

THE “RAPTURE” EXAMINED

- I. THE TERM *RAPTURE* DEFINED.
- A. The Word *Rapture* Means, “a Carrying Away” or “Being Carried away in Body or Spirit.”
1. The word *rapture* does not actually appear in the Bible, but it does not contradict in any way the clear New Testament teaching of a carrying away of Church Age Saints.
 2. The term *rapture* has been used for about 100 years now to describe the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ **for** His Saints to carry them up to heaven (1 Thes 4:13-17). The *rapture* should not be confused with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ returning to the earth **with** His Saints (Jude v.14).
- B. The *Rapture* Is solely (only; exclusively) a New Testament Doctrine that Was first Revealed to the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 15:51-54). However, It Was clearly Predicted in John 14:1-3 by Jesus Christ.
- C. There Are clear Examples of the *Rapture* in both Testaments.
1. Old Testament Examples Are:
 - a. The Prophet Enoch (Gen 5:24).
 - b. The Prophet Moses (Deu 34:5-6; Jude v.9; Mat 17:1-3).
 - c. The Prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 2:9-11).
 2. New Testament Examples Are:
 - a. The Lord Jesus Christ (John 20:17 & 26-27), before His ascension into heaven in Acts 1:9-11.
 - b. The Apostle Paul (2 Cor 12:1-4).
 - c. The Apostle John (Rev 4:1-2).
 - d. All Christians, the Body of Christ (1 Thes 4:13-17; 1 Cor 15:51-54).
- D. The Early Christians Expected the *Rapture* to Occur at any Moment (1 John 3:1-2; Phil 3:20-21; Rom 16:20; 1 Thes 4:16-17; Rev 1:1; 22:6-7).
- E. An Early Church Age Father named Ephraem Syrus (A.D. 306 to 373) Wrote a Letter which Contained a Sermon on the Pre-Millennial, Pre-Tribulation “Rapture.”
- F. There Is no Prophecy That Needs Fulfilling, nor any Sign Required, before the *Rapture* Takes Place (Tit 2:11-13).

II. THE *RAPTURE* DETERMINED.

- A. Even though all Pre-Millennialists (those who believe that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will take place before His thousand year reign on the earth) Believe in the *Rapture*, They Are Divided as to Its Time of Occurrence (when it will take place).
- B. Pre-Millennialists Are Divided into four major Groups: (1) Those Having the Partial *Rapture* View, (2) Those Having the Post-Tribulation *Rapture* View, (3) Those Having the Mid-Tribulation *Rapture* View, and (4) Those Having the Pre-Tribulation *Rapture* View.
1. **The Partial *Rapture* View:**
 - a. They teach that not all believers will be taken up at the *rapture*.
 - b. They believe that only those “watching and waiting” for the *rapture* will be taken, only those who are “prepared for and expecting it.”
 - c. They say that only those who “wait for, look for and have loved His appearing” will be taken.
 - d. They believe that “watching and waiting” for Jesus Christ to appear is connected with being rewarded for service.
 - e. They believe that one’s acceptance as a Child of God is based on his being *prepared* (works) in addition to being saved, by connecting “law” and “grace.”
 - f. They believe that not all of the Body of Christ will be taken up in the *rapture* at the same time. Thereby denying the unity of the Body of Christ.
 - g. They teach that there is now no difference between Israel (the Jews) and the New Testament Church. They think that the mid-tribulation resurrection of the Jews is actually a partial mid-tribulation *rapture* of the New Testament Church.
 - h. They believe that a part of the New Testament Church will go through the Tribulation Period.
 - i. They claim that those Christians who go through the Tribulation Period will meet the Lord in the clouds on His way down to earth at His Second Coming (Advent).
 2. **The Post-Tribulation *Rapture* View:**
 - a. They teach that the New Testament Church (all Christians) will continue on the earth until the Second Coming of Christ (after the present Church Age) at the end of the Tribulation Period. The New Testament Church will then be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, on His way down from heaven to earth, and then will return immediately with the Lord back to the earth.
 - b. They claim that there are no dispensational differences in the dealings of God with man.
 - c. They believe that there are no differences between the New Testament Church and the Jews (national Israel).

