

**THE COMING OF THE LORD  
THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH**

**1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-17, 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-53**

**I. MEANING OF THE WORD “RAPTURE.”**

The term is derived from the Latin, which means “*a carrying off, to transport from one place to another, or a snatching away.*”

Though the word “*rapture*” is not found in the Scripture, the concept of the “*carrying off*” or the *rapture* of the Church is clearly taught in Scripture.

The rapture of the church is the next known event on God’s prophetic calendar in which God “*snatches away*” all believers from the earth in order to make way for His righteous judgment to be poured out on the earth during the tribulation period.

The doctrine of the *rapture* was not taught in the Old Testament, which is why Paul calls it a “*mystery*”. It is a *mystery* now revealed.

Though the *rapture* was not taught in the Old Testament, that doesn’t mean that there is nothing in the Old Testament about it. It was prefigured in the Old Testament. We’ll see more about this later.

The *rapture* of the Church is a glorious event that every believer should be longing for with great anticipation! Because when it happens, we will finally be free from sin and this sin cursed world! We will be transformed immediately into the likeness of the LORD! We will be in the LORD’s presence forever!

The rapture should be a comforting doctrine full of hope!  
The LORD wants us to “*comfort one another with these words*”

**II. PARTICIPANTS OF THE RAPTURE.**

**A. The Lord Jesus Himself.**

1. The Lord Jesus Said He Would Come! (*John 14:1-3*)

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2. The Men In White Apparel (or Angels) At Christ’s Ascension Said Jesus Would Come! (*Acts 1:9-11*)
3. The Apostle Paul Said Jesus Would Come!  
(*1 Thessalonians 4:16*)

**B. The Archangel. (i.e. Michael) (*1 Thessalonians 4:16*)  
(*Michael: Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7*)**

**C. Bodies Of Dead Believers.**  
This includes believers from Pentecost to the Rapture.  
(*1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; 18; 1 Corinthians 15:35ff*)

**D. Translated Bodies Of Living Believers.**  
(*1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:17*)

**III. FALSE VIEWS OF THE RAPTURE.**

**A. The Rapture Is The Same As The Second Coming.**  
At the Rapture, Jesus comes for His Church in the air, while at the Second Coming He comes with His people to the earth.  
(*See Jude 14-15; Revelation 19:11-16*)

**B. The Rapture Will Include Only "Spiritual" Christians, While Carnal Christians Will Be Left Behind To Endure The Tribulation.**  
This theory is refuted by one little word in *1 Corinthians 15:51*, where Paul says that “*we shall all be changed.*”

This false view is often called the “*partial Rapture*” theory.

The N.T. pictures the Church as the body and bride of Christ. If this theory were correct, then a part of this body would suffer amputation, and a section of the bride would be left behind!

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**C. The Rapture Will Not Occur Until The Middle Of The Tribulation, Thus Forcing The Entire Church To Go Through The First Half Of God's Wrath.**

This theory is called *mid-tribulationism*, and is refuted by Paul in *1 Thessalonians 5:9*, where he says, "*For God hath not appointed us to wrath...*"

**D. The Rapture Will Not Occur Until The End Of The Tribulation.**

This is known as post-tribulationism, and is refuted by *1 Thessalonians 5:9* and *Revelation 3:10*.

**E. Consider The Following About The Rapture:**

1. The Bible teaches clearly that the Rapture is *pre-tribulation* in nature and includes all believers. (*1 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 5:9*)
2. Perhaps the strongest proof of this statement is the fact that up to chapter 4 of Revelation the Church is mentioned many times, but from chapter 4 to chapter 19 (the period of the Tribulation) there is no mention whatsoever of the Church on earth.
3. We are told that Christians are God's ambassadors on earth (*2 Corinthians 5:20*) and that He will someday declare war on this earth.

The first thing a king or president does after he declares war on another country is to call his ambassadors home! Thus we conclude that the Church will escape the tribulation period.

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**IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE RAPTURE.**

**A. To Deliver The Church From The Wrath To Come!**

**B. To Judge And Reward The Church Of God!**  
(*1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10*)

**C. To Remove, To A Large Extent, The Influence Of The Holy Spirit. (*2 Thessalonians 2:7*)**

Many theologians believe the "*he*" in this verse is a reference to the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit of God indwelling believers has been acting as a divine dam, faithfully holding back the waters of sin. But at the rapture His blessed influence will be removed to a large extent in order to prepare the way for the Tribulation.

**V. THE MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE.**

In *1 Corinthians 15:51* Paul declares, "*Behold, I show you a mystery...*" What is this secret of the Saviour?

If you stopped reading in chapter 14 you would be forced to conclude that a Christian could get to heaven only after physically dying.

The only two exceptions were *Enoch (Genesis 5:24)* and *Elijah (2 Kings 2:11)*, but apart from these it would be clear that believers have to travel the path of the grave to reach the goal of glory.

