

Living for His Return

Jesus and the End Times

Part 3: The Rapture of the Church

*“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up (Grk. *harpazo*) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 NIV)*

INTRODUCTION

A. Definition of the Rapture

The phrase "caught up" (1 Thess. 4:17) is translated from the Greek word *harpazō* (ἁρπάζω), which means:

- to seize, snatch, or take away suddenly,
- to carry off by force,
- to rescue from danger or destruction.

The term “rapture” comes from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, which uses the word *rapiemur* (from *rapio*, also meaning “to seize or snatch”) for *harpazō*.

B. Other Key Bible Passages

- **1 Corinthians 15:51–52** – “We shall be changed... in the twinkling of an eye.”
- **John 14:1–3** – “I will come again and receive you to Myself.”
- **Titus 2:13** – “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing...”

VIEWS OF THE RAPTURE TIMING

1. Pre-Tribulation Rapture

- **Belief:** The Rapture happens **before** the 7-year Tribulation.

- **Support:**
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:9 – “God has not appointed us to wrath.”
 - Revelation 3:10 – “I will keep you from the hour of trial...”
 - Distinction between Rapture and Second Coming.
- **Rationale:** God removes the church before judgment falls; consistent with God’s deliverance of Noah and Lot before judgment.

2. Mid-Tribulation Rapture

- **Belief:** The Rapture happens **in the middle** of the Tribulation (after 3.5 years).
- **Support:**
 - Emphasis on a specific “last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:52).
 - Revelation 11:15 – The 7th trumpet signals a key turning point.
- **Rationale:** The Church endures the first half of Tribulation but is spared the Great Tribulation (second half).

3. Pre-Wrath Rapture (Hybrid View)

- **Belief:** The Rapture happens **before God's wrath** is poured out, but **after part** of the Tribulation.
- **Support:**
 - Differentiates between man’s wrath (persecution) and God’s wrath.
 - Revelation 6:17 – “The great day of His wrath has come.”
- **Rationale:** The Church is present during early persecution but taken out before God’s final judgments.

4. Post-Tribulation Rapture

- **Belief:** The Rapture occurs **at the end** of the Tribulation, simultaneously with Christ’s Second Coming.
- **Support:**
 - Matthew 24:29–31 – Jesus gathers His elect after the Tribulation.
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 – The “man of sin” appears before Jesus returns.

- **Rationale:** The Church endures persecution and is raptured as Christ returns to reign.

COMPARING THE VIEWS

View	Timing	Church Present During Tribulation?	God's Wrath?
Pre-Tribulation	Before Tribulation	No	Church is spared
Mid-Tribulation	Middle (3.5 years)	Yes (first half)	Church spared second half
Pre-Wrath	Before God's wrath	Yes (part of Tribulation)	Church spared final wrath
Post-Tribulation	End of Tribulation	Yes (entire time)	Church delivered at end

WHY THE RAPTURE MATTERS

A. It gives us _____.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:18 – “Comfort one another with these words.”

B. it is a motivation to _____.

- 1 John 3:2–3 – Everyone who has this hope purifies himself.

C. It makes us _____.

- Matthew 24:42–44 – “Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming...”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What comforts you most about the idea of the Rapture?

