

A STUDY ON THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

A. THE DETAILS OF THE RAPTURE

1. What the Rapture is

- a. The rapture of the Church will be a glorious event which will come about at the close of the Church Age. At that time the Lord Jesus will resurrect those who have died *in Christ* and catch them up to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:13-18).
- b. At that time the generation of believers who are alive will be given incorruptible bodies and then be caught up also to meet the Lord (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-53; Phil. 3:20,21; Rev. 4:1).
- c. The Rapture will be the fulfillment of Christ's promise to believers which is the blessed hope of all those in Christ (Jn. 14:1-6; Titus 2:13).
- d. The Rapture will be the means by which the Lord delivers His people from the wrath of the Tribulation Period which will come upon an unbelieving world (Rom. 5:9; I Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10).

2. Who the Rapture will include

- a. The Rapture will include all those who have died *in Christ* (I Thess. 4:16) and also *living believers* (I Cor. 15:51). It will involve all those who have received Christ from the day of Pentecost until the close of the Church program (Acts 15:14).
- b. The Rapture will *not* include O.T. saints since they will be resurrected and judged after the Tribulation Period (Dan. 12:1,2; Hos. 13:14; Isa. 26:16-21; Matt. 25:31-40).
- c. The Rapture will *not* include the whole realm of Christendom but only those born-again believers who are blood-bought and blood--washed by faith in Christ (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 13:23-25; I Cor. 6:9-11).

3. When the Rapture will occur

- a. The Rapture is an imminent event or one which could take place at any moment (Rom. 13:11,12; Heb. 10:37; Jas. 5:8; I Thess. 1:9,10).
- b. Notice since believers will appear with Christ in glory (Col. 3:4) and return with Him at the Second Coming (Rev. 19:11-16) the Rapture will occur just prior to the Tribulation Period.

- c. There are no signs concerning the Rapture of the Church and therefore nobody knows when the event will occur. We can assume however since many of the signs concerning Israel's redemption and the one-world church are coming to pass, the rapture must be very soon.²²

4. How the Rapture differs from the Second Coming of Christ.

a. **The Rapture:**

- (1) Church caught up with Christ, "For His own" (I Thess. 4:13-18).
- (2) Gentile Nations unchanged (I Thess. 5:5-7).
- (3) Earth will be unchanged.
- (4) Involves a mystery: All will not die (I Cor. 15:51)
- (5) Christ's gathering believers- the blessed hope of those in Him (Tit. 2:13).
- (6) Christ will come as the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29)
- (7) Christ's coming unseen to the world.

b. **The Revelation or Second Coming**

- (1) Church coming with Christ: "With His own" (Rev. 19:14).
- (2) Gentile nations to be judged (Matt. 25:31-46).
- (3) Curse on the earth partially lifted (Isa. 11:6-9; 35:1-10; Mic 4:4,5; Rom. 8:18-23).
- (4) Involves no mystery. Both the O.T. and N.T. speak of His coming (Dan 2:44,45; Isa. 2:1-4; Matt. 25:31-46).
- (5) Christ's gathering will concern Israel (Matt. 24:29-31; 30:3,4).
- (6) Christ comes as Messiah and King (Zech. 14:9-17; Rev 19:6).
- (7) Christ's coming will be seen by the whole world (Matt. 24:29,30; 25:31; II Thess. 1:9; Rev. 1:7; 6:16,17; 19: 11-16).²³

B. THE DIFFERENT VIEWS CONCERNING THE RAPTURE

1. The **Mid-tribulational** Rapture view.

- a. It's **position**. This view holds that the Church will be raptured in the middle of the Tribulation Period just before the time of the great tribulation. Proponents of this view identify the "*last trump*" of I Cor. 15:52 with the *seventh* trumpet blast of Rev.11:15. They see the first three and a half years of the tribulation as separate from the time of God's wrath.

b. **Refutation**

- (1) This view fails to identify the whole Tribulation Period as a part of God's wrath not just the last three and one-half years. Rev. 15:1 indicates that all the things prior to that time are apart of God's wrath.

- (2) This view fails to distinguish between what happens at the sounding of these two trumpets (I Cor. 15:52; Rev. 11:15). One calls saints to glory, the other calls for judgment upon God's enemies.

2. The **Post-tribulational** Rapture View

- a. It's *position*. This view holds that the Church will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation Period or as a part of the program of Christ's Second Coming. Proponents of this view see the anticipation of the Tribulation Period in passages such as Acts 14:22; I Thess. 3:3,4).

b. *Refutation*.

- (1) This view fails to distinguish between the tribulation, which the Church must suffer as a result of man's persecutions, and tribulation which will be God's wrath on an unbelieving world.
- (2) This view fails to produce any evidence of a resurrection of Church saints from the passages concerning the Lord's coming (Rev. 19:11-21).

