



**Doctrine: The Rapture
Going Up or Going Down?
Part 1
1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11**

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Due to the growing numbers of folks who are busy trying to mislead us and deceive us ala 2 Peter 2, we are going to ground ourselves in the Biblical Doctrine of the Pretribulation Rapture of the Church. Peter seriously locks this down for us in 2 Peter 3.



2 Peter 3:3–9

“knowing this first of all, that **scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.** But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. **But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**” (ESV)

1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as indeed the rest of mankind do, who have no hope. **For if we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we say this to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who remain, 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.** Therefore, comfort one another with these words. Now as to the periods and times, brothers and sisters, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming just like a thief in the night. **While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction will come upon them like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day.** We are not of night nor of darkness; so then, let’s not sleep as others do, but let’s be alert and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk, get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let’s be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing.” (NASB 2020)

We are going to begin a discussion, based first of all, on where we are in the timeline of the end of the age, Secondly, because there is now so much false teaching and deception taking place on the topic. This is a yet future event that as believers in Jesus Christ, we are looking forward to. Jesus is the one who introduced this idea, even though there are Old Testament hints of it. This idea is referred to in the Greek New Testament as the harpazo or removal of the church. Jesus first introduced it in His briefing to the disciples just before the cross. Harpazo (take by force, to snatch away) is the Greek word used by Paul in our text, but we know the doctrine via the Latin word rapiemur, which means to seize. It is translated caught up.

John 14:1–3

“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, **I will come and get you**, so that you will always be with me where I am.” (NLT)

“This is a coming for deliverance for the faithful, however, not a coming for judgment. He will retrieve the faithful and take them back to the Father’s house with Himself (John 14:2–3). There they will remain with



Him until He returns to the earth to establish His earthly kingdom for a thousand years. Do not assume it is only 7 years either. We conclude, therefore, that Jesus was the one who initiated the teaching of the imminence of His return both to judge the world and to deliver the faithful.” (Thomas 2015, 28)

What Jesus has just told His disciples is world changing. It is the very first time anyone will ever hear that God has a plan to remove His people off this planet to be with Jesus. Israel was promised the land, the prophecies of the Kingdom of God was all about that. The land, well it is here on this planet and this is what His people are waiting for.

But here, just before going to the cross, Jesus tells His disciples new truth. He will be returning to the Father and while there, He will be personally preparing a place totally individualized for each of His followers. He will be doing this to come back and take us to be with Him. This is new truth, it is something His disciples must have been blown away by, and it is a promise that we are still waiting to be fulfilled today. We call it the harpazo of the church.

Although the rapture of the church was introduced by Christ the night before His crucifixion, as recorded in John 14:1–3, the details of the rapture were not revealed in Scripture until 1 Thessalonians was written. It is not too much to say that 1 Thessalonians 4–5 is probably the most important passage dealing with the rapture in the New Testament. (Walvoord 1976, 299)

This is not all that Jesus taught, as it pertains to the end of the age stuff, He also promised this.

John 16:13

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and **He will disclose to you what is to come.**” (NASB 2020)

We are promised special understanding, through the Holy Spirit, of future things. “The Lord, then, expects us to understand prophecy, including the prophecy of the rapture of the church. Clearly that doctrine cannot be ignored if we enter fully into the fulfillment of Christ’s promise.” (Ryrie 1981, 21)

There are many today who are telling us that they have the superspecial top top-secret interpretation that has only been revealed to them and no one else. That is Gnosticism. What Jesus tells us right here in John 16 is, ignore them. If you are saved, you have everything you need to interpret last things and to understand prophecy.

Amos 3:7

“Certainly **the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret plan To His servants the prophets.**” (NASB 2020)

As followers of Jesus, He has given us the Holy Spirit to “teach us all things” (John 14:26). Understanding that and adding to it the fact that we have also been told that the Holy Spirit will “disclose what is to come” (John 16:13) it sounds like we are to be in the know.

Looking at what Amos said that the Lord does nothing without disclosing it to His servants the prophets, what did Jesus just say about us in John 15.

John 15:12–15

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.**” (NASB 2020)



The Lord intends for us to know and not be in the dark at all. I am amazed that something so simple has become so complicated because there are those who do not accept the simple truth of the word of God and want to add to it.

Because of this promise that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us those things to come, **this means we can all learn about last things without having to take time wasting courses on interpretation and the like.**

As believers, the Holy Spirit lives in each of us and Jesus tells us the Holy Spirit is responsible for teaching us all things (John 14:26). Especially last things.

Forget about stuff being hidden or hard to understand. If you know Christ, you know.

As we have seen already in 1 Thessalonians 5:4, **“But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief;”** (NASB 2020)

As we examine the doctrine of the pretribulation rapture of the church, there are several primary key texts we will be examining.

John 14:1-3 where Jesus first introduces this idea to His disciples.

Paul covers it in two teachings.

- 1 Corinthians 15:51-58
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 with fine tuning in 2 Thessalonians

Then Jesus touches on it again in Revelation 3:10.

