

34. The Rapture

-The rapture is imminent (1 Thessalonians 4:15; Revelation 1:1, 1:3, 22:20). Following the rebirth of Israel, the rapture is the next major Bible prophecy to be fulfilled. Jesus will return and take all His believers (those living and those who have died) to heaven before the seven-year Great Tribulation begins. Millions of Christians will vanish worldwide as a result. The billions of people left behind will be scared and confused. Many theories will be proposed to explain their disappearance, but the Bible reveals the truth. The rapture was prophesied (foretold) in the Bible almost 2,000 years ago (John 14:1-3; Philippians 3:20-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Revelation 3:10-11). The word "rapture" is from the Latin for "caught up" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Believers who have previously died are already in heaven, but will return with Jesus to receive their resurrected bodies. Living believers and the dead in Christ will meet the Lord in the air. Jesus will return again at the end of the Great Tribulation to rescue believers and His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

- When Jesus returns, four things must happen before believers are caught up. They will hear a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will be resurrected (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This implies that alert and ready believers may have a few moments to react after they hear the "shout" and before they are actually "caught up". The rapture is also referred to as the "day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10, 2:16), the "day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6) and the "day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:8). New Testament believers are described as eagerly waiting for the return and revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is also a reference to the rapture (1 Corinthians 1:7; Romans 8:19, 23, 25; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 9:28). Believers, children of God, will be like Him when He appears because they will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:21). For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For in those days, they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away (Matthew 24:36-39). "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left... For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think he will" (Matthew 24:40-44). The parable of the 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) stresses the importance of being alert and prepared for the Lord's return, for no one knows the day or the hour.

- "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord " (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

- The Bible clearly states that we will not know the day of the rapture. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:36). The fact that we will not know the "day" or "hour" of Jesus' return is emphasized in many different verses, including several parables (Matthew 24:36, 44, 50, 25:13; Mark 13:32;

Luke 12:39, 40, 46). Perhaps the repeated use of the words "day" and "hour" convey the idea that although we don't know the day of the rapture, we should know the season.

- The rapture is sometimes described as occurring like a thief in the night, meaning that it will take most people by surprise and will come unexpectedly (Matthew 24:36-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). However, Christians who are alert and ready should not be surprised by the rapture. "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4). "Be on guard... and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap" (Luke 21:34). "Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you" (Revelation 3:3). We don't know the day, but we should know the season. Believers should be able to "discern the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3) as Jesus expected the religious leaders of His day to do. Because of God's grace and mercy, Christians at the time of the rapture will be spared from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9; Revelation 3:10). The convergence of Bible prophecies and world events indicate the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

- The Bible clearly shows that during the end times many people will be saved and many will lose their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus (Revelation 6:9-11, 20:4). There will be a huge revival during the Great Tribulation. The book of Revelation describes a great multitude (that no one could count) of believers in heaven that have come out of the Great Tribulation. This indicates that a vast number of people will be saved. There will be so many believers in the world that the dragon (Satan) and the antichrist will wage war against them during the last half of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:17, 13:7; Daniel 7:21). "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands... These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb... They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore: nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:9-17).