

Series: **The End of Time**
Today's Title: **"The Rapture of the Church"**
October 1, 2023 – *Selected Passages*

Objective: To help us be informed about the rapture and encouraged by this event.

Submit questions about Revelation – end times – via the app.

Opening Prayer

Over the last few Sundays, I've mentioned that **The End of Time** – the plan of God for the end of the world that He decreed before creation – that era is next on God's timeline.

Show timeline on screen – focus on first part.

We are currently in the Church Age – and the next 'age' on God's timeline is **The End of Time**.

Today, we're going to consider the event that launches the world into **The End of Time** that God has planned.

Today, we're going to look at *'The Rapture of the Church'*.

First, you should know the word 'Rapture' is not found in the Bible.

The word is not there, but the teaching is clearly there.

So, why do we use this word? Where does this idea come from?

Greek: *haporzo* - to seize, catch up, snatch away.

Latin: *rapturo* – where we get our word 'rapture' from.

So... we get our word 'rapture' – from the Latin Vulgate's translation of the Greek word, *haporzo*.

Second, you should know the rapture is a central Christian teaching, and there are 3 primary views among Christians on when the rapture of the Church will happen.

Pre-Tribulation

Mid-Tribulation

Post-Tribulation

Pre-Trib – Mid-Trib – Post-Trib.

All 3 views are concerned with when the rapture of the Church happens in reference to the Tribulation.

- All 3 views affirm the rapture.
- All 3 views affirm the Tribulation.
- All 3 views believe the rapture is different from the return of Christ (2nd coming).

Third...

“sleep” – a euphemism in the Bible for death.

In fact, our English word ‘cemetery,’ which is derived from the Greek word, *koimeterion*, means, ‘sleeping place.’

In Christian circles, there is a lot of confusion on this event. There are not only the alternative views on the timing of the rapture in regard to the Tribulation, but there seems to be a lack of clarity on numerous aspects of the event.

So... let’s begin by following our first point today.

Be informed by the truth of the Bible. *1 Thess. 4:13-15a*

There are all sorts of websites, blogs, books, sermons, and Bible commentaries that talk about the rapture. When Paul was writing his 2nd letter to the church in Thessalonica, he mentions a fake letter / counterfeit letter – that someone sent to the church – and the letter claimed to be from Paul – but it wasn't.

2 Thess. 2:1-3

“Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Let no one deceive you in any way.”

So, be careful what teaching sources you're utilizing when you study this.

Let's make sure the Bible is the primary source we're using to understand the rapture.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15

“...we do not want you to be uninformed...”

Paul's desire is to make sure we know the truth.

He wants us to be informed – knowledgeable on this topic (and others!!!).

It seems an increasing number of Christians are “uninformed” on what the Bible teaches.

There seems to be a decreasing level of Biblical literacy in the culture – but it's also happening in the Church.

There is a general / underlying belief in the secular culture that Christians are ignorant – “uninformed” about certain things in life.

I can tell you that in some ways that’s true.

I only know a few of the current singers and actors that are popular.

There are certain things I’m “uninformed” about – because I don’t care – they aren’t important for my life – they are often a waste of time, etc.

I do think we should know the culture – be aware of the culture we live in – if we hope to share Christ with the culture.

But we should make sure we’re not “uninformed” when it comes to Christ – and matter of the faith.

Paul’s desire here is not confusion – but clarity – information – truth.

“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again...”

The basis for this is the truth of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

It is the Bible that gives us the historical record of Jesus dying and rising from the dead.

It is our belief in the Bible’s testimony that our confidence rests upon.

We know the Bible is inspired by God.

Since God cannot lie – since He knows all things and is sovereign over all things – we know what He has revealed in His Word is true.

Since it is from God – His revelation to us - it is authoritative in all matters of life and faith.

We believe not only what it reveals has happened in the past, but we believe what it promises about the future.

The death of Jesus is what paid the price for our sins.

Jesus took our place – He paid the price for our sins as He gave Himself as a sacrifice on the cross.

The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope for our own resurrection.

He defeated death and sin by His resurrection.

The Bible tells us He is the ‘firstfruits’ – giving us confidence in our own future resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”

“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord...”

This is a “word from the Lord” – not the imagination of the Apostle Paul.

This is new revelation from Jesus.

This wasn't taught in the O.T. (more on that in a moment).

The rapture should be encouraging truth. *1 Thess. 4:15b-18*

The teaching of this event in the Bible was given so Christians would be encouraged and comforted.

The Christians Paul was writing to were worried / scared that their loved ones and friends who had died would be left out of the picture when Jesus comes back for His Church.

Paul's message to them was given in a pastoral tone, not just a didactic or intending to teach theology.

In fact, all theology should be comforting and encouraging to us.

But in **1 Thess. 4**, Paul is trying to give comfort and encouragement to those in Thessalonica who were grieving their loved ones / friends passing, and they were worried that since they were dead, they would somehow miss out when Jesus comes for His Church.

Read 1 Thess. 4:15b-18

"...we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

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.

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.

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

vs. 18 gives us Paul’s intent – encouragement.

But we see some of the details here of the rapture – the taking up of the Church.

Let’s break down these verses.

vs. 15 – Christians *living* when the rapture occurs.

“...we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.”

Paul tells us believers who are alive at the time of the rapture will be #2 in line.

vs. 16b – Christians who have *died* during the Church Age will be resurrected *first*.

“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.

From Stephen, the first martyr, and the Christians who died beginning on the day of Pentecost when the Church was born – to the moment when Christ comes to snatch-up His Church – all those who have died “in Christ” will be first in line for their bodily resurrection.