This is not about the second coming. Many get confused between the two. We are going to be concentrating on the imminent coming again of Jesus Christ to come and get us just as He promised in John 14. This is not the second coming. There are signs that even Jesus discussed about His second coming, there are no signs for the rapture. None at all. It has been imminent since the ascension of Jesus Christ. Even Paul was looking forward to be taken from this planet.

But for us to understand this topic, we are going to camp here at the end of the age for awhile so we can grasp all the various truths that come into play. I will try to define some of the terms we run into along the way.

Something else for us to understand before we get into this too far, this is now considered, by some, to be a controversial topic. My intent is to show you what we believe here at Calvary, the doctrine of the pretribulation rapture of the church, is what scripture teaches.

By the way, if your view of when the rapture will take place varies from what we teach and believe, that is okay. This is not a point to divide over even though many today do so.

I know there are many who want to argue for their view. I will not engage in any such arguments. As a church, we are here to make disciples. This is part of that since it was obviously important enough to Paul to have included it in the training, he provided to the church in Thessalonica in their first two weeks as believers.

One more thing we need to understand. I have no idea when it is that Jesus will return for His church. There have been many who have tried to put a stake in the ground using all kinds of different methods to validate their reasoning. The bottom line.



Matthew 24:36

“No one knows, however, when that day and hour will come—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son; the Father alone knows.” (GNB)

There are common pitfalls to avoid as we study this topic. Newspaper prophecy is just the beginning.

“When it comes to interpreting Bible prophecy, one of the more common problems is the tendency for people to view biblical predictions through the eyes of their own personal experience. The Germans call this a *zeitgeist*, a current mood or response to certain existing conditions. Thus, the great temptation for those who attempt to interpret prophecy is to move from the biblical facts to their own assumptions and speculations. As they view the future through the eyes of the present, their speculations can end up seeming like real possibilities. The tragedy of all this is that instead of rejecting prophetic speculation for what it is, many Christians are often duped by it. What’s more, those who attempt to guess the date of Christ’s coming and determine the identity of the antichrist are claiming to know more than the authors of Scripture. Daniel Mitchell, professor of theology at Liberty University, has said, “Speculating on the date of Christ’s return not only breeds bad theology ... it is the original sin all over again—trying to know as much as God.”” (Hitchcock and Hindson 2018, 32-33)

Jesus is indeed coming for His church at any moment. Yes, there is a massive convergence of the signs He said to look for regarding His second coming, an event which takes place at the end of the Tribulation. The shadows are indeed reflecting on us today pointing to the nearness of His coming to get us.

We need to be discerning of “popular teachers” who, every time there is a blood moon or a comet or whatever, begin predicting when Jesus will come back. There are those who simply report the information and allow you to discern what the scriptures are saying. Then there are those who ask leading questions to get you to make a judgment that they have already predetermined.

There are numerous videos on You Tube surrounding the theme of the rapture. If they tell you they can predict when, they can’t. If they tell you they can show you the signs that it is near, they can’t because there aren’t any.

If you find a podcast that will take you step by step as to why the rapture should be today, don’t bother wasting your time. Paul will tell us right here in 1 Thessalonians it is something he expected to happen in his lifetime, and we are to be living the same way.

Our lens is the scriptures.

Remember, the disciples thought they had it all wired about the coming of Messiah and what He would do. They missed so many of the obvious signs it isn’t even funny when you look at it in retrospect. No one had the complete picture until Jesus taught it the evening of His resurrection. We forget that if Satan had the whole story, and he didn’t, then he would have tried to stop it. Instead, he and his fallen brethren instigated the crucifixion not even knowing they were signing their own death warrants (1 Corinthians 2:8).

If that was the case, then guess what, the same principle of communications jamming may also be going on today.

Dr Michael Heiser tells us that “The identity and purpose of the messiah are unknowable from a Bible verse—and even many Bible verses. The profile proceeds along conceptual trajectories that eventually merge into a portrait. And so Jesus’ question (Luke 24:26) to the two men on the road to Emmaus makes eminent sense: “Was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Yes, of course it was. It’s just hard to see that unless you know what you’re looking for. The messianic portrait



can only be discerned by assembling a hundred terms, phrases, metaphors, and symbols, which themselves take on meaning only when their patterns and convergences are detected.” (Heiser 2015, 248)

About the different viewpoints regarding when the rapture will occur.

The principal disagreement today lies between pretribulationists and posttribulationists, both of which are premillennial. (Premillennial means before the millennium begins) Pretribulationists hold that Christ’s coming for His church, the rapture, will occur before the Tribulation (the entire seventieth “week” of Daniel) begins. Posttribulationists teach that the rapture and the second coming are facets of a single event occurring at the conclusion of the Tribulation. Both agree that the second coming of Christ will be followed by the Millennium on earth. (Ryrie 1981, 12)

Before we go further, I do believe it is important for us to have a general idea of the highpoints about the Tribulation.

So, when we gather together next Sunday, we are going to start with the Tribulation from 50,000 feet.

Let’s pray.

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