

“The Rapture: An Explanation and the Five Different Views”
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Rev. 4 and 5: The Throne Room of God, where the Lord is glorified as Creator and Savior.

Today: The Rapture; an Explanation and the Five Different Views.

Three Essentials of the Rapture: The Preterist (*Partial*), Historicist, Idealist, and Futurist all agree.

1. Christ is returning. Rev. 22:12, “I am coming soon ...”
2. No one knows when Christ will return. Mk. 13:32, “Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”
3. The Rapture will bring about the resurrection of the bodies of Believers in Jesus Christ.

Rapture – The Latin term *Raptus*, from the Greek *Harpazo* (1 Th. 4:17, “*To seize, to snatch.*”)

- Jn. 14:1-3, “Let not your hearts be troubled... If I go and prepare a place for you, I will **come again** and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”
- The term “Rapture” was first used in the seventeenth century by Increase Mather.
- The early church thought Christ would return in their lifetimes. “*What happens to those believers who die before Christ returns—will they be able to participate in His return?*”

1 Th. 4:13-18 describes the order of events of the Rapture:

1. The Lord himself will return with three sounds (or combination of all three): a loud command, voice of the archangel, and the trumpet call of God (see Ex. 19 at Mt. Sinai).
2. The dead in Christ will rise **FIRST**.
 - a. “Fallen asleep” is not Soul Sleep: “...today you will be with me in paradise.” (Lk. 23:43)
 - b. If you die today, your **soul/spirit** goes to heaven while your body goes to “sleep.”
 - c. Ps. 90:10, “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we **fly away**.”
 - i. “Gathered to his people” (Gen. 25:8, Abraham). This does not refer to the body being gathered to the earth, but the soul being gathered.
 - ii. Lk. 16:22, “The poor man died and was carried by the angels...”
3. We who are alive, who are left will be “caught up” (with new glorified bodies).
 - a. Harpazo – used in Greek literature when **Fate** “snatched” the living from earth.
 - b. Resurrection in the OT? Is. 26:19, “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.”
4. We will be “together w/ **them** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” (lower)

“What happens to those believers before the return of Christ?” 1 Cor. 15

1 Cor. 15:50-55, We will be resurrected ...in the “twinkling” of an eye. (*Rhipe*: “Jerk”)

1 Cor. 15:42-44, Four adjectives to describe the resurrected body:

1. Imperishable. No longer subject to physical decay, aging, sickness, and death.
2. Glory (*Doxa*). It connotes bright, physically wondrous, remarkably changed.
3. Power. No more weakness due to the fall.

4. Spiritual body. Physical, but *empowered* by the Spirit; fitted for the next life.

Five Different Views of the Rapture

1. Partial Rapture: Only faithful believers will be raptured; the rest will be raptured in groups throughout the Tribulation OR at the end of the Tribulation (??).
 - a. History:
 - i. 1853. Robert Govett, British evangelist.
 - ii. Second century? Irenaeus wrote “those who are spiritual” will be raptured. Then, the rest of the believers will be raptured at *the end* of the Tribulation.
 - b. Proponents: Watchman Nee and Hudson Taylor (Chinese evangelists)
 - c. Scriptural Support:
 - i. Mt. 25:1-13, Parable of the ten virgins, waiting for the bridegroom. Five bring enough oil (the faithful ones); five don't.
 - ii. Lk. 21:36, “*Stay awake* at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”
 - d. Strengths: The Bible *does* stress staying awake, being prepared for Christ's return.
 - e. Weaknesses: Exegetical issues, may breed record keeping and anxiety.
2. Pre-Tribulation Rapture: The Rapture occurs *before* the 7-year Tribulation while the Second Coming occurs at the *end* of the 7-year Tribulation. The Rapture is described as Jesus coming *for* the church & the Second Coming is Jesus coming *with* the church.
 - a. History: Clarified in the 1830's by John Nelson Darby, a British evangelist.
 - b. Proponents: Robert Jeffress, John MacArthur, Tommy Nelson.
 - c. Scriptural Support:
 - i. 1 Th. 5:9, “For God has not destined us for *wrath*, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - ii. Jer. 30:7. Tribulation is known as the time of “Jacob's Trouble.” (Jews)
 - d. Strengths:
 - i. No mention of the word “church” in Revelation from chapters 4 to 21.
 - ii. The early church seemed to view Christ's return as *imminent* (could return at any moment; not waiting for any events to occur before Christ returns).
 - e. Weaknesses:
 - i. There's no historical record of this view in the early church.
 - ii. This view looks like “three comings” of Christ, not two.
3. Mid-Tribulation Rapture: The Rapture occurs in *the middle* of the 7-year Tribulation. (Dan. 9). Believers go through the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, but are raptured *before* the wrath of God falls on the earth in the last 3 ½ years, (GREAT Tribulation).
 - a. History: 1941. An American, Norman B. Harrison.
 - b. Proponents: Gleason Archer and Harold Ockenga preached this position.
 - c. Scriptural Support:
 - i. Dan. 7:25, The saints “...shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.” (1 year, 2 years, ½ year = *3 ½ years*).

