

WHAT JESUS SAID – THEN AND NOW

About the Rapture

TEXT: Mt. 24:37-44

INTRODUCTION: With the appearance of the three of the four blood moons on days of Jewish festivals, the world has focused new attention on Biblical promises of the end times. A prominent part of that attention is specifically on the rapture of the church.

Since we are examining what Jesus said then and what it means to us now, it would probably be a good time to see what Jesus said about the rapture of believers. Actually, Jesus described what was going to happen in Mt. 24

Matthew 24:37–44 37 But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two *women* will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Interestingly, the angels that appeared when Jesus ascended back into heaven also made a reference to this coming event.

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.”

And when God gave the Revelation to the apostle John, John saw the risen Christ addressing the seven churches. And to the church at Philadelphia (the missionary church), the Lord Jesus made this promise.

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.

All of these passages are references to what is called the rapture of the church.

I. WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

- A. The rapture is that event when The Risen Christ returns in the sky to take all of the saved 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 dead believers are raised first.

1. **These bodies are miraculously transformed into glorified, resurrection 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 soul and spirit 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 alive will also rise to meet the Lord in the air.

1. **They will be given their resurrection 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 Antichrist 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.

II. WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE OCCUR?

A. Theologically there are three views:

1. **Pre-tribulation:** The rapture occurs before the tribulation begins.
2. **Mid-tribulation:** The rapture occurs at the mid-point (three and a half years into tribulation).

3. Post-tribulation: The rapture occurs at the end of the tribulation, the beginning of the millennium.

B. According to the Calendar?

2020?

2017?

2016?

2015?

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

C. It could happen any moment!

1. Jesus told us we could recognize the season of the rapture.

- a. By what happens to Israel
- b. By conditions in the world

By what happens to Israel

Matthew 24:32–35 32 “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. 33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! 34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

By conditions in the world

Matthew 24:37–39 37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

- **Pervasive evil**

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

- **Acceptance of evil**
- **Willfully ignorant of God’s warnings**
- **Oblivious to the times in which they live**

III. WHY WILL GOD RAPTURE THE CHURCH?

- A. **To protect 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 gospel and turn to Christ before it is too late.

IV. WHAT SHOULD WE DO IF WE BELIEVE THE RAPTURE IS COMING?

- A. **Be watchful – expectant**
- B. **Live ready**
 - 1. Be doing what you want to be found doing
 - 2. Warn others – as Jesus did, not with signs or screaming

CONCLUSION:

Do you believe the words of Jesus?

Are you ready?

Are you living ready?