

The History and Significance of Premillennialism

Lesson #6 The Premillennial Rapture of the Church ⁰⁶⁴³

I. Introduction

The word rapture is not found in Scripture. It is a transliteration from the Latin word “rapio”, meaning to seize, snatch, or carry away. It is used to reflect the NT Greek word ἁρπάζω harpazo (Str. 726) 14x, meaning to seize, to take away by force, to snatch away. It is used in 1 Thess 4:17 and translated in the NASU as “*caught up*”. This word is also used twice regarding Paul’s being “caught up” to the third heaven in 2 Cor 12:1-6.

“The majority of broadly Christian and mainline churches do not subscribe to pretribulationist views. Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, United Methodists, the United Church of Christ, and most Reformed Christians do not generally use *rapture* as a specific theological term, nor do they generally subscribe to the premillennial dispensational views associated with its use. Instead these groups typically interpret *rapture* in the sense of the elect gathering with Christ in Heaven after His second coming and reject the idea that a large segment of humanity will be left behind on earth for an extended tribulation period after the events of 1 Thessalonians 4:17”

Wikipedia; under “*Rapture*”

II. Scriptural Foundation for the Rapture of the Church

Paul writing his second letter to the Church in Thessalonica addressed accusations from false teachers:

2 Thess 2:1-6 *Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ²that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.* NASU

Paul here reminds them of the correct understanding in his first epistle to them several months earlier:

1 Thess 4:13-18 *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵For this we say 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. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.* NASU

1 Cor 15:50-57 *Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in 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 will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR*

VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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John 14:1-3 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If 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. NASU

James 5:7-9 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. ⁸You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. NASU

1 Thess 1:9-10 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

1 Thess 5:9-11 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. NASU

III. Brings Hope and Comfort in the Church in This Present Age

A. Imminency

“In doing some research on the doctrine of imminency, I noticed few people take the time to actually define what prophetic imminency means. First, let us look at the general definition of the key word ‘imminent.’ The quality or condition of being about to occur.”

Imminency, as it relates to Bible prophecy, simply means that the return of Jesus Christ for the Church can happen at any moment. No warning signs will indicate a short-term countdown. We as Christians remain on alert 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The only way for the rapture to be truly imminent is to have it transpire before the tribulation. If the Church were required to wait until after the manifestation of certain events, then there would be no doctrine of imminency.”

<https://www.raptureready.com/2016/07/19/imminency/#:~:text=Imminency%2C%20as%20it%20relates%20to%20Bible%20prophecy%2C%20simply.and%20the%20Rapture%20in%20Scripture%20%3A%3A%20Rapture%20Ready>

Scripture relating to Imminency:

1 Thess 1:9-10 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Other references supporting Imminency:

Acts 1:11; Php 3:20-21; 1 Thess 5:4-11; 1 Pet 1:13-16; Jude 20-23;

B. New Testament Saints Only (Regenerated, born again only)

1st Resurrection of the Holy Ones: These are different events in time, but cumulatively make up the first resurrection.

- Jesus the Christ as the First fruits (about 33 AD)
- The Church saints (asleep) at the Rapture of the Church (Unknown time) }

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All of God's holy saints who have passed in death and those few who remain at the end of the Tribulation.

- Old Testament saints, Tribulation Saints (asleep)
(Israelites and Gentiles still alive at the end of the Tribulation)

C. The Secret Rapture

Christ will come in the air and raise the glorified saints up to meet Him in the air. It is presumed that the saints will be raised from the dead in glorified bodies and taken up from this life likewise in glorified bodies. It is hard to imagine how the world would see, understand, or explain this miraculous phenomenon. It is believed that they will not see it. It will occur in secret, but nevertheless, many saints will be gone instantaneously.

Although this is widely believed amongst Premillennialists, I was not able to find a specific Scripture passage that clearly stated this as a secret event. **Discuss.**

D. What is the Glorification of the Saints?

“The short answer is that ‘glorification’ is God’s final removal of sin from the life of the saints (i.e., everyone who is saved) in the eternal state (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17). **At Christ’s coming, [in the air at the rapture]** the glory of God (Romans 5:2)—His honor, praise, majesty, and holiness—will be realized in us; instead of being mortals burdened with sin nature, we will be changed into holy immortals with direct and unhindered access to God’s presence, and we will enjoy holy communion with Him throughout eternity. In considering glorification, we should focus on Christ, for He is every Christian’s ‘blessed hope’; also, we may consider final glorification as the culmination of sanctification.