- ii. Rev. 11:15, “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has **become** the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.’”
 - d. Strengths:
 - i. The Bible refers to the “**Great** Tribulation” (Mt. 24), beginning with the Abomination of Desolation (Antichrist sets himself up as god).
 - e. Weaknesses:
 - i. 1941 is a very new date in the history of the church for this view.
 - ii. Won’t the church escape God’s wrath according to 1 Th. 5:9?
4. Pre-Wrath Tribulation Rapture: Believers will be raptured in the second half of the 7-year Tribulation, yet **before** God’s wrath falls. This view is very similar to the Mid-Tribulation view; yet differs from that perspective by a few months.
- a. History: 1990. Marv Rosenthal, an American Jewish believer and writer for *Zion’s Hope* and fellow businessman Robert D. Van Kampen formulated this view.
 - b. Proponents: There are many, but it’s the newest view, so it’s not as well known.
 - c. Scriptural Support:
 - i. Mt. 24:22, “If those days had not been **cut short**, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”
 - d. Strengths:
 - i. The Rapture must occur **before** God’s wrath falls on the earth because believers do not ever experience God’s wrath.
 - ii. God’s wrath is not mentioned as falling to the earth until **after** the sixth seal is broken. (Rev. 6:12-17)
 - e. Weaknesses:
 - i. 1990 is an extremely new date in the history of the church for this view.
 - ii. “Cut short” of Mt. 24:22 may refer to Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70.
5. Post-Tribulation Rapture: The Rapture is at the **end** of the Tribulation. The church undergoes the Tribulation, but is somehow protected from the wrath of God. Thus, the Rapture occurs *simultaneously* with the second coming of Christ (**same event**).
- a. History – Second century. This is the earliest view of the church according to the historical writings. Papias and Polycarp (disciples of John) held to this view.
 - b. Proponents: Jeff Durbin, Al Mohler, Charles Spurgeon
 - c. Scriptural Support:
 - i. Mt. 24:29-31, “Immediately **after** the Tribulation ... they will gather his elect...”
 - ii. 2 Th. 2:3, “That Day (the Lord’s return) will not come, unless the rebellion comes **first**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed...” (the Antichrist)
 - d. Strengths:
 - i. This is the oldest view of the church.
 - ii. Revelation mentions **one** return of the Lord (Rev. 19), after the Tribulation.
 - e. Weaknesses:
 - i. Because of Christ’s death for us, believers never experience God’s wrath. The wrath of 1 Th. 5:9 must refer to God’s wrath in **hell**, not on the earth.
 - ii. This view cancels the view that Christ’s return is imminent.

Six ways to prepare for the Rapture:

1. Seek peace and pursue it, Ps. 34:14.
2. Grieve and comfort biblically:
 - a. “(Do) not grieve as others who have no *hope*.” (1 Th. 4:13)
 - b. “Encourage one another with these words.” (1 Th. 4:18)
3. Watch yourself. “Watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation *(pursuit of pleasure)* and drunkenness and *cares* of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.” (Lk. 21:34)
4. GC squared. Great Commandment & Great Commission living. *(See our website!)*
5. Keep on abounding in the work of the Lord. “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not *in vain*.” (1 Cor. 15:58)
6. Love His appearing. At the end of Paul’s life he writes, “There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to *all* who have *loved* His appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:8)