

The Rapture *and the* **Revelation**

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Introduction

This book investigates what the Bible has to say about the rapture and explains the major prophecies of the book of Revelation from the historicism view of interpretation, as traditionally adopted by Protestants. In identifying the antichrist, Babylon, and other prophetic themes, this book will at times address various churches and denominations. It is therefore important to note that this is in no way a criticism or condemnation of people in any particular church or denomination. While some churches or denominations may be considered false, or fallen, this is no reflection on the people in these churches. There are people in every denomination who are following God according to the best of their ability. There are people in what may be considered false, fallen, or cultish churches who are more faithful than those who are worshipping in churches that are closer to biblical truth. God will have people in heaven from every denomination, and as Christians, we should have high regard and respect for believers in all denominations, as well as non-believers. Still, the fact that Christians have splintered into thousands of churches teaching different doctrines means some churches have a clearer understanding of the Bible, while some will be further from the truth. Our purpose is to draw closer to the truth. While some of the things presented here may go against popular teachings, and may challenge some popular beliefs, please read as those in Berea who “received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

I. The Rapture

(Based on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

For the Lord ... will descend ... And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17

The word 'rapture' is not found in the original Bible language. It comes from the Latin translation, which uses the word 'rapiemur,' meaning "to carry away" with rapt or force, as found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, which says, "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [rapiemur] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

We find similar sentiments in Matthew 24:29-31, which states, "Immediately after the tribulation... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Since this takes place "after the tribulation," most Christians have come to the conclusion that Paul and Jesus are talking about two different scenes, one speaking of the pre-tribulation rapture and the other speaking of the literal return of Christ at the end of the world. The confusion rests in the similarities between the two verses. Let's compare and contrast the two verses.

In contrasting the two scenes we must consider a few similarities, like clouds, trumpets, and the raising of the saints. In Thessalonians, Paul says Jesus will “descend” from heaven on “clouds” with the sound of a “trumpet,” then the dead “will rise.” In Matthew, we see Jesus “coming” from heaven on “clouds” with the sound of a “trumpet” to “gather” the saints. If we take off what I like to call our ‘pre-tribulation rapture glasses’ and take the Bible as it reads, it is clear that these two scenes are speaking of the same event. The problem is, most people have become lazy, accepting whatever the spiritual “experts” say, without looking into the issues for themselves. So, let’s take a moment to consider the issue of the rapture from the Bible.

Some further urge that since 1 Thessalonians 5:2 follows with, “the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night,” this must refer to the rapture, even though Paul goes on to say, “you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thess. 5:4). The apostle Peter also uses the “thief” reference in relation to the end of the world, but notice how he describes the event. 2 Peter 3:10 says, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Peter goes on to describe the destruction of the earth and the setting up of the “new earth,” a clear reference to the literal return of Christ (2 Pet. 3:13). In the context, the thief reference is simply an appeal to be ready. When we take the Bible simply as it reads, the rapture issue becomes clear.

One of the most popular verses used to support a pre-tribulation rapture, and the foundation for the *'Left Behind'* series, is found in Matthew 24, where Jesus compares His coming to the flood, saying, as “Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left” (Matt. 24:38-40). Since we have been told by so many Christian leaders that the ones “taken” are taken to heaven in the rapture and the ones “left behind” are left on earth to endure the tribulation, most people have never thought to consider any other explanation of the verse, but I would challenge you to take a closer look.

The verse says that as the wicked people rejected God in the days of Noah when “the flood came and took them all away,” the wicked who reject God in the end times will also be “taken.” As clear as this is, most people overlook the fact that the ones “taken” are not taken to heaven. They are taken to destruction. The same discourse in Luke 17:27 confirms this, stating, “the flood came and destroyed them” (Luke 17:27). According to the Bible, the ones taken are not taken to heaven but to their destruction. We know this because after Jesus says this, Peter asks, “Where Lord?” He can’t be asking where the one in the field is because we know where he is. He is asking where the one is taken to, and Jesus replies, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered” (Luke 17:37). That is, “wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered” (Matt. 24:28). Jesus is saying the same thing as Jeremiah, when he said, “their corpses I will give as

meat for the birds” (Jer. 19:7). In the context, it becomes clear that the wicked are taken to their death, while those who are “left behind” are the believers.

Another passage supporting the pre-tribulation rapture is 1 Corinthians 15:51 and 52, where we are told, “we shall 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Notice that the trumpet is called the “last trumpet,” and this sound is heard right before the dead are “raised.” This looks exactly like the return of Jesus “after the tribulation” when He comes “with a great sound of a trumpet” to “gather together His elect” (Matt. 24:29, 31). The problem is, when we read these verses with our pre-tribulation rapture glasses, we miss the connection.

The pre-tribulation rapture theory was originally taken from a misrepresentation of a prophecy in the book of Daniel, where we are told that the Jews had sixty-nine weeks before the “Messiah” was to come and make a “covenant with many for one week,” or seven days (Dan. 9:24-27). Since prophecy depicts one “day for each year” (Eze. 4:6), these seven days represent seven years, which those who believe in the pre-tribulation rapture refer to as the great seven-year tribulation. They try to take this seven-year prophecy, throw it into the future, and apply it to the reign of the antichrist after the rapture. Others who believe in the mid-tribulation rapture theory take the last three and a half years of the prophecy and throw it into the future, but could it be that both of these theories have missed the mark? Let’s look at this a little closer.