- d. They do not believe that the purpose of the Tribulation Period is God's judgment on sin.
 - e. They claim that the *rapture* and the Second Coming of Christ are one and the same event.
 - f. They do not believe in the doctrine of the imminent (at any moment) return of Jesus Christ.
 - g. They teach that there is no future fulfillment of the Tribulation Period (the "troubles times" mentioned in Dan 9:24-27) and claim that the prophecies of the Book of Daniel were fulfilled historically by A.D. 70.
3. **The Mid-Tribulation Rapture View:**
- a. They say that the New Testament Church will be raptured at the end of the first three and one half years of Daniel's Seventieth Week (the Tribulation Period).
 - b. They believe that the New Testament Church will have to go through the first half of the Great Tribulation, before God's wrath begins. The New Testament Church will then be translated (raptured) before the second half begins.
 - c. They teach that the *rapture* of the New Testament Church will occur in connection with the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet and the catching up of the two witnesses in Revelation chapter eleven.
 - d. They believe that the New Testament Church will go through the Tribulation Period because it needs "purging," but is not promised "wrath."
 - e. They do not believe in the imminent (at any moment) return of Jesus Christ and teach that the New Testament Church will be present on the earth during the Tribulation Period, after Revelation 4:1.
 - f. They claim that the *rapture* and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are two separate events, and not two parts of one event.
 - g. They say that the restrainer of 2nd Thessalonians 2:6-8 is the Holy Spirit and the New Testament Church is only promised deliverance from wrath.
 - h. They do not believe in the dispensational dividing of the Bible.
 - i. They do not make a distinction between national Israel and the New Testament Church.
 - j. They divide the Tribulation Period into two separate and unrelated halves so that the New Testament Church can go through the first half, even though it has no part in the second half (which is called "Jacob's Trouble").
 - k. They do not believe that the New Testament Church was a mystery in the Old Testament and claim that Church Age Christians replaced national Israel in God's program for man.
 - l. They rely heavily on allegorizing (giving another meaning to) the events of the first half of the Tribulation Period.

- m. They claim that the first half of the Tribulation Period is only “the beginning of sorrows” (Mat 24:3-8) and the second half is the actual time of “great tribulation”.
 - n. They are sometimes called “Pre-Wrath Rapturists.”
4. **The Pre-Tribulation Rapture View (the correct view):**
- a. They teach that the entire Body of Christ (the New Testament Church) will all be removed from the earth at the same time. First they will be resurrected and then they will be translated (raising them from the dead and then carrying them away to heaven) (1 Thes 4:16-17), before any part of the Great Tribulation Period begins (Daniel’s 70th Week) (Dan 9:24-27).
 - b. They base their belief solely (only; exclusively) on the literal meaning of the Bible, which reveals:
 - 1) The dispensations of the Bible.
 - 2) That there is a difference between the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God (Christians) (1 Cor 10:32).
 - 3) That the New Testament Church is an unrevealed mystery (Col 1:25-27) hidden in Old Testament types (like Rebecca in Gen 24).
 - 4) That the present Church Age is only a temporary time delay in God’s program for national Israel because the Jews rejected their Messiah (John 19:13-15; Rom 11:25-29).
 - 5) That the present Church Age must end before God resumes His dealings with national Israel (Gal 3:28; Rom 11:25-29).
 - c. They teach that the nature of the Great Tribulation is that of:
 - 1) God’s wrath (Zep 1:14-18; Rev 6:15-17; 14:8-10, 19).
 - 2) God’s judgment (Rev 14:7; 16:5-7; 19:2).
 - 3) God’s indignation (anger) (Isa 26:20-21; 34:1-3).
 - 4) God’s punishment (Isa 24:20-21).
 - 5) God’s trial (Rev 3:10).
 - 6) God’s trouble (Jer 30:7).
 - 7) God’s destruction (Joel 1:15).
 - 8) God’s darkness (Amos 5:18).
 - d. They teach that the New Testament Church will escape God’s judgment, wrath and condemnation of the world (1 John 4:17; 1 Thes 1:9-10; 5:9; John 5:24; Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 11:31-32).
 - e. They teach that Daniel’s Seventieth Week (the Great Tribulation) is worldwide (Rev 3:10; Isa 34:2), which would affect the New Testament Church (Christ’s Body) if it were still on the earth.
 - f. They teach that the Tribulation Period (which has no bearing on the New Testament Church) has a two-fold purpose: (1) to find out which People and Nations of the earth will choose either God or the Anti-christ (Rev 13:1-8; 14:6-7, 9-10) and (2) to prepare national Israel for her coming Messiah-King (the Lord Jesus Christ) (Mal 4:4-6; Rev 14:12-14).

