church

will be removed from the earth three and a half years after the seven year tribulation begins.

1. The first problem is that the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy is interpreted literal but the first three and a half years spiritualized in order to put the church in the tribulation.
 - * You either interpret the time literal or symbolic but you must be consistent in your interpretation!
2. The second problem is that a three and a half year mark is given for the removal of the church, which is an obvious red light, indicating it is wrong, for Jesus repeatedly proclaimed that no man knows the day or the hour". Dan. 9:27, Math. 24:15
3. The problem of such an interpretation is that of confusing the three and a half year mark that identifies the Anti-christ and identifying it with the removal of the bride of Christ.
 - a. The increment of 1260 days for the time of the two witnesses. Rev. 11:3
 - b. The increment of forty-two months for tread down the city of Jerusalem and speak blasphemies by the Anti-Christ. Rev. 11:2, 13:5
 - c. The increment of three and a half years, time and times and half a time,

for the protection of Israel in the wilderness. Rev. 12:14

- B. There is the teaching called "post-tribulation", which teaches that the church will be removed from the earth at the end of the seven years of the tribulation and great tribulation.
 1. The book of Revelations is interpreted as historical and fulfilled, which is spiritualizing, spiritualizing the literalness of the events in order to harmonize with their interpretation.
 2. The fact once again, that there is a set time of the removal is inconsistent with the words of Jesus.
 - * No man knows the day or the hour, Jesus said!
 3. The obvious problem is that the removal of the church at the end of the seven years would remove all believers from the earth, who would occupy the thousand year reign besides Israel?
 4. The removal would also not allow time for the judgment of the believers, at the Bema-Seat of Christ, the presentation of the bride to Christ and the marriage of the Lamb.
 5. The removal would also make no sense, being raptured only to immediately return with Christ to the earth.

C. There is the teaching that appeared in the nineties called “pre-wrath rapture” by Marvin Rosenthal, that has only added to the confusion, teaching that the church will be removed three quarters through the seven year tribulation.

* I don’t know anyone who has espoused it or is teaching it!

1. The set time for removal would once again refute it .

* No man knows the day or the hour,
Jesus said!

2. The starting point of “The Day Of The Lord” is misunderstood.

a. The “Day Of The Lord” takes place at the same time the removal of the church.

b. The appearance of the Anti-christ is the deception people are given over to by God for rejection of the gospel during the age of Grace. 2Thess. 2:9-12, Rev. 6:1

3. The teaching is inconsistent with the 70th week of Daniel. Dan. 9:27

a. Israel makes the covenant with the Ant-christ.

b. Israel expects the Anti-christ as their Messiah, until the middle when he tries to destroy her.

D. There is the teaching called “pre-tribulation”, which teaches. that the church will be removed from the earth prior to the seven years of the tribulation.

1. The teaching is consistent with the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy, when God begins His prophetic clock once again.

2. The teaching treats the book of Revelation as literal, historical and symbolic according to the context.

3. The imminent return of Christ for his church recognizes that He can come back any minute, no man knows the day or the hour.

4. The exhortation that is repeated in the Scriptures is that we are to watch and pray, in order to be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. Lk. 21:36

* This is what we as Calvary Chapel of Pasadena believe and teach!

The four different views of the rapture must be examined!

III. The evidence for pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture.

* This means that the Lord Jesus will come back for His church before the seven year

Tribulation and Great-Tribulation and the thousand year reign!

