

Session 6

# The Rapture of the Saints

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## A. Introduction

1. One of the main positive events that will happen in the End Times is commonly referred to as “the Rapture of the saints”. It is an event that believers can look forward to with hope (Lk. 21:28), as it marks the completion of our salvation in spirit, soul and body.
2. However, there are many differing views regarding this event and in some cases a lack of clarity about what Scripture says. Many believers may have our views on the Rapture influenced more by the media and what we watch in movies than what God’s Word actually says.
3. When studying the details of this event, there is a need to search across Scripture and find all verses (or as many as we can) regarding this event, and from these verses, piece together what God’s Word actually says about it in totality.
4. The four main passages of Scripture related to the Rapture of the saints are:
  - a. 1 Cor. 15:51–53;
  - b. 1 Thes. 4:16–18;
  - c. Matt. 24:30–31;
  - d. Rev. 11:15

## B. What is the Rapture?

1. The actual word “Rapture” does not occur in the Bible. It is instead a widely accepted term to describe an event where believers are “caught up” into the air to meet with Jesus.
2. 1 Thes. 4:17 gives us an idea of what the Rapture is like: *“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”*
  - a. This speaks of a literal and physical catching up in the air. The Greek word translated as “caught up” is *harpazo*, which can also mean “carry away” or “snatched away”.
  - b. It is not a secret event but one that will be dramatic that all those around will be able to witness with their eyes.

- c. Contrary to what some stories and movies have portrayed, it is also not a sudden disappearance of the saints into thin air, but a very obvious lifting up of the saints from earth into the sky.

### **C. What Else Happens at the Rapture?**

The Bible mentions that a few things happen simultaneously with the Rapture:

#### 1. The Second Coming of Jesus

- a. The Rapture occurs at the same time that Jesus descends upon the clouds in power and glory at His Second Coming. He will send forth His angels who will gather the saints from across the earth (Matt. 24:30–31).

#### 2. The Resurrection of the Dead Saints

- a. Just before the Rapture of saints who are alive at Jesus' Second Coming, the dead in Christ — faithful believers who have died throughout history — will be raised first.
- b. Then, we who are alive will be caught up with these resurrected saints to meet Jesus in the air (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes. 4:17)

#### 3. Glorification of the Saints

- a. The faithful saints of God will all receive glorified bodies, similar to Jesus' glorified body. Our glorified bodies will not age, will be incorruptible by sin, and will be immortal (1 Cor. 15:51–54).
- b. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:52 that this is a “mystery”, where we will be “changed — in the twinkling of an eye” at the same time that we are caught up to meet Jesus at His Second Coming.

### **D. When does the Rapture Take Place in God's End-Time Timeline?**

- 1. There are a few views in the Body of Christ on when the Rapture happens in the End-Time timeline, and it is most commonly described in relation to the Great Tribulation — “pre-tribulation” or “post-tribulation” Rapture.
- 2. However, God's Word does not frame the timing of the Rapture in relation to the Great Tribulation. Instead, the Rapture is always inextricably linked to the Second Coming of Jesus in Scripture, and happens at the same time that the Lord returns (2 Thes. 2:1).

3. At the Sound of a “Trumpet”

- a. The Second Coming of Jesus and Rapture is heralded and announced by the sounding of a trumpet (1 Thes. 4:16, Matt 24:31, 1 Cor. 15:51). This reference to a trumpet gives us a clue as to when these events actually occur in God’s End-Time timeline.
- b. If we search across passages of Scripture on the End Times for a “last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:51), we find in the book of Revelation a series of seven trumpets that are sounded as part of God’s End-Time judgments on Antichrist and those who oppose Jesus on the earth (Rev. 8, 9, 11:15–19).
- c. The seventh trumpet is the “last trumpet” that will be sounded (Rev. 11:15). It is a supernatural event and will likely be heard not only by believers but by all nations as well.
- d. It is at the sounding of the seventh / last trumpet that Jesus will return and saints will be raptured.

4. The last / seventh trumpet sounds at the end of the Great Tribulation

- a. When Scripture on the End Times, especially from the book of Revelation and Daniel are pieced together, we see that the 3½ years of Great Tribulation will coincide with the release of the seal and trumpet judgments against the Antichrist. (The End-Time timeline will be covered in a later session.)
- b. The last trumpet occurs just before the seven “bowls of the wrath of God” (Rev. 16:1) are poured out on the earth, but after the Great Tribulation.
- c. Scripture is also clear that Jesus will only return after the Antichrist is revealed (2 Thes. 2:3–4), meaning that the saints will not be raptured before tribulation.

5. Scripture points to a post-tribulation-pre-wrath Rapture

- a. As Scripture says that the saints will not face the wrath of God (1 Thes. 1:10), but will still undergo tribulation especially in the form of persecution under the hand of the Antichrist (Rev. 12:17; Dan. 7:25), thus the timing of the Rapture can be more accurately described as a “post-tribulation-pre-wrath” Rapture.
- b. Since there will be great glory poured out upon the Church of Jesus Christ during the time of the Great Tribulation, we will want to be around to live through the finest hours of human history for His people.

## **E. Some Misunderstood and Misappropriated Verses Regarding the Rapture**

### 1. Matthew 24:36–41 — The Days of Noah

- a. This passage of Scripture is one of the most widely used to point to a pre-tribulation Rapture, as the phrase “taken away” here is often read only in context of the “coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:37), which is the return of Jesus.
- b. However, many leave out what the return of Jesus is likened to in verse 37 — the “days of Noah”, which sets the actual context for the rest of the verses.
- c. The “days of Noah” allude not to Rapture, but instead to judgment. In Noah’s time, the people were unaware of coming judgment until the floodwaters of judgment came and “took them all away” (v39).
- d. The same will be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man — many people would be swept away in the floods of judgment that the Lord is going to pour out on the earth leading up to Jesus’ return.
- e. Thus, this passage does not refer to the Rapture and it is actually better to be left behind instead of being “taken away” by the floods of judgment.

### 2. Revelation 3:10 — The Letter to the Church of Philadelphia

- a. Some have taken this particular verse and applied it as a general principle to all believers across all times — that for those who keep God’s command to persevere, we will be “kept from” the hour of trial, which some interpret to mean that we will be spared from persecution.
- b. However, the rest of Scripture does not support this principle, as Jesus guarantees that we will be persecuted and that there will be tribulation.
- c. Furthermore, the word “kept from” that Jesus used in Rev. 3:10 (Greek: *tereo*) is the same word that was used in John 17:15, where He prayed, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”
- d. Thus, it is a misinterpretation of this verse that we will be spared tribulation and be Raptured away before it happens.

## **F. A Recent Misconception Regarding the Rapture**

1. One misconception that has surfaced recently regarding the Rapture is that there will be two Raptures and two groups of people raptured at different times.
2. This is not in accordance to the Bible. If we search the Scriptures, there is only one catching up / gathering of the saints to meet Jesus in the air.
  - a. However, the Bible does talk about two resurrections. Apostle John explicitly states that there is a “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5), which then implies that there is a second resurrection. This second resurrection is described in Rev. 20:12–13.
  - b. Nowhere does Scripture say that there is a “first” catching up, and a “second” catching up. Instead, the Rapture is always portrayed as one event that simultaneously happens with the Second Coming of Jesus.