

END TIMES – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

WHAT, WHEN, & WHY

TEXT: Acts 1:9-11 9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Revelation 3:10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

INTRODUCTION: The first event of the end times is the rapture of the church.

I. WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

A. The rapture is that event when the Risen Christ returns in the _____ to take all of the _____ to their home in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For 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 by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

B. The bodies of the _____ are raised first.

1. These bodies are miraculously transformed into glorified, _____ bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

2. The glorified body is reunited with the _____ and _____ of the person which has been with Jesus in heaven since their death.

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

C. Then believers who are _____ will also rise to meet the Lord in the air.

1. They will be given their _____ bodies as well.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*”

2. The removal of all believers from the earth allows the _____ to begin his rise to power.

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do* so until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

“He who now restrains” is the _____, not the Holy Spirit.

How do we know the Holy Spirit does not leave the earth when the believers are raptured?

We know because in the first years of the tribulation, a great multitude of people get _____.

II. WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE OCCUR?

A. Three views:

1. Pre-tribulation: The rapture occurs _____ the tribulation begins.
2. Mid-tribulation: The rapture occurs at the _____ (three and a half years into tribulation).
3. Post-tribulation: The rapture occurs at the _____ of the tribulation, the beginning of millennium.

B. Why I believe the rapture occurs before the tribulation begins:

1. Because of the promises of God concerning the coming _____ of God.

- a. **The wrath of God will be poured out during the tribulation.** The wrath of God is referenced _____ times in Rev. from 6:16 to 19:15.
 (Rev. 6:16,17; 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15)

- b. **But the wrath of God is for _____ only.**

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

- c. **Believers are promised that we are to be _____ from the wrath to come.**

Romans 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2. **Because of God's promises to the _____.**

- a. **God promises to the whole church of overcomers at Philadelphia in**

Revelation 3:10 "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."

- b. **The only hour of trial for the whole earth revealed in Scripture is the _____.**

- c. **Who are overcomers? _____**

1 John 5:4-5 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

I believe the rapture occurs before the tribulation...

3. **Because the _____ is missing from the account of the tribulation given in the Revelation.**

- a. **Rev. 2-3 contains Christ's message to the church through history.**

- b. **Rev. 4-5 is the scene in heaven just before the tribulation begins.**

The elders (who come out of the church, Rev. 5:9-10) are wearing golden

crowns, which implies they have already been through the _____ of Christ.

- c. **There is no mention of the church from Rev. ____ to Rev. ____** which covers the entire seven year tribulation. While there are many people saved during this period, God must use other witnesses to proclaim the gospel, for the church is not present on the earth to do it.
4. **Because the rapture will occur suddenly and _____.**

Matthew 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”

- a. If the Scripture taught a mid-tribulation rapture, then the rapture would not be a _____ because you could mark time from the beginning of the tribulation which is inaugurated by the signing of a covenant (treaty) with Israel and then proceeds with a specific succession of events that anyone could follow.
- b. The same can be said if the rapture comes at the _____ of the tribulation.

III. WHY WILL GOD RAPTURE THE CHURCH?

- A. To _____ God's people from the devastation, disasters, and death that will come upon the earth as a result of the wrath and judgment of God.
- B. To give a dramatic testimony to the unbelievers who are left behind so as to encourage them to believe the _____ and turn to Christ before it is too late.