- A. The nature of the church is presented as a constant contrast to Israel.
1. The church is comprised of Jew and Gentile, who have excepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, while Israel was made up of Jews and some proselytes. Eph. 2:14-15, Col. 3:11
 2. The church was a mystery concealed in the Old Testament, that Jew and Gentile would make up the body of Christ, not that the Gentiles would not be blessed in salvation. Gen. 12:3, Rom. 16:25-27, Eph. 3:1-7, Col. 1:26-29
 3. The church is called the bride of Christ, a virgin, Israel is called the wife of God who has been put away through divorce. Jer. 3:1, Rev. 22:17
* Those that attempt to make the woman in the book of Revelation the church have a bigger problem because she is pregnant and the church is a virgin. Rev. 12:4, 2Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:27
 4. The church is being built by Jesus Himself, for Jesus rejected Israel until the church age is closed.
 - a. Jesus after Peter's confession, that He was the Son of the Living God, said, "I will build my church and the gates

of hell shall not prevail against it".
Math 16:18

- b. The Gentiles would be grafted in like a wild olive tree and Israel rejected because of unbelief. Rom. 11:11-24
- c. The Lord in His triumphant entry to Jerusalem, wept over it saying, "If you had known, even you, especially **in this your day**, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes", and He pronounced judgment over her. Lk. 19:42-44
* Fulfilling the prophecy to the day, 483 years, 173, 880, from March 14, 445 B. C. , to April 6, 32 A. D., based on a 360 day Babylonian calendar year, which by the way if the Genesis year. Dan. 9:24-26, Zach. 9:9 (Sir Robert Anderson, The Coming Prince)
- d. Matthew tells us that the Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem as He rejected her, "Your house is left to you desolate, you shall see Me no more till you say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord". Math. 23:38-39
- e. The apostles in the first church counsel recognized this basic and

simple truth, by the mouth of James.
Acts 15:13-17

- 1) “ Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a **people for His name**. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written. **After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David**, which has fallen down; I will **rebuild its ruins**, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.
- 2) 'The contrast and distinctions between Israel and the church are many from the type of covenant to the promises of their inheritance! (Chafer has listed twenty-four!)

B. The nature of the church age is presented as a contrast to the nature of the tribulation time.

1. The church age is characterized by grace through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross for the sins of all the world, in contrast the tribulation period is characterized by God’s wrath from His

throne. Jn. 3:16, 2Cor. 5:21, 1Jn. 2:2, Rev. 11:18, 14:8, 10, 19, 15:1,7, 16:1, 19

* The Old Testament calls it a time of distress, indignation, affliction, Jacob's trouble. Jer. 30:7

2. The wrath of God fell on Christ for those who would make up His bride the church and therefore not appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, in contrast to those who reject Him. Rom. 5:9, 1Thess. 5:9
3. The church is to pray for their enemies and forgive them, in contrast those martyred under the fifth seal pray, “How long oh Lord, till You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth. Math. 5:44, Rev. 6:10
4. The promise to the church is that in the world she would have tribulations but this is distinct and in contrast to the specific hour that will try all “earth dwellers”, which the church is promised to be kept from. Rev. 3:10, 1Thess. 1:10
 - a. The word from “ek” in Revelation three, verse ten means to guard and cause one to escape in safety out of whatever is the subject.
 - 1) If the word “en” had been used it would of meant to cause to persevere or stand firm in a thing. (Thayers)

- 2) Some will teach that the word can mean “through” but the context and the nature of the Philadelphian church is a contrast to those who will fall under God’s judgment!
- b. The hope of the believer is Jesus not simply heaven or any other place, we are longing to be with him where ever He be and be just like Him. Phil. 3:20-21, Col. 2:3, 1Thess. 4:13, 1Tim. 1:1, Tit. 2:13, Heb. 4:18, 1Pet. 1:3-4, 1Jn. 3:1-4
- C. The nature of the removal of the church is presented as a contrast to the return of the second coming.
1. The removal of the church is in order for God to deal with Israel once again.
- a. Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the gentile has come in, the complete number of people to be saved which comprises the church. Rom. 11:25
- b. Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles “till the times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled, which is not the same as the “fullness of the Gentiles. Rom. 11:25
- * The “Times of the Gentiles” began with Babylon, the head of gold and will end with the ten toes of

