

Understanding the *Rapture*

The English term Rapture comes from 1 Thessalonians 4:17, where Paul writes that we will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. The Greek translation for "caught up" is *harpazo*. The Latin term for caught up is *rapturo*. The Latin, *rapturo*, became the root word for the English term Rapture. The word Rapture indicates a swift catching up or rescuing of God's people from the wrath to come.

The Rapture is God's method of removing the church from the earth and bringing them to heaven before the wrath that will be inflicted on the earth. In Revelation 3:10, Jesus said we would be "kept from the hour of testing that shall come upon the world".

Paul wrote about the Rapture saying: "Behold I show you a mystery we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment in the twinkling of an eye...for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised...and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

What are the signs that the Rapture is close?

There are many indications that we are living in what the Bible calls the End Times, or the Last Days. Jesus spoke of wars, and rumors of wars being one of those signs. He also mentioned earthquakes will be on the rise, which continues to increase beyond anything we have ever seen. Famines and disease will be prevalent also.

While these are just a few of many signs the Bible mentions, one that sticks out is that it will be as in the days of Noah, which is when the world was doing what was right in their own eyes and ignoring the warnings from God. That's exactly what we see going on in our world today.

How Close are we to the Rapture?

Jesus said in Matthew 24:42 that we don't know the day or the hour when He will return. That means we need to be ready at all times.

How to be Ready for the Rapture

God cares for you and has inspired us to provide these resources so that you will know what to do, what is coming, and how to prepare for the future. The most important decision you must make right now is what you will do about Jesus. It is a matter of belief. If you believe in Jesus, it will lead you to act on that belief.

Jesus said that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. It is much easier to serve Jesus than to try and do things on our own. You must decide if you will commit to follow and serve Him.

Despite the difficulties you are facing (and will face in the years to come), there is Hope. His name is Jesus Christ! He will be with you, He will help you, and He will reward all who are courageous and faithful to Him. If you confess your sins to Him, He is faithful to forgive you.

Aren't I Good Enough for God?

You may be thinking, I'm a good person and a good God would not leave me behind and take some of my friends and family members. That does not seem fair. What God has done, and what God always does, is fair and just.

God is good, and He gave the world a warning. In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Only a good God would do that.

Romans 5:8 notes: "God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." Through prophecies and promises God warned that a *Rapture* was coming. He urged humanity to be spiritually ready for it. God is fair, and the Rapture proves how fair He is to remove the people who believe in Him and His Son from His wrath.

Even the Tribulation reveals how God is just by offering salvation to anyone who trusts in Him AFTER the Rapture. The wrath of God is another way to wake people up to the power of God.

We pray that this is the choice you make to avoid this wrath to come.

How Can I be Saved?

1. Admit you are a Sinner

Understand that God has not been first place in your life and ask Him to forgive your sins. Scripture notes that God loves us, and that Jesus will forgive the sins that are confessed to Him.

- *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong."* (1 John 1:9)

2. Believe in Jesus as your Savior

Believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins and that He rose again and is alive today.

- *"If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* (Romans 10:9)

3. Confess the Jesus is Lord

Ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and be Lord of your life.

- Romans 10:9 *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
- Romans 10:13 *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Remember, restoring our relationship with God is not based on anything we do, but on what Jesus already did for us!

Here is a sample prayer:

"Dear God, thank you for loving me, even when I didn't love You. I realize I need You in my life. I am sorry for my sins, and I ask You to forgive me. Thank you for sending Your Son to die on the cross for me. Please help me to understand Your will for my life, and how I can live to please you. Please come into my life and make me a new person. I accept Your gift of

salvation. Please help me to grow now as a Christian. In the name of Your Son Jesus, I ask these things, Amen!"

What Happens When You are Saved?

1. The Holy Spirit comes into your life.

You may not feel different now that you have said the prayer, but you can trust what Jesus told the disciples. He has sent the Helper that He may abide with us forever. (John 14:16) That Helper is the Holy Spirit. He will be with you and guide you until the time Jesus takes you home in the Rapture. Jesus also said that the Holy Spirit isn't received by the world because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but He will be revealed to you because He dwells with you and will be in you.

