

What the Future Holds—Biblical Prophecy
Lesson 2: The Rapture

I. **Definition of the Rapture**: The “rapture of the church” is the carrying away of the church from earth to heaven to be with Christ.

A. The term “**rapture**” comes from the Latin word “**rapturo**” which translates the Greek word in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 for “caught up” (*harpazo*) which means to snatch up or catch up or take away.

B. The English term “rapture” means the state of being carried away, usually in joy or exhilaration. Thus the “rapture” will be a time of supreme joy, when Christ takes the church to be with Him in His presence.

II. **Views of the Rapture**: Within pre-millennialism (the view that Christ will return before the millennium and establish His kingdom) there are four basic views as to when the rapture will occur.

A. The four Premillennial views of the rapture are as follows:

the “**Partial rapture**” – only those who are waiting for rapture will be raptured;

the “**Midtribulation rapture**” – the rapture occurs in the middle of the tribulation;

the “**Posttribulation rapture**” – the rapture occurs at the end of the tribulation;

the “**Pretribulation rapture**” – the rapture occurs before the tribulation.

B. Support for the “**Pretribulation rapture**”:

1. The nature of the “Tribulation” – the tribulation is a period of “wrath” (Rev. 16:1) and Christians will be delivered from “wrath” – 1 Thess. 1:10

2. The imminency factor- when the rapture is referred to, it is always with the view that it could occur at any moment, that it is imminent, which would not be the case if it occurred at the end or in the middle of the tribulation- 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 John 2:28-3:3; 1 Cor. 15:51-58

3. The “church” in the book of Revelation- while the word “church” is used numerous times in Rev. 1-3, but it is never used in Rev. 4-19 when the discussion is about the events of the tribulation

4. The removal of the “restrainer” - the “man of sin” (anti-Christ) will not be revealed until the Holy Spirit’s restraining ministry through the church is removed- 2 Thess. 2:7-8

5. Populating the millennial kingdom- if the rapture occurs at Christ’s 2nd coming to earth, and all believers at that point are “raptured”, who will populate the millennial kingdom? A pretribulation rapture sees the church raptured before the Tribulation and the surviving Tribulation believers as the ones who enter the millennial kingdom and populate the millennium

6. The differences between the Rapture and the 2nd Coming of Christ- In the Rapture, Christ returns in the clouds; at the 2nd coming, He returns to the Mount of Olives (Zech.14:4-5). The Rapture sees a procession of saints from earth to heaven (John 14:1-3) while the 2nd Coming of Christ sees a procession of saints from heaven to earth (Rev. 19). At the rapture, the world will not be judged, but at the 2nd Coming of Christ, the entire world will be judged (Matt. 25:32; Ezek. 20:33-44).

III. **The Details of the Rapture**: The elements of the Rapture are primarily spelled out in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:51-58.

A. The Lord will descend from heaven- 1 Thess. 4:16a

- B. There will be a shout (1 Thess. 4:16b).
- C. There will be the voice of an archangel, probably Michael- 1 Thess 4:16c
- D. There will be the trumpet of God- 1 Thess. 4:16d; 1 Cor. 15:51-52
- E. The dead in Christ (those who died in Christ from the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 until the day of the Rapture) will be raptured 1st- 1 Thess. 4:16e; 1 Cor. 15:52
- F. They will receive an imperishable resurrection body- 1Cor. 15:52
- G. Christians alive at the Rapture will be changed- 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:52-55
- H. All Christians from that point on will always be with the Lord- 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:56-58
- I. The truth of the rapture is a cause for comfort and a motivation to serve Christ- 1 Thess. 4:18; 1 Cor. 15:58

Takeaways:

1. We are to always be prepared to meet the Lord, living dependently upon Christ so we can present to him a life that expresses His holiness- 1 John 3:3
2. We are to be sharing the good news of the gospel with those who don't know Christ- 2 Corinthians 5:20-21