

WHAT JESUS SAID – THEN AND NOW

Digging Deeper Into the Rapture

INTRODUCTION: The event of the end times that interests people the most is the rapture of the church.

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.

I. WHAT

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 Cor. 15:42-44)**
- 2. The glorified body is reunited with the soul and spirit of the person which has been with Jesus in heaven since their death.**
- 3. (Absent from the body, present with the Lord. 2 Cor. 5:8)**

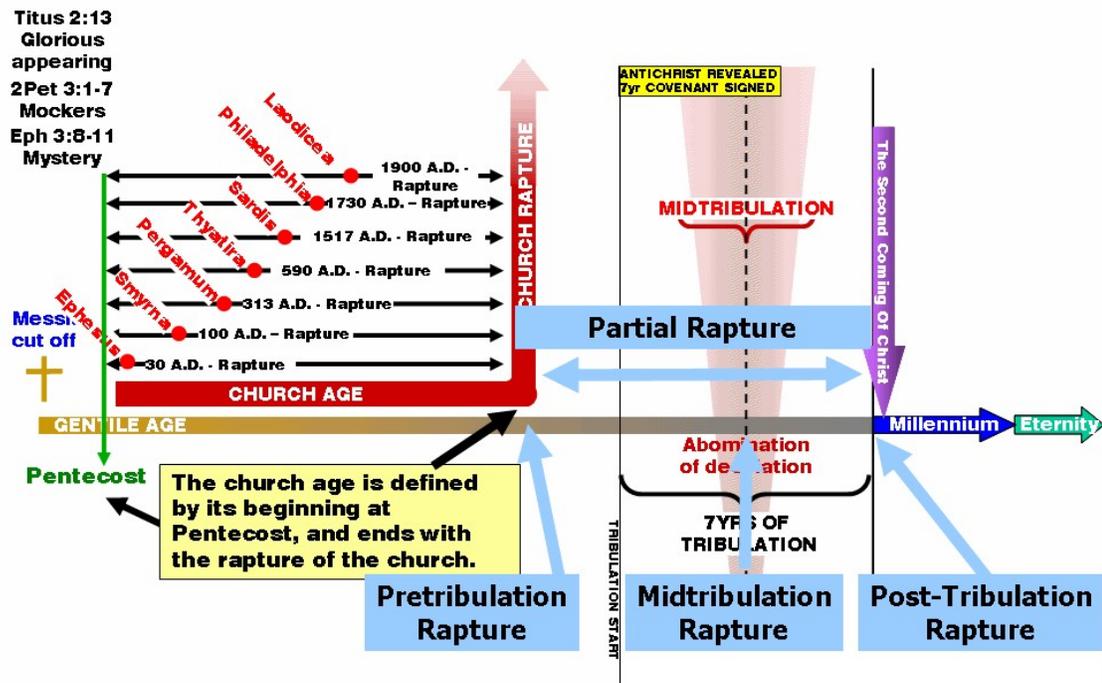
C. Then believers who are alive will also rise to meet the Lord in the air.

- 1. They will be given their resurrection bodies as well. (1 Cor. 15:51-54)**
- 2. The removal of all believers from the earth allows the Antichrist to begin his rise to power. (2 Thess. 2:6-8)**

II. WHEN

Three views:

Four Views of the Rapture



This graphic, which offers a very good summary of end time events says four, but the fourth one is just a combination of two of the others.

A. Pre-tribulation: before the tribulation begins

Why I believe the rapture occurs before the tribulation begins:

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

- The wrath of God will be poured out during the tribulation.
- The wrath of God is referenced 10 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)

Rev. 6:16, 17 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Rev. 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

- But the wrath of God is for unbelievers only. (Jn. 3:36, Eph. 5:6)

Jn. 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.”

Eph. 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.

d. Believers are promised that we are to be spared from the wrath to come. (Rom. 5:9, 1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9)

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

1 Thess. 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 Thess. 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 overcomers.

a. God promises to the whole church of overcomers at Philadelphia in Rev. 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 coming for the whole earth revealed in Scripture is the tribulation.

c. Who are overcomers?

Born again believers

1 Jn. 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?

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

a. Rev. 2-3 contain 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 Judgment Seat of Christ.

Rev. 5:9-10 9 And they sang a new song, saying:
 “You are worthy to take the scroll,
 And to open its seals;
 For You were slain,
 And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
 Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God;
 And we shall reign on the earth.”

c. There is no mention of the church from Rev. 6 to Rev. 19 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 unexpectedly.

Mt. 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 surprise because you could mark time from the beginning of the tribulation which is inaugurated by the signing of a covenant with Israel and then proceeds with a specific succession of events that anyone could follow.
- b. The same can be said if the rapture follows the tribulation.