2. Assurance of Answers to Prayers

God isn't Santa. When we pray, we should be seeking God's will, and not our own. He loves to answer prayers that are in line with His plan for you. Jesus told the disciples: "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

3. Assurance of Forgiveness

Wouldn't it be great if you received a certificate absolving you of your sins? The Holy Spirit is better than a certificate! Paul explains what happens after we are saved in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...". We are not condemned because of what Jesus has done for us. Read all of Romans chapter 8 if you want to be assured of that.

4. Assurance of Salvation and Eternal Life

There are many Scriptures that tell us how we can be sure we are saved. One favorite is: "He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west." Paul said it this way in Romans 8:38-39: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

How will we spend eternity? Revelation 21:4 tells us: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

What to Expect Next?

- **Expect opposition** from people who don't know Jesus as their Savior. They will give you many reasons why you are wrong to believe in Him. Since we are in a spiritual war, expect spiritual battles.

Satan knows his time is short, and he is in a rage (Rev. 12:12). His demons (fallen angels) are looking to see who is serving the Lord. They will attempt to stop anything you do for God. Doubt and discouragement are two of Satan's favorite weapons. Do not let him steal your joy, slow you down, or hold you back from doing what God wants you to do.

- **Expect God to move.** James 1:6-7 notes that believers should pray expecting that God will move. Yes, Satan will attack, but God will prevail. God has, and will continue to move on behalf of, and through, His people. We may not always be able to see His working, but we can know He has a plan (Jeremiah 29:11) and He is at work. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us how to overcome the enemy: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

After the Rapture

If you are still here after the Rapture, there is still hope.

The prophecies from God warned that the *Rapture* was coming. He urged humanity to be spiritually ready for it. God is fair, and the fact that the Rapture happened, simply proves that God is true to his word.

But take heart—all hope is not lost. God still offers sinners the opportunity to be saved from eternal separation from God. Unfortunately, you will have to live on the earth and endure some very hard times.

Why am I still here?

- Because all have sinned and are not worthy of heaven. That's the result of Adam and Eve disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. That's why Jesus went to the cross, to wipe away the consequence of sin. No matter how hard we try, we will never be good enough. But God made it possible for us to be qualified by accepting the gift given through His Son.
- Because God's standard of morality is higher than ours. We are used to comparing ourselves to other humans to determine how good we are. In reality, we need to compare ourselves to God to qualify for eternity.
- Sin has disqualified every unforgiven person from the lifeboat, which is the Rapture.

Where is my family who were in the Rapture?

Vanishings will be reported in every nation. Infants, toddlers, and children will be gone. People will attempt to identify what the common denominator was amongst those who vanished. The mainstream media will have their own set of answers that may range from UFO's to God sending them to hell because they misrepresented Him.

There are two characteristics of the people who vanished:

1. They were either too young and had not had a chance to understand who Jesus is and what He has done for them.
2. They were old enough to be responsible for their choices and they chose to believe in God and His Son Jesus to be their Savior.

Your family members are safe in heaven for eternity. They felt no fear and no pain. They are surrounded by the love of God and everything they will ever need.

What do I have to do to be reunited with my family in heaven?

Salvation is no different after the Rapture than it is before the Rapture.

1. Admit you are a sinner

(1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.)

2. Believe that Jesus is your Savior

(John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.)

3. Confess that Jesus is Lord

(Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.)

(Romans 10:13 Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.)

Although you are saved, you will now live out your life until Jesus returns, or you die or are martyred for your faith. The good news is that your last breath on earth is followed by your first breath in heaven.

What is the Tribulation?

The Tribulation period or Wrath or Hour of Trial will begin shortly after the Rapture. The defining trigger is when a document is signed allowing the nation of Israel to rebuild their Temple. This will begin the 7-year countdown.

The first 3 ½ years will be earmarked by unusual weather and atmospheric conditions. Many will die during this time. The second 3 ½ years are known as the Great Tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. It will begin with the Antichrist calling himself God and killing two-thirds of the Jews living in Jerusalem.

Who is the ANTICHRIST?

Scripture notes that during the Tribulation period, a world leader will arise. The world will praise him for brokering a peace covenant in the Middle East and solving many complex global issues. Though he will claim to be divine, he is in fact a man indwelt by Satan, the Antichrist.

What NOT to do

The antichrist will erect a statue of himself in the Jewish temple and require everyone to worship him. This will happen 3 ½ years after the decree to rebuild the temple is signed.