- Nebuchadnezzar’s image, a confederacy of ten nations to rule the world and the Anti-Christ. Lk. 21:24, Dan. 2, 7
- c. The removal of the church is to judge Israel and to prepare her for her Messiah.
- 1) The prophet Zachariah declares that in that day the Jews will ask Jesus, “Where did You receive these wounds? Then He will say in the house of My friends”. Zech. 13:6
- 2) God will cause 2/3 of the Jews to perish and 1/3 to be refined through the fire. Zech. 13:8-9
2. The second coming is to judge the ungodly and set up the Kingdom.
- a. Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the vengeance of God at His return with His church in flaming fire. 2Thess. 1:7-10
- b. Jude tells us that Enoch prophesied of the Lord coming to execute judgment on the ungodly with ten thousand of His saints. Jude 14
- c. Jesus said He would judge the nations as sheep from goats. Math 25:31-34
- d. John gives us a sneak preview of the battle of Armageddon, as Jesus returns with His Bride to strike the

nations with the sword that goes forth from His mouth. Rev. 19:11-16

- D.** The nature of the language for the removal of the church is presented unmistakably.
- 1.** The privilege is to escape physical death and be caught up with the departed saints in the clouds is found in the First epistle to the Thessalonians, where Paul is explaining to the believers that their dead loved ones were not going to miss out in anything when the Lord returned for His church. 1Thess. 4:13-18
 - * Paul spent only three weeks at Thessalonica and he taught them about the rapture! Acts. 17:1-9
 - a.** The word caught up “harpazo” means to seize violently, carry off by force, claim for one’s self eagerly. vs. 17
 - b.** Of the thirteen times it appears in the New Testament, the meaning of a sudden and jolting removal, appears consistently.
 - * The Latin counterpart is “rapare” where we get our word rapture but “harpazo” means the same.
 - 1)** Philip was “harpazo” by the Holy Spirit as he baptized the Ethiopian eunuch and was transported to Azotus. Acts 8:39

- 2)** Paul was “harpazo” to the third heaven. 2Cor 12:2
 - 3)** Satan “harpazo” the word of God from men’s hearts, in the Kingdom Parable of the Sower. Matt 13:19
 - 4)** The woman’s child is “harpazo” to God, meaning Christ, the Messiah. Rev 12:5
- 2.** The purpose is to meet the Lord in the air.
 - a.** The word meet “apanteesis”, means to encounter and used of a formal reception for a royal magistrates by going out to meet them and accompanying them back on the final part of the journey.
 - b.** The word appears three other times in the New Testament.
 - 1)** It is used of believers meeting Paul at his port of entry at Rome and accompanying him the rest of the way. Acts 28:15
 - 2)** It is used two times of those who went out to meet the bridegroom to attend the wedding in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins which is used by some to teach the imminent return of Christ for His bride the church, but I believe it probably refers to Israel at the second coming.

- 1) Chapter 25 is a continuation of the Olivet Discourse that began in chapter 24.
- 2) Jesus has been talking about the signs of His coming and the end of the age, which culminates in His physical return to the earth for the second time.
- 3) Jesus has just mentioned the faithful and evil servant and how they will be dealt with at His return.
- 4) The first word of chapter twenty-five is “Then” the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins. 25:1
- 5) The context of chapter twenty-five is the second return of Christ, it is still Jewish ground.
- 6) The people involved are the Jews who will accept Jesus in the tribulation and Great Tribulation, not the church.
 - a) Often clouds refer to theophanies of Divine glory. Ex 16:10, 19:16, 1 Kings 8, Dan. 7:13, Matt . 24:30, Acts 1:9
 - b) God makes the clouds His chariots. Ps 104:3-b
- c. The man Enoch and Elijah are types of raptured. Gen. 5:24, 2Kings 2:11