They will receive their glorified body.

It doesn't matter the condition of their body.
If they were burned in a fire – cremated at death –
drowned at sea and consumed by fish – body never
recovered from war – or if their body was carefully
embalmed and placed in a casket and then placed in
a concrete vault and buried.

Every one of the bodies will be reincorporated by
the God who created the entire universe out of
nothing – but they will be reincorporated and
resurrected into a glorified, spiritual body – fit for
eternity!

vs. 16 – The rapture will not be a *hidden* or *secret* event.

“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.”

When Jesus comes back for His Church, it will be a
public event.

He will not be hidden.

The rapture will be a loud event.

This doesn't mean unbelievers will know and
understand what is happening.

But they will be aware that something is happening.

vs. 17 – All of us will *meet* and *remain* with Jesus in the
clouds.

“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.”

The “dead in Christ” – along with believers “who are alive” – will be “caught up” (Greek: *harpazo* / Latin: *rapturo*) “together...in the clouds”.

Notice – Jesus does not touch the ground.

This is not His 2nd coming – the return of Christ.

His 2nd coming is very specific. He will return to the Earth on the Mount of Olives – just across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

At the rapture, we will be taken up – “caught up” – and meet Jesus in the clouds.

Our bodies will be transformed in an instant into our glorified body / spiritual body.

1 John 3:2

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

At the rapture, our bodies will be instantly changed into our glorified body – or what Paul refers to...

1 Corinthians 15:44 as a “spiritual body” (“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”).

After we all meet Jesus in the air / clouds – Paul tells us “...we will always be with the Lord.”

This is how Christians from the Church Age how their bodies get to Heaven.

We know from other passages that at the moment a Christian dies, their soul is in heaven – in the presence of Christ (See 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23).

So, the soul of Christians who have died during the Church Age – their soul is in heaven now – has been since their death.

But their disembodied soul – will be embodied – at the moment of the rapture.

Christians who are alive when the rapture occurs will be transformed instantly – into their glorified body when we meet Jesus in the air.

The rapture was a “mystery”, and it will be instantaneous. *1 Corinthians 15:51-53*

The other primary passage which gives us details about the rapture is found in Paul’s first letter to the believers in Corinth – in the 15th chapter.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 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 be changed.

53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”

vs. 51 - “Behold! I tell you a mystery.”

This is not a riddle or some sort of puzzle to be solved. In the N.T. a “mystery” is a truth that was not previously revealed – but it is now revealed.

Nothing more than that.

It’s additional / further revelation from God about something.

vs. 52 - “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...”

The rapture will not be a prolonged or extended event. It will be quick – instantaneous.

“moment” – Greek = *atomos* – where we get our word ‘atom’ from. It has the idea of something too small to be cut or divided further.

“twinkling of an eye” – Greek has the idea of a rapid movement – the time it takes for light to reflect off the pupil of the eye.

It’s from this passage – and **1 John 3:2** – that we see the transformation of our earthly body into our spiritual body – our glorified body.

The rapture is imminent.

Imminent is the word often used as to when the rapture could occur.

Merriam Webster: ‘ready to take place’

Some struggle with this because we read in the N.T. – in the 1st century – a few years after Jesus ascended to heaven – that they believed Jesus would come back for the Church during their lifetime.

Paul makes some statements to this possibility.

But he also made other statements that it might occur after his death.

The point – we don’t know when it will happen.

But we do know the rapture is the event which begins

The End of Time – God’s plan of events for the redemption and judgment of the world.

Therefore – it is imminent.

Here are some Scripture passages that teach this truth.

Matthew 24:37-42 (see Luke 17:26-27)

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,

39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.

41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.

42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”

Luke 17:26-27

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

27 They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”

Important detail regarding the reference in these passages to the “days of Noah”.

God rescued Noah and his family from the judgment of the flood.

Now it’s true He didn’t *‘snatch up’* take Noah and his family away from the earth, but the Lord did remove them from the judgment which was coming.

Nobody knew exactly when the flood would occur.

Noah didn’t know the exact time – until God told him to get into the ark.

The people heard Noah’s preaching and his warning of imminent judgment (2 Peter 2:5), but they rejected the warnings and perished.

Another passage that refers to the imminent nature of the rapture is **1 Thess. 5:1-11**.

I won’t take the time to read this – but it tells us the Day of the Lord – which is a reference to judgment.

Since the rapture is the launching event for the judgment of the Tribulation, the teaching in this passage certainly refers to the unknown timing and imminent timing of the rapture.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

3 While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

Apply it...

Be informed by the Bible.

There are many, many false ideas and false teaching when it comes to Revelation and **The End of Time**.

Make sure what you believe is rooted in God’s Word – the Bible.

Make sure your belief is in alignment with other solid, proven, dependable Bible teachers / theologians / pastors.

If you’re the only one who believes something...maybe, you need to rethink your beliefs!

If you’re a Christian, be encouraged by God’s judgment.

It's clear that the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture to reveal God's future judgment and plans so believers would be encouraged and comforted.

However, if you're not a believer – if you're not a Christian – then you should take notice – be uncomfortable – discouraged – fearful.

He will judge you – if you refuse to put your faith in His Son, Jesus, as your Savior – to save you from your sins.

Are you ready for the Rapture?

When Jesus comes to Rapture – to 'snatch up' – to 'take away' the Church into heaven – are you ready?

Will He find you faithful?

Will He find you living in obedience to His Word?

Have you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior?

Now...today... is the time for you to come to Christ.

Closing prayer