There will come a time when the government mandates a new method of payment, which the Bible calls the "mark of the beast". The Mark will be required to buy and sell.

The two most important things to remember is:

1. Don't worship the antichrist
2. Don't accept any government mandated mark

Scripture tells us that those who accept the Mark are sealed for hell.
(Revelation 14:9-11)

What to Expect Next

Israel will be invaded by Russia, Turkey and Iran. (Ezekiel 38-39).

The invasion from the North will likely come shortly after the Rapture. Israel will defeat the invading army by the power of God.

Israel will be offered a 7 year peace treaty:

The Antichrist will offer a "*covenant with the many*" which will include Israel (Daniel 9:27). It is this 'covenant' that begins the seven-year Tribulation period.

A new Temple will be built in Jerusalem: Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and John refer to a Temple being in Jerusalem in the last days. This event is referenced in Daniel 9:27, 12:11; Mark 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:4; and Revelation 11:1-2.

Temple sacrifices will be reinstated in Israel in the last days. Daniel 9:27; 12:11, and Revelation 13 reference this. The completion of the Temple and routine of daily sacrifices must be in place prior to the mid-point of the Tribulation.

Temple sacrifices will be forbidden: At the mid-point of the Tribulation period, the Antichrist will seize control of the Temple, abruptly end the daily sacrifices and proclaim himself to be God. (Revelation 13).

144,000 believers will be sealed by the Spirit: The Holy Spirit will 'seal' 12,000 Jewish believers from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. (Rev. 7)

Two Prophets from Heaven will appear to be witnesses for God. (Rev. 11:3-14) These prophets will preach with power for 42 months and then be put to death. Their deaths will be celebrated by many. Their bodies will lie in the street for three days, after which they will be miraculously resurrected and taken up into Heaven.

Vegetation decimated: Revelation 8:7 notes that the first trumpet judgment will bring the destruction of 1/3 of all vegetation on Earth.

A meteor or comet falls into the sea: Revelation 8:8-9 notes that the second trumpet judgment facilitates something falling into the sea and destroying 1/3 of life in all seas.

Wormwood: Similar to the second trumpet judgment, the third trumpet judgment facilitates celestial object falling to the earth causing fresh water to turn bitter (resulting in many deaths).

Reduction of light: The fourth trumpet judgment brings about a 1/3 reduction of light (from the sun, moon, and stars).

Tormenting creatures: The fifth trumpet judgment will bring scorpion-like creatures from the demon world. These creatures torment humanity, but they do not cause death.

Forced worship of Antichrist: 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13 note that the False Prophet (the Antichrist's right hand man) will force all to worship the Antichrist. Failure to do so will result in starvation, ridicule, and death. Proof of allegiance to the Antichrist will include receiving a *mark* on the right hand or forehead. Without the mark one will not be able to legally buy or sell anything.

Sores on those who receive the mark: Revelation 16:1-2 notes that those who accept the mark of the Beast, signifying their worship of him, will contract painful sores on their body.

The Antichrist will be wounded: Revelation 13 notes that the Antichrist will suffer a fatal wound to the head but will recover to the amazement of many—a happening which boosts his claim to deity.

Life in seas and rivers dies: Revelation 16:3 indicates that remaining life in the sea dies as the second vial of judgment is poured out. The death toll is such that the oceans become as blood. The third vial of judgment brings about the death of life in the rivers (Rev. 16:4).

Scorching heat: The fourth vial of judgment brings scorching heat which causes misery and devastates vegetation. (Rev 16:8-9)

Darkness: The fifth vial of judgment brings anomalous darkness and painful maladies, some translations read 'plagues.' (Revelation 16:10-11).

War: There will be a series of wars—the last great series of wars, are collectively referred to as the battle of Armageddon.

Victory: Though Israel will be surrounded and outnumbered by her enemies, God will intervene, and Jesus will prevail in the battle of Armageddon. Satan and the False Prophet will be bound and thrown into the pit. Jesus Christ will begin His *Millennial Reign* and bring peace and justice to the earth. (Revelation 19-21).

In conclusion, at the end of the 7 years, Jesus Christ will return to rule and reign over the earth from Jerusalem. (Revelation 19–20).