

The Rapture of the Church

What is it? - *A look at the biblical description and order of the Rapture*

by Mike Wingfield

It all happens in “*the twinkling of an eye*”. - 1 Corinthians 15:52

Dead church saints in heaven return to earth with Jesus – 1 Thessalonians 4:14

All the souls of the church saints who have been in heaven with Jesus since the time of their death will supernaturally return to earth with Him. Jesus will accompany them into the earth’s atmosphere. He will stop in the clouds to wait for them to return to Him with all the other transformed living church saints.

Three supernatural signals set it all in motion- 1 Thessalonians 4:16

As the souls of the dead saints descend into their graves, three supernatural signals set the order of rapture into motion:

The shout of Jesus- “*all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth...*”- John 5:28, 29

The voice of the archangel- Angels assist the Lord in the transfer of His saints into His presence (Luke 16:22).

The blast of the trumpet of the Lord- “*The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*”- 1 Corinthians 15:52

The bodies of “the dead in Christ” are resurrected- 1 Thessalonians 4:16

The living souls of the dead church saints will enter their supernaturally restored and resurrected bodies. Instantly, their souls and bodies are reunited and immediately transformed. They will receive a new eternal heavenly body and perfect sinless mind. They will rise out of their graves to return to Jesus in the clouds.

All living saints on earth are supernaturally changed- 1 Thessalonians 4:17

The living believers will suddenly and supernaturally be transformed, by-passing the experience of death (1 Corinthians 15:51). They will receive a new eternal heavenly body and perfect sinless mind. See Chart #133. “*We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” (1 John 3:2).

All resurrected and living transformed church saints are “caught up together” to meet Jesus. - 1 Thessalonians 4:17

All the resurrected and transformed living church saints will rise together. They will be snatched upward together as the completed body of Christ to meet Jesus in the clouds. After joining Jesus, they return to heaven with Him to live with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

A Biblical Description of the Rapture

The Rapture is unique in God's sovereign work over His creation. Never has an entire generation of people escaped death to enter the presence of the Lord in heaven. According to the testimony of Scripture, all but two people have died since the time of Adam and Eve. Both Enoch and Elijah escaped death to be welcomed into the presence of God, each in his own unique way. Enoch was supernaturally translated into the presence of the Lord 897 years before the global flood in the days of Noah. Enoch went out for a walk one day and he never returned. The Bible says, *“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him”* (Genesis 5:24). Hebrews 11:5 adds, *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* After faithfully standing for God during days of great apostasy in Israel, God took the prophet Elijah to Himself. The Bible says, *“And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven”* (2 Kings 2:11).

According to the Bible, God has chosen to take an entire group of believers, who are His bride, into His presence at the end of this age. Like Enoch and Elijah, they will simply vanish off the face of the earth. Both Enoch and Elijah were taken by God so that they would not need to endure the judgment of God that would eventually fall upon their subsequent generations. Likewise, the Lord has ordained that He will remove His bride from the earth before the time of the Tribulation comes upon the earth. In a similar fashion as Enoch and Elijah, they will be supernaturally translated into the presence of God in heaven.

The Rapture is the next major event on God's eternal calendar. It is that supernatural and imminent event in which the entire body of church believers (both dead and alive) will be physically caught away to meet their Lord in the air. It is about suddenly seeing Jesus and being with Him forever.

There are three major biblical texts that speak of the Rapture: [John 14:1-3](#); [1 Corinthians 15:51-53](#); and [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#). One out of every three verses in the New Testament Epistles points to the Second Coming of Jesus. **Obviously, this was the heartbeat of the early church!**

The word “rapture” does not occur in the English translations of the Bible. This does not mean that it is an illegitimate doctrine as some teach. For example, the word “trinity” is also not in the Bible. However, no true, born-again believer would dispute there are three members of one true God – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ([Matthew 28:19](#)). The word “rapture” was coined about 175 years ago to describe the words *“caught up”* in [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#). The Greek word is “harpazo,” which means “to suddenly snatch away.” It was used in [Acts 8:39](#) to describe the supernatural transfer of Philip, the evangelist, from one place to another. In [2 Corinthians 12:4](#), this word was used to describe Paul when he was “caught up” into heaven. This word was used by the Apostle John in [Revelation 12:5](#) to describe Christ's ascension to heaven.

Later, this Greek word was translated “raptus” in the Latin Vulgate. This translation was used in the church for 1,000 years. The word rapture was coined from the Latin word “raptus.” The history of the church clearly demonstrates that the doctrine of the rapture and other aspects of the Second Coming of Christ were taught from the time of the apostles until our day.

The rapture will be a sudden, life-changing event that should capture our minds and fill our lives with a hope that gives us a passion for living. It is a promise from the Lord Jesus ([John 14:1-3](#)). It is a very significant teaching that describes our ultimate salvation. Our salvation is far more than what Christ is doing for us now. Our faith is a vibrant and blessed hope that encompasses the eternal blessings that extend beyond this present life on earth. The New Testament believer is constantly exhorted to not set their affections on earthly things ([Colossians 3:1-2](#)). The true essence of eternal life will be realized when we are raptured and with Christ in glory ([Colossians 3:3-4](#)).

We are not at home in this world. We are citizens of heaven ([Philippians 3:20](#)). We are only pilgrims passing through ([Hebrews 11:13](#); [1 Peter 2:11](#)). The believer whose heart is anchored in His Lord will not fall in love with the temporal things of this world. Read [1 John 2:15-17](#).

We were made for eternity. We were created by God in His image ([Genesis 1:27](#)). He created us to know Him, fellowship with Him, worship Him, and serve Him. It is His longing and desire for us to be with Him ([John 14:3](#); [17:24](#)). If we are walking in the Spirit, we will have a passionate longing to go home and be with Jesus. If we are controlled

by the Holy Spirit, we will consistently cry out to God, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” ([Revelation 22:20](#)). Those who have this desire can honestly say they “*love his appearing*” ([2 Timothy 4:8](#)).