3. The **Partial** Rapture View.

- a. It's *position*. This view holds that only *spiritual* believers will be raptured prior to the Tribulation Period. Using verses like Matt. 24:13; Luke 21:36; Phil. 3:20; II Tim. 4:8 and Heb. 9:28, proponents of this view contend that carnal believers will be raptured sometime during the Tribulation Period after they have been purified.

b. *Refutation*

- (1) This position denies the atoning work of Christ to deliver the believer from condemnation (Rom. 8:1; Jn. 5:24).
- (2) This position bases a part of God's program of salvation on works instead of grace.
- (3) It also confuses the practical aspect of sanctification with the ultimate aspect which will come about at the rapture (Jude 24; Eph. 5:26, 27).

4. The **Pre-tribulational** Rapture view.

- a. It's *position*. This view holds that all of the Church saints will be raptured *prior* to the revelation of the Antichrist and the beginning of the Tribulation Period.
- b. It's *defense*.

- (1) God's purpose for the Church is completely unrelated to His purpose in the Tribulation Period. The Tribulation Period of the seventieth week is determined upon Israel (Dan. 9:24). The Tribulation Period will punish unbelievers (Mic. 5:15; Rev. 3:10), and prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ and Israel to receive the Messiah (Zech. 12:10-14; Matt. 24:30).
- (2) Notice there are no references made to the Church saints being upon the earth during anytime of the Tribulation Period. cp. Rev. 4:1 to 19:10.
- (3) Paul's words of encouragement to the Thessalonian believers argue for a pre-tribulation position. The Thessalonians were troubled about their dead loved ones not having a part in the Rapture. Paul shared that they would be involved in it first. If the Thessalonians had thought their loved ones would have to go through the Tribulation they would have rejoiced for their escape rather than being troubled (I Thess. 4:13-18).
- (4) Notice also since the Church will return with Christ at the Second Coming an interval of time is needed for the Church saints to be examined and rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ (I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10).
- (5) The imminent return of Christ for the Church also argues for a pre-tribulation position. Since many of the details of the Tribulation Period are known, if the Church were to go through any part of this period it would destroy the imminency of Christ's return which would be precluded by these events.
- (6) The promises which the Lord has made to Church saints argue against the Church going through any part of the Tribulation Period (Rom. 5:9; I Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev.3:10).
- (7) Finally the examples of God delivering His own prior to judgment and destruction argues for a pre-tribulation view. Enoch was translated *before* the judgment of the flood. Noah was kept from the judgment. Lot was called out of Sodom *before* it was destroyed. And Rahab was delivered *before* Jericho was destroyed.²⁴

C. SOME PERSONAL APPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RAPTURE

1. Since Christ may return at any moment believers should stay in fellowship and love His appearing (I Jn. 2:28; II Tim. 4:8)
2. Since His return is imminent, it should deter the believer from sinning and not being involved in the Lord work (I Jn.3:2,3; Luke 19:12,13; Rom. 13:11; I Thess. 5:6,7).
3. Since His return *is* imminent believers should be concerned about the things which they would do if they knew the exact time of His return. If they knew the day they would be seeking to do the Lord's will, witnessing to those lost, and being a faithful steward in

whatever they have been called upon to do.

D. SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED CONCERNING THOSE SAVED AFTER THE RAPTURE

1. Will people be saved after the Rapture of the Church occurs?

Yes, however, it should be noted that those saved after the Rapture will not be those who heard the gospel and had an opportunity to be saved and yet rejected Christ before the rapture occurred (II Thess. 2:8-12). The Bible states very emphatically that those who die without Christ will die in their sins and will have no second chances (John 8:24; Luke 16:19-31). Notice God could not be just to offer a second chance to those who have rejected Christ before the Rapture when there is no second chance given to those who died rejecting Christ.

2. What will change after the Rapture occurs?

First of all, the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit will be suspended for some 3 ½ years after the Rapture occurs (II Thess. 2:7,8). Salvation will no longer be predicated on the basis of responding in faith to the gospel of Christ. Those saved will be responding to the message of the Kingdom Gospel which will be declared by the two witnesses who will come on the scene at the middle of the seven years tribulation period (Matt. 24:9-14; Rev. 11:3). No one can be saved apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit when the gospel is preached and so no one will be saved until then because there will be no message preached.

3. Who are those saved after the Rapture?

According to Rev. 7:2-8 and 11:3 there will be a 144,000 Jews who will respond to the Kingdom Gospel which will be preached by the two witnesses. Multitudes of Gentiles will also be saved in response to the Kingdom Gospel and will evidence their faith by their kindness extended to the Jews during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 7:9-17; Matt. 25:34-40). The Scriptures point out that most of those saved during the Tribulation Period will either be beheaded or they will die from starvation or some other judgment of that time because they will refuse to worship the Antichrist and receive the mark of the beast (Rev. 7:16, 17; 20:4).

Note: Much of this material is taken from the author's work entitled Simple Outlines in Systematic Theology available in the bookstore section of this website.