B. Post-tribulation: at the end of the tribulation, beginning of the millennium

1. Arguments for

- a. **2 Thessalonians 2:2-3** 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

This passage says that the Day of Christ, which is the rapture of the church, will not come until the antichrist is revealed.

Therefore the rapture cannot precede the tribulation because the antichrist is revealed during the tribulation.

- b. **Matt. 24** is a chronological account of the end times detailing the following events in the following order:
 - 1) The “beginnings of sorrows” beginning with the days of the early church (24:4-14)
 - 2) The tribulation with the persecution by the antichrist (24:15-28)
 - 3) The Second Coming of Christ (24:29-31)
 - 4) The Rapture of the Church (24:36-44)
- c. The rapture and the second coming of Christ essentially occur at the same time. If this is true, the rapture must occur after the tribulation because everybody agrees that the second coming occurs after the tribulation.

2. Response to these arguments

- a. The overwhelming textual evidence shows that the Greek of 2 Thess. 2:2 says, “as though the day of the Lord had come.” This makes a big difference. The day of Christ is the rapture, but the day of the Lord is

the time of God’s judgment upon the earth that culminates in the Battle of Armageddon.

Certainly the day of the Lord will not be completed until after the antichrist is revealed.

Also, the rest of this passage makes much better sense in light of a pre-tribulation rapture.

2 Thess. 2:7-8 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.

The one taken out of the way so that the antichrist can be revealed is the church. This necessitates a pre-trib rapture.

b. Mt. 24 is not chronological.

The context of the chapter says that **Jesus was answering three questions asked by His disciples in**

Matthew 24:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*”

Jesus answers the questions in the order asked.

- 1) When will these things (the destruction of the temple) be? 24:4-14**
- 2) What will be the sign of Your coming? 24:15-31**
- 3) What will be the sign of the end of the age? 24:32-44**
 - a) The sign of the budding fig tree (rebirth of Israel) 24:32-35**
 - b) The unexpected rapture of believers 24:36-44**

This is the better exegesis of the passage because it fits the context of the questions, and it allows the parable of the fig tree to make sense.

In addition, the rapture cannot be unexpected as described in 24:36-44 if it occurs with or after the glorious appearing of the Lord described in 24:27-31.

- c) The rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ are clearly distinctive events.** Note the differences.

Rapture	Second Coming
Translation of all believers	No translation at all
Imminent, any-moment	Follows definite predicted signs including tribulation

Not in the Old Testament	Predicted often in Old
Before the day of wrath	Concluding the day of wrath
Christ comes for His own	Christ comes with His own
He comes in the air	He comes to the earth

C. Mid-tribulation: at the mid-point (three and a half years into tribulation)

1. Arguments for

- a. The two witnesses are raptured in the middle of the tribulation. Rev. 11:12
- b. The 144,000 are seen in heaven shortly after the middle of the tribulation. Rev. 14:1
- c. God reaps the harvest of the earth in Rev. 14:14.
- d. The church must experience a time of tribulation brought by persecution. **John 16:33** *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*
- e. The church will not experience the wrath of God, but that is not poured out until the Great Tribulation which is the second half of the seven year tribulation period.

2. Response

- a. The two witnesses are raptured in the middle of the tribulation, but not with anyone else. They are caught up alone.
- b. The 144,000 are taken to heaven, but we do not know if they were allowed to die and went, or if they were raptured. Either way still does not mean that God has waited until now to rapture the church. In fact, none of the descriptions of the rapture elsewhere in Scripture are associated with this event. The 144,000 are called firstfruits. This refers to the fact that they were the firstfruits of the tribulation harvest. If the church had remained on earth during the first half of the tribulation, the 144,000 would be second fruits at best.
- c. Rev. 14:14 does refer to saved people being taken to heaven, but there is no mention of anything associated with the rapture. In fact, the reaping with the sickle indicates death. Christ does not come and get these; they come to Him by death.
- d. The church has and will endure tribulation through persecution, but that does not mean it must endure the tribulation. The tribulation is not just a period of persecution. It is a time when God pours out His wrath and judgment upon the earth.
- e. There is no doubt that the wrath of God begins to be poured out upon the earth during the first half of the tribulation.

D. The fourth view is Partial Rapture

- 1. Some get raptured before the tribulation and others at mid or end of tribulation.**
- 2. Generally, those who hold this view say when one gets raptured depends on their faithfulness to the Lord.**

CONCLUSION: God has made plain not only what He has already done in Christ, but what He is going to do in the days to come. Are you ready? Are your loved ones ready?