** As the days of Noah and Lot's!*

- 1) We ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Rom. 8:23
- 2) I heard a voice like a trumpet, “Come up here and I will show you the things that must take place after this, the church age.” Rev 4:1
- 3) After the church is removed to heaven the first seal is opened and the man of sin is revealed on a white horse, having a bow but no arrows, conquering through diplomacy, false peace the first three and a half years. Rev. 6:1-2
- d. The restrainer that is holding back the full manifestation of evil through the appearance of the Anti-Christ is the church not the Holy Spirit, for the world is not ruled by the Holy Spirit and people will be saved during the tribulation by the Holy Spirit. 2Thess. 2:1-12
 - * Some are given over to the lie, having rejected the truth on an ongoing basis!
- e. The man of sin will sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God in the middle of the seven years,

known as the “Abomination of Desolation”. Dan. 9:27, Math. 24:15

* The phrase “falling away” can mean from the faith or removal of the church! 2Thess. 2:3

3. The promise is that we shall always be with the Lord.
 - a. The believer will return to heaven with Jesus for seven years and then return with Christ to set up the Kingdom.
 - b. Jesus promised this by distinguishing His coming for His saints from His coming with His saints. Jn 14:1-3
 - 1) At the rapture, all go to heaven.
 - 2) At the second coming, all come to earth with Christ.
 - 3) At the rapture, Jesus receives us to Himself.
 - 4) At the second coming, Jesus receives those who survived the Great-Tribulation without receiving the mark, into the Kingdom.

* That is why it was so difficult for His disciples to except the concept of going to heaven, for they were looking for God to come to earth to set up the Kingdom!
 - c. Paul declares, “For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Col. 3:3-4

- d. John says, “Beloved, now are we children of God; though it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in them purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1Jn 2:2-3
- E. The nature of His coming for His church is presented as imminence.
1. Jesus gave many parables of the evil steward who did not know the time of his masters return and was found drinking and mistreating the servants.
 2. The words of Jesus were “pray and watch that you be ready to escape all these things and be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man”, imply imminence. Lk. 21:36
 3. Jesus said no man knows the day or the hour. Math. 24:36
 4. Our bodies will be changed in a moment in a twinkling of the eye, at the last trump, no to be confuse with the 7th trump of Revelation. 1Cor. 15:51-52, Phil. 3:20, Col. 3:4

- * The last trump in Corinthians and the Thessalonians is not the last trump in the book of Revelations.
5. Every chapter of the First epistle of Thessalonians mentions the Lord's imminent return. 1Thess. 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:17, 5:9
 6. The early church, the church fathers and the reformers all believed in the imminent return of Jesus!
 7. John clearly shows that after the church age is over in Revelations chapter two and three, then the church is present in heaven in chapters four and five, singing the song which only the church can sing, right before the tribulation begins and the man of sin is revealed. Rev. 5:9-10
 8. The day of the second coming is given to us by Daniel, 1290 days from the abomination that causes desolation. Dan. 12:11, Matt. 24:15
 9. The day of the rapture no man knows, therefore we are to watch and pray always that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Lk. 21:36
 - a. Only Luke's gospel tells us the fact of being worthy to escape all the things to come in the tribulation!
 - * Have you ever asked yourself why?

- b. Matthew's was written to the Jews, who will go through the Tribulation.
- c. Mark was written to the Romans, who for the most part denied and crucified Him.
- d. Luke was written for the Gentiles, whom God would call out to Himself as His bride.
- e. The disciples could not get used to the concept of Jesus going to heaven and returning for His church in the air at a later time, they were expecting an earthly Kingdom, so Jesus had to remind them again. Acts 1:6-8

The evidence for pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture is overwhelmingly favored by the Scriptures!_

Conclusion

Listen to Paul's words as he describes the rapture of the church as, "The blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you." Tit. 3:13-15

1. The promise to the church Thyatira was, "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her

into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. Rev. 2:21-22

* This is the only part of the church that will go through the Tribulation!

2. The promise to the church of Philadelphia is, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." Rev. 3:10

* This is the part of the church that will not go through the Tribulation!

3. The promise to the church of Laodicea was, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth". Rev. 3:15-16

* This is the warning to all who are lukewarm!

I hope you aren't looking for Anti-christ but Jesus Christ, watch and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Lk. 21:36

* **Will it be rapture or regret?**