- g. They teach that the Seven Year Tribulation Period is not two separate three and one-half year periods (see 3.m. above), even though it is spoken of as having two parts (Dan 9:27; Rev 13:4-5; Gen 29:27-28).
- h. They teach that the nation of Israel was given “signs” to look for just before the Second Coming of the Messiah (1 Cor 1:22; Mat 24:3-11, 24; Luke 17:26-30). However, the New Testament Church is to expect the return of Jesus Christ at any moment to translate (carry) it to heaven (2 Pet 3:3-4; John 14:2-3; Acts 1:9-11; Phil 3:20; 1 Thes 1:10; Tit 2:13; 2 Tim 4:8; Col 3:4).
- i. They teach that a *rapture* before the Tribulation Period and Second Coming of Christ (Rev 4:1; 19:11-16) is needed to provide an interval for the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb to take place (Rom 14:10; Rev 19:6-9).
- j. They teach that **at** the *rapture* Jesus Christ will come in the air **for** His Saints (the Christians) (1 Thes 4:13-17).
- k. They teach that **after** the *rapture* Christ will come to the earth at His Second Coming **with all** His Saints (all the saved from Adam through the Tribulation Period) (Mat 24:29-31; Jude v.14; Rev 19:11-16; Zec 14:1-5).
- l. They teach that righteous Christians (2 Cor 5:21), like righteous Lot in Genesis 19:22 (cf. 2 Pet 2:6-9), must be gone before God’s judgment begins.
- m. They teach that the resurrection of each Christian is assured at the *rapture* because he has the Holy Spirit in him (1 Cor 6:19; Rom 8:11), keeping (sealing) him (Eph 1:13) in Christ until the redemption of his body (Eph 4:30) at the *rapture* (1 Cor 15:51-55; 1 Thes 4:16-17).

III. THE PURPOSE FOR THE PRETRIBULATION *RAPTURE*:

- A. So the physical Bodies of the “dead in Christ” (dead Christians) Can Be Raised from among the unsaved Dead Bodies (1 Thes 4:13-17) in Their Graves.
- B. So the physical Bodies of both the Dead and the Living Christians Can Be Changed from mortal Bodies (ones that can die) to immortal Bodies (ones that cannot die) (1 Cor 15:51-54; Phil 3:20-21).
- C. So the Bodies of the Dead Christians Can Be Reunited with Their Spirits and Souls (1 Thes 4:16-17; 5:23). The Spirits and Souls of the Dead Saints Will Be in Heaven until the *Rapture* (Phil 1:23-24).
- D. So Jesus Christ Can Remove Christians from the Earth and Take Them to Heaven (John 14:1-3).

- E. So Christians Can Escape the Tribulation Period (the wrath to come) (1 Thes 5:9).
- F. So Christians Can Be Judged in Heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ for Their Works (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:11-15).
- G. So Jesus Christ and the Family of God Can Celebrate the Marriage of the Lamb to His Bride and to have the Marriage Supper (Rev 19:7-9).
- H. So Christians Can Return with Jesus Christ to the Earth on supernatural Horses (Rev 19:11-14; 2 Kgs 2:11).

IV. MORE DETAILS CONCERNING THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE.

- A. The exact Time of Its Occurrence Is not Known (1 Thes 5:1-4; Luke 12:40), but It's Expected at any Time (Rom 16:20; Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-2; Rev 1:1; 22:6).
- B. The Christian's new body will be like the Resurrected Body of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-2; Luke 24:33-43; John 20:26-29; Rom 8:29-30).
- C. At the *rapture*, Christians Will Have no Blood when They Are Taken to Heaven because Jesus Christ Had none after His resurrection (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor 15:42-44, 50; Luke 24:39).
- D. At the *Rapture*, the Lord Jesus Christ will Appear only to Believers, just as He Appeared only to Believers after His Resurrection (see 1 Cor 15:3-8 & cf. Tit 2:13; Heb 9:28).