

Rapture Ready

Here in Revelation 4 we enter into the prophetic portion of the book of Revelation

Revelation 1:19

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

Revelation 4:1

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

From this point forward we will be looking into events that have yet to unfold on the stage of human history

Some of the prophetic events mentioned in Revelation that still remain to be fulfilled include:

- The rapture
- The Rise of Anti-Christ
- The Tribulation
- The Return of Christ
- The Millennial Reign
- The Judgments
- The New Heaven and Earth

The first of these events, the one that will begin the drama of Revelation will be the rapture of the church.

That will be the subject of the beginning of chapter 4

We will discuss

- What the Rapture is
- How the Rapture is both taught and illustrated in scripture
- When the Rapture will take place
- And how to be prepared for the Rapture

The Rapture: What is it?

Rapture

- Comes from the Latin, "*rapturuo*"
- Is a translation of the Greek, "*harpadzo*"
- Means - to be caught away

The Rapture refers to when Jesus comes for His Church

Biblically speaking there is a difference between when Jesus comes **for** His Church and when Jesus comes **with** His church to set up His kingdom

John 14:1-3

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also.

Jude 1:14

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, **the Lord comes with** ten thousands of His saints,

A study of Eschatology (End Times Events) reveals that some events seem to come without warning while other seem to be the fulfillment of a series of prearranged events.

This seeming paradox can be resolved by recognizing the return of Christ is a 2-part event. Jesus will first come first for His church and then Jesus will come with His church to set up His kingdom

For our purposes we will presume a pre-tribulation rapture

That is that the rapture will precede the rise of the antichrist and the tribulation period described in Revelation 6-9

We will do so for 3 reasons

- The first is **biblical**

We believe this to be the position of the Bible writers

We will provide several examples of this as we continue

- Second is **expectational**

Only a pretribulation Rapture keeps our eyes looking for and hastening the coming of Jesus

All others have us looking for events to transpire before the Rapture can happen

- Third is **hopeful**

Paul wrote that the Rapture should be a comforting doctrine

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

While there is some argument as to the timing of the Rapture the doctrine itself is clearly Taught in Scripture

- **There are two primary texts whose subject is the Rapture**

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

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.

Paul explains that a day is coming when Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout and the believers who are living at the time will be **caught up** into heaven and meet Jesus in the air

The phrase “**caught up**” is where the term rapture comes from

It is a translation of the Greek word **Harpazo-**

The word is used quite often in scripture

Matthew 13:19

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and **snatches** away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

Of a bird snatching seed off the ground

John 10:12

But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and **scatters** them.

Of a predator catching its prey

Acts 23:10

Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and **take him by force** from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

Of soldiers taking a person by force

Acts 8:39

Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **caught Philip away**, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

Of a person suddenly and without warning (instantaneously) being taken from one location to another

2 Corinthians 12:2

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was **caught up to** the third heaven.

Of a person being translated into heaven

Harpadzo, Rapture or Caught Up - then means to be forcibly and instantaneously snatched from earth to heaven

As a result, Kittile defines it this way

“harpázō”

- a. 'To steal,'
- b. 'to capture,'
- c. 'to snatch,'
- d. 'to seize,'
- e. 'to take by force,'

f. 'to catch away'"

For our purposes we might use the following definition

The Rapture refers to a generation of believers who will enter heaven without passing through the doorway of death

- **The second Primary Text is found in**

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 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 incorruptible, **and we shall be changed**. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Paul declares that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom.

He adds that our corrupted bodies cannot inherit an incorruptible prize

Therefore, death is necessary.

We must pass through the doorway of death to enter glory.

Unless of course the rapture takes place

Paul refers to this as a mystery.

A **mystery** is something that cannot be known without revelation

We cannot deduce this by observing nature

Nature teaches us that everything dies

But Paul declares a time coming when those who are alive will be instantaneously taken for earth to heaven and transformed from earthly, corrupted bodies to incorruptible heavenly bodies where mortal will put on immortality

When the Lord comes for His Church the living saints be raptured and their bodies will be transformed into glorified imperishable bodies designed for eternity

At the last Trumpet

While it is unlikely that all earth will hear the sound of a trumpet blaring this sound will echo throughout the heavens and will serve as a call for the saints to come home

- **There is a third passage that at least alludes to the Rapture**

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **and our gathering together to Him**, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in Will mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day **will not come unless the falling away comes first**, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Coming and gathering to Him

This seems to be alluding to the return of Christ for His church

That day will not come unless the falling away comes first

Some of the first English translations used the term **departure** instead of **falling away**. The implication is that the text is not referring to apostasy but to the removal of something or someone or many someone's

Tyndale (1530)

“Let no man deceive you by any means, for the Lord cometh not, except there come a **departing** first, and that that sinful man be opened, the son of perdition”

and Wycliffe (1380)

(Let) No man deceive you in any manner. For but dissension, (or **departing** away), come first, and the man of sin be showed, the son of perdition,

This is not solid enough evidence on its own to speak of the pre-tribulation rapture, but coupled with what else the Bible teaches on the subject it at least deserves consideration

In addition to the Rapture being taught as a Doctrine, the Rapture also helps to support the teaching of other doctrines

Deliverance from Judgment

The cross delivers those who trust in Christ out from under God's wrath.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God **did not appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ

Since the wrath of God has been poured out upon Jesus the saints will not have to endure it

Romans 5:9

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be **saved from wrath through Him**.

The Tribulation is a form of judgment for sin and is referred to as the wrath of the Lamb

Revelation 6:16

and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the **wrath of the Lamb!**

The rapture is **the means** of delivering the saints out of the earth before the wrath of God is revealed

In addition to being taught in Scripture the Rapture is also **Illustrated** in Scripture

This is common. The Bible provides doctrine, or teaching regarding a particular subject or event, then provides ample passages that help to illustrate that doctrine.