But now the secret is out, and here it is: Millions of Christians will someday reach heaven without dying!

*"...we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."*

This then is the mystery of the Rapture!

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**VI. THE TRUMPET OF THE RAPTURE.**

In at least three biblical passages concerning the Rapture, a trumpet is mentioned.

*(1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 4:1)*

How are we to understand this?

The phrase "*the trump of God*" is significant, because in the Old Testament the trumpet was used for two things—

**To summon to battle and to summon to worship.**

Which of the two meanings is involved with the *rapture*.

It is possible that **both meanings are in mind, one directed toward angels and the other to believers.**

**A. To Angels, The Trumpet Blast Will Mean "*Prepare For Battle!*"**

According to various N.T. passages this present world lies in the hands of the evil one, the devil, and the very atmosphere is filled with his wicked power and presence.

*Ephesians 6:12—"For we wrestle not against flesh..."*

*1 John 5:19—"The whole world lieth in wickedness"*

Satan will obviously resist believers being caught up through his domain and becoming freed from his wicked worldly system. Therefore, the trumpet commands the angels, "*Prepare for battle! Clear the way for the catching up of those resurrected bodies and those living believers!*"

**B. To All Believers, The Trumpet Blast Will Mean "*Prepare To Worship!*" (Numbers 10:1-4)**

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**VII. THE OLD TESTAMENT FORESHADOWING (OR PREFIGURE) OF THE RAPTURE.**

**A. Seen In Enoch, Who Was Taken From The World Before The Flood Judgment. (Genesis 5:24)**

**B. Seen In Lot, Who Was Removed From Sodom Before The Fire Judgment. (Genesis 19:12-24)**

**VIII. THE CHALLENGE OF THE RAPTURE.**

Because of this glorious coming event, Believers are instructed to do many things:

**A. We Are To Attend The Services Of The Lord Regularly And Exhort Each Other! (Hebrews 10:25)**

**B. We Are To Observe The Lord's Supper With The Rapture In Mind! (1 Corinthians 11:26)**

**C. We Are To Love Believers And All Men. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)**

**D. We Are To Be Patient And Establish Our Hearts. (James 5:8)**

**E. We Are To Abide In The Lord And Live Unto Him. (1 John 2:28; 3:2-3; Titus 2:12-13)**

**F. We Are To Comfort One Another With These Words. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)**

**G. We Are To Be Concerned With Heaven. (Colossians 3:1-4)**

**H. We Are To Be Fulfill The Great Commission. (Jude 21-23)**

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- I. Additionally, Preachers Are To Preach The Word And Watch Over The Flock Of God.  
(2 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 Peter 5:2-4)**

**IX. THE EFFECT OF THE RAPTURE.**

What will be the reaction of a sin-sick society when millions of people suddenly disappear?

**A. Massive Manhunts...**

Certainly the believers will be missed! It is evident from the Bible that the sudden disappearance of both Enoch and Elijah (two Old Testament types of the Rapture) caused considerable confusion and alarm among their friends.

*Hebrews 11:5—"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him."*

Especially interesting are the words, "*and was not found*". Enoch was doubtless the object of a great manhunt.

The Scriptures describe the later translation of Elijah in even greater detail, as the citizens of Jericho asked Elisha about the disappearance of his master. **2 Kings 2:16-17**

So, it is possible that there will be massive manhunts as family members, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances literally vanish into thin air.

**B. Confusion...**

How much more confusion and alarm will come from the sudden and mysterious disappearance of literally millions of men and women, boys and girls.

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Will the disappearance be blamed on an invasion from outer space. Hollywood has the world primed to accept this as an alternative.

**C. Disaster...**

1. Airplane Crashes.
2. Automobile Wrecks.
3. Train Wrecks.
4. Nuclear Accidents.
5. Financial Disaster.

It is interesting to note that life insurance policies cannot be collected on until a person has been missing at least 7 years.

Key employees will possibly be missing.

Disasters will possibly bankrupt insurance companies.

**D. Utter Chaos...**

The world will no doubt be looking for a stabilizing world leader to bring order to the chaos...The antichrist.

**X. WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE TAKE PLACE?**

**A. The Rapture Is Imminent.**

Imminent means there is nothing that must take place in order for it to happen. By Paul's very wording we can see that He was looking for the *rapture* in his day!

**B. The Signs Of The Second Coming Mean It Can't Be Long.**

We will study these in a later study. Consider that there are only seven years from the rapture to the Second Coming. If the signs of Jesus' Second Coming are already coming to pass, surely the rapture cannot be far away from us.

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**C. No One Knows For Sure When The Rapture Will Be.**

1. Men have made calculations that have failed.
2. Men have made guesses that have failed.
3. Men have made prophecies that have failed.
4. Men have had visions that have failed.

**D. We Can Only Be Certain That He Will Come.**

**Conclusion**

Are you ready?