

The Rapture

Eschatology = study of end times or last things.

- **Titus 2:13**, *"looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,"*

The Rapture is a doctrine that has been under much scrutiny and maybe more so scoffing over the last many years. We've gone through seasons over the last many decades where faithful followers have felt like they were in the days when they would see Jesus. As time progresses it's left some disillusioned and wondering if Jesus is ever coming back.

But yet this is exactly what Peter warns us of:

- **2 Peter 3:3–4a**, *"knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?"*

Now there are many Christians who believe in the second coming of Christ – where He will come again physically to this earth. But there are many that don't believe there will be a rapture of the church that precedes this second coming. So today I want to talk about why I believe in the Rapture. And I want to clarify that this is not something that is a matter of salvation, but rather interpretation. In other words, you might have a different view regarding end times scenarios, and that's ok. You don't have to have the same view I have to go to this church, I'm just wanting to help you experience what it's like to be right in these matters. So these are not matters to divide over, or even break fellowship over, but I think what we begin to see as we break this all down is that this becomes a blessed hope for believers today.

In fact Bible Prophecy has so many benefits and blessings for us today, which is why I'm excited for this series.

1. Prophecy proves that God is real and the Bible is true.
2. Prophecy promotes evangelism in the church.
3. Prophecy promotes holy living (1 John 3:2-3).
4. Prophecy provides hope in a hopeless age.

So I trust that as we spend the next few weeks in this mini-series of Things To Come, you will be comforted and excited for the days in which we find ourselves.

Like I said, today I want to discuss why I believe in a Rapture. And more so, why I believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Now one thing opponents of the Rapture love to point out is that the word Rapture isn't even in the Bible. And they're right! But following that argument along you could say that the word Trinity is not in the Bible. Yet we would heartedly agree that the Bible reveals the triune nature of God. The teaching and doctrine of the Trinity is laid out for us in Scripture, just as we see the teaching of the Rapture. This is not something that has been a modern thought or idea from the likes of John Nelson Darby. He often gets referred to as the one who came up with the Rapture theory, dating back to the early 1800's. But this teaching is in the Bible and one that early church fathers alluded to. One such case:

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, (ca. AD 175) book 5, chapter 29: "And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, "There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be."

Our English word *rapture* comes from the Latin Vulgate. It translated the Greek word *harpazo* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 as *rapiemur/rapturo* in the Latin Vulgate. The word *harpazo* means to snatch up forcibly; to carry away. This is the Rapture.

So to keep us on track today, which is going to be a very tall order as there's so much to discuss on this subject, we're going to take the word Rapture and break it down in a bit of a mnemonic style:

R – A – P – T – U – R – E:

1. R = Reason for the Tribulation

One of the more remarkable prophecies in the Bible I believe is found in Daniel 9. It's known as Daniel's 70 week prophecy. In this prophecy the term week is used to describe a group of 7, and more precisely this describes a group of 7 years.

- **Daniel 9:24**, "*Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.*"

So this is revealing 70 groups of 7 years = 490 years to be exact.

And this prophecy is given for Daniel's people and his city. That's the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

Reading on...

- **Daniel 9:25–26**, *“Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. ²⁶ “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.”*

So this equals 69 weeks, and if you want to break it down further, this equals 483 years or 173,880 days (using the Babylonian calendar which used 360 day years).

- So we’re given some very precise dating. From the time that the decree goes forth to rebuild Jerusalem, until the Messiah comes, it would be 483 years.
- We know from Nehemiah 2:1-6 that a decree to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls was issued in the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes. This is believed to be specifically March 14, 445 B.C.

And so from this command until the Messiah would be 483 years or 173,880 days. A very interesting event took place if you add up these days from March 14, 445 B.C., it was the day that Jesus came riding into Jerusalem being proclaimed as the Messiah! That day was April 6, 32 A.D. exactly 173,880 days from the issuing of the decree.

God’s Word fulfilled exactly to the day!

But we’ve only dealt with 69 weeks, there’s one more week unfulfilled, one more group of 7 years that is specifically for Israel. This is where the tribulation comes in.

- **Daniel 9:27**, *“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”*

We’re living in an interval between these two periods in Daniel (between the first 483 years decreed for Israel, and the last 7 years. God’s prophetic clock centers around the nation of Israel. Right now they’ve been temporarily laid aside, and we’re living in the church age. But there will come a time when the church will be raptured up - all believers in Christ will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air

and go to heaven. At that point God will begin to focus His work in and through His people Israel once more.