Final glorification must await the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 6:14). Until **He returns, [in the air, at the rapture]** we are burdened with sin, and our spiritual vision is distorted because of the curse. ‘For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known’ (1 Corinthians 13:12). Every day, we should be diligent by the Spirit to put to death what is ‘fleshly’ (sinful) in us (Romans 8:13).

How and when will we be finally glorified? At the last trumpet, **when Jesus comes, [in the air, at the rapture]** the saints will undergo a fundamental, instant transformation (‘we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye’ – 1 Corinthians 15:51); then the ‘perishable’ will put on the ‘imperishable’ (1 Corinthians 15:53).

Yet 2 Corinthians 3:18 clearly indicates that, in a mysterious sense, ‘we all,’ in the present, ‘with unveiled face’ are ‘beholding the glory of the Lord’ and are being transformed into His image ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Lest anyone imagine that this beholding and transformation (as part of sanctification) is the work of especially saintly people, the Scripture adds the following bit of information: ‘For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.’ In other words, it is a blessing bestowed on every believer. This does not refer to our final glorification but to an aspect of sanctification by which the Spirit is transfiguring us right now. To Him be the praise for His work in sanctifying us in the Spirit and in truth (Jude 24-25; John 17:17; 4:23).”

<https://www.gotquestions.org/glorification.html>

IV. Sequence of the “Events of the Rapture” (from Charting the End Times; a visual guide; p. 51)

1st The Lord Himself will descend from His Father’s house, where he is preparing a place for us’ (Jn 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:16)

2nd He will come again to receive us to Himself. (Jn 14:1-3)

- 3rd He will resurrect those who have fallen asleep in Him – deceased believers whom we will not precede. (1st Thess 4:14-15)
- 4th The Lord will shout as He descends (loud command – 1 Thess 4:16) All this takes place in the twinkling of an eye – (1 Cor 15:52)
- 5th We will hear the voice of the archangel (perhaps to lead Israel during the seven years of the Tribulation as he did in the OT – 1 Thess 4:16)
- 6th We will also hear the trumpet call of God (1 Thess 4:16), the last trumpet for the church. Don't confuse this with the 7th trumpet of judgement upon the world during the Tribulation in Rev 11:15.)
- 7th The dead in Christ will rise first (the corruptible ashes of their dead bodies are made incorruptible and joined together with their spirits, which Jesus brings with Him – 1 Thess 4:16-17).
- 8th Then we who are alive and remain will be changed (or made incorruptible by having our bodies made immortal - 1 Cor 15:51-53).
- 9th We will be caught up (raptured) together (1 Thess 4:17).
- 10th We will be caught up in the clouds (where dead and living believers will have a monumental reunion – 1 Thess 4:17)
- 11th We will meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:17).
- 12th Christ will receive us to Himself and take us to the Father's house "that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:3).
- 13th And so we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17).

V. Purpose of the Rapture

A. Remove God's adopted children, the saints of the Church age, from the coming judgment of God on the earth (Tribulation). The Church saints are not the target of this judgment, only because we stand in the righteousness of Christ. We have been judicially separated from our sins through the power of Christ's blood and are hence sealed unto salvation by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We in no way stand righteous before God in our own righteousness or power!

B. The Church is the **Bride of Christ!**

John 14:1-4 *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If 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.* NASU

An Important Quotation

The result of this threefold work is a perfect salvation, by which the sinner is justified, made acceptable to God, placed in Christ positionally, to be received by God as though he were the Son Himself. The individual who has this perfect standing of Christ can never be less than completely acceptable to God. The partial rapturist, who insists that only those who are "waiting" and "watching" will be translated, minimizes the perfect standing of the child of God in Christ and presents him before the Father in his own experimental righteousness. The sinner, then, must be less than justified, less than perfect in Christ.

Dwight Pentecost; *Things to Come*; p. 160