- You can find illustrations for just about every Doctrine within Scripture.
- The illustrations do not establish the doctrine but help to shed light upon it.
- It is critical to make the distinction because doctrine is never built from illustration

Illustrations of the Rapture

Deliverance from judgment

- Before judging the earth God delivered Noah, lifting his family above the flood
- Before destroying Sodom God delivered Lot and his family

Being Caught up

Enoch

Genesis 5:24

Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for **God took him**.

Hebrews 11:5

By faith Enoch was **taken away** so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had **taken him**”; for before he was **taken** he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

We also see the Rapture Illustrated here in the book of Revelation

Revelation 4:1

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

- John hears a trumpet blast and is suddenly raptured or caught up into the heavens
- The Great Tribulation will begin to unfold upon the earth
- The church, which has been the central focus of Revelation will not be mentioned again within the chronology of the book

This passage is of particular importance since the doctrinal passages of the rapture had already been clearly known and established by the church. When John begins to describe his experience the believer would immediately be drawn to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 15 where the trumpet sounds and the believers are taken up

When will the Rapture take place?

We cannot know the day or the hour

Matthew 24:36

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

We can however observe the signs of the times

Matthew 16:2-3

He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you **cannot discern the signs of the times**.

Matthew 24:32-34

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, **know that it is near**—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

2 signs we should be aware of

Luke 21:25-28

“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts **failing them from fear** and the **expectation** of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

When the hearts of men begin to fail for fear of what is happening with the environment it is time to look up for your redemption draws near

This seems to be one of the chief fears among people today.

Policies are constantly being enacted based upon a fear that the earth itself is being destroyed

Matthew 24:37-39

But as the **days of Noah** were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in **marriage**, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

2 things are highlighted about the days of Noah

- First, a cavalier attitude under the shadow of ever-increasing signs
- Second, marriage

Marriage is one of the most common events in every culture. (Although the bride and groom think of it as the most important day in history and that their ceremony is unique.)

How could marriage every be a sign?

Yet marriage has become one of the hottest topics in the world over the past several years. Policy makers even attempting to change its definition into something that it has be ever been

The Bible is filled with other signs pointing to the end of the age

- Rebirth of Israel
- A global community
- Tolerance and intolerance
- Even the Information Age and world travel are alluded to as signs of the times

How to be Rapture Ready

The primary message associated with eschatology or end times events is a message to be ready

Mark 13:5

And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “**Take heed** that no one deceives you.

Mark 13:9

“But **watch out for yourselves**, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.

Mark 13:23

But **take heed**; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

Mark 13:33

Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

1 Thessalonians 5:2

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes **as a thief in the night**.

1 Thessalonians 5:4

But **you, brethren, are not in darkness**, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

Romans 13:11-12

And do this, knowing the time, that now **it is high time to awake out of sleep**; for now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at

hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

A Final Thought

Understanding what is coming should stir holiness within

1 John 3:3

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Holiness -

- Set apart from anything that is unclean or would defile
- Set apart to serving Jesus in the capacities in which He has called and will gift us

To be rapture Ready is to receive Christ and to get busy furthering His kingdom

The evidence of a person has accepted Christ is a surrendered life

The evidence of a surrendered life is participation in the kingdom of God

Finally, notice what John was “raptured” to

He was caught up into the heavenly scene

To the throne of God

To the angels and the saints

To watch as the events coming from the throne of heaven unleash the events that will transpire on the earth

Chapter 5

A throne, surrounded by thrones

We read several prepositions that describe the thrones and the activity in the heavenly scene

On the throne

Around the throne

From the throne

Before the throne

In the midst of the throne

We read of God seated upon His throne and the angels and saints surrounding Him when suddenly a chorus of praise begins and the saints bow before God, casting down their throne and directing their praises to Him

Several things should grab our attention

- The central focus of Heaven is the throne of God

A throne is a place of rule, judgment and provision

Rule

Psalms 115:3

But our God is in heaven;

He does whatever He pleases.

Judgment

Psalms 9:7

But the LORD shall endure forever;

He has prepared His throne for judgment.

Provision

Life

Revelation 22:1-2

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Daily provision

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- No description of God is provided

Angels and saints are described but God dwells in light

This is common among all visions of heaven

The throne is central

Worship is central

No description of God is provided

One is provided by God Himself when He reveals Himself to Moses

Exodus 34:6-7

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

- Saints are clothed in white and wearing crowns

Garments are given at conversion

Crowns are given for faithful service rendered

- Saints cast their crowns before the Lord as part of the celebration

This takes us into chapter 5 where John remains in heaven and continues to observe the events that transpire around the throne

- A scroll sealed with 7 seals in the hands of the One upon the throne

John weeps because no one is worthy to loose the seals and open the scroll

Until Jesus arrives on the scene

He is described as both a Lion and a Lamb bearing the marks of being slain

He takes the scroll, looses the seals and unleashes judgment upon the earth

- What is the scroll?

John does not give an exact definition of the scroll.

We do know from what transpires next that when the seals are loosed the judgments of God begin to pour out upon the earth

We can conclude then that the scroll represents the judgment of God

- Only Jesus could loose the seals because only Jesus has the right to unleash judgment upon the earth

Man has been granted great authority in creation

- Man is the highest of God' creation
- Man is given authority over the earth to subdue and care for it
- Man has been given authority to establish systems of government to keep order among men

But man does not have the authority to determine what is right and wrong

Morality rests with God

Jesus alone has the right and authority to judge

- When the seals are loosed the Tribulation begins

John will watch from heaven as the events of the Tribulation begin to unfold

There will be no mention of the church during the events of the Tribulation Period