R – Reason for the Tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27 – it is for Israel)

2.A = Accounts in Scripture / Typology

The idea of somebody being seized, or caught up is not a unique one. In fact it's something we see elsewhere in Scripture.

- Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him (Genesis 5:24).
- Elijah was likewise taken up to heaven before tasting of death. **2 Kings 2:11**, *"Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."*
- Paul also was harpazo'd, or taken up to heaven. **2 Corinthians 12:2–4**, *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴ how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."*
- Philip experienced this as well. **Acts 8:39**, *"Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing."*
- The two witnesses in Revelation 11:12 likewise experience being taken up to heaven. Though this is a little different circumstance, you get the idea. This is not a new concept.

These are individuals that experienced this *harpazo*. But we also see a great account or typology with the Jewish wedding that is alluded to in various Scriptures. Jesus hints at it in John 14:1-3. Various parables use the illustration of a wedding. It's very fitting because a Jewish wedding consisted of 3 parts: (1) The **Engagement** was an agreement that was reached between the parents of the bride and groom. A price was set for the bride and the couple entered into this arrangement for marriage.

(2) The **Betrothal** was more official. This is when the couple exchanged vows in the presence of family and friends. This is when they were considered officially

married. They had covenanted to be together and be one, and this could only be broken by divorce. This betrothal period could last for up to a year. In the meantime, the groom was adding a room onto his father's house for them to live in.

- The picture is wonderful as Jesus said in **John 14:1-3**, "*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*"

As the groom and his bride were apart, and as the groom prepared a place for them to dwell, the groom would come for his bride at an unexpected time. The bride would not know when, but would live watching, waiting, and expecting.

(3) The ***Wedding and Wedding Feast*** was the third event. When it was time for the wedding, the groom would leave his father's house and go to where his bride was to bring her back home with him.

As the groom would get close, the groomsman would blow the shofar, the trumpet would sound and the groom would take his bride home to his father's house where they would enter the bridal chambers to consummate the marriage.

- The guests would continue to celebrate at this wedding feast for the next 7 days. All the while the bride and groom were waited on and treated like royalty.
- After the 7 days the bride would be brought out before all the guests.
- These 7 days in the bridal chamber are a picture of the 7 year tribulation period where we'll be, not in tribulation on the earth, but in jubilation in heaven. After the tribulation we will return with Christ to the earth as the Bride of Christ.
- This leads well into our next point.

A – Accounts in Scripture / Typology (Enoch; Elijah; Philip; Paul; Jewish Wedding; John 14:1-3 - Jesus' first hint of a Rapture)

3.P = Place of the Church in the Tribulation

The book of Revelation gives us some wonderful details about things to come. However a lot of people also think of the book of Revelation as a difficult book, a scary book, a book to avoid. And I think that's such a shame. Because not only

does the book of Revelation have a built in blessing for us (Revelation 1:3), but it also has a built in outline for us (Revelation 1:19).

- **Revelation 1:3**, *"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."*
- **Revelation 1:19**, *"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."*

So John is told *write the things you have seen*. That's Jesus. We have the resurrected, glorified Jesus detailed in Chapter 1.

Then John is told to *write the things which are*. In Chapters 2-3 we have the churches – 7 specific churches existing at the time of John writing this.

Interestingly, these churches, in the order they're written, give us an overview of church history right up to today. It's quite remarkable.

Then John is told to *write the things which will take place after this*. After what? After the churches.

- The term church or churches is used 20 times in Revelation. All but one are used in the first 3 chapters.
- Where's the church? In heaven!

Revelation 4 begins with:

Revelation 4:1–2, *"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne."*

Come up here! Sounds like the rapture doesn't it? And immediately John is in heaven. I believe this is revealing what is going to happen after the church age. The church will be raptured up and God will begin to focus on Israel once again.

And check out the song John hears being sung in heaven.

Revelation 5:9–10, *"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."*

- Only the church can sing this song. We are the redeemed!

- The church is seen next in Revelation coming back with Christ after the Tribulation (Rev 19:14). And we're coming back to reign with Christ on the earth! Eternity is going to be a trip man!

P – Place of the Church in the Tribulation (absent in Rev. 6-19; Rev 5:8-10 - song of the redeemed)