

THE RAPTURE

1 The word “rapture” does not appear in Scripture. The term comes from a Latin word
2 meaning “a carrying off, or a snatching away.” While the word “rapture” does not
3 appear in Holy Writ, the concept of the “carrying off” is clearly taught in the Bible.
4

5 The rapture of the church is the event in which God “snatches away” all believers from
6 the earth in order to make way for His righteous judgment to be poured out on earth
7 during the tribulation period.
8

9 1 Thes. 4:13-18

10 **And now, brothers and sisters, I want you to know what will happen to the**
11 **Christians who have died so you will not be full of sorrow like people who have no**
12 **hope. [14] For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also**
13 **believe that when Jesus comes, God will bring back with Jesus all the Christians**
14 **who have died.**

15 **[15] I can tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the**
16 **Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves. [16]**
17 **For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with**
18 **the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians**
19 **who have died will rise from their graves. [17] Then, together with them, we who are**
20 **still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in**
21 **the air and remain with him forever. [18] So comfort and encourage each other with**
22 **these words.**

23
24 1 Cor. 15:50-54

25 **What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that flesh and blood cannot inherit**
26 **the Kingdom of God. These perishable bodies of ours are not able to live forever.**

27 **[51] But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us**
28 **will die, but we will all be transformed. [52] It will happen in a moment, in the**
29 **blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds,**
30 **the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we**
31 **who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. [53] For our perishable**
32 **earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die.**

33 **[54] When this happens—when our perishable earthly bodies have been**
34 **transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die—then at last the Scriptures will**

1 **come true: "Death is swallowed up in victory.**
2

Under the section "The Blessed Hope" in the Statement of Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God is the following statement: *The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ (died) and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the Church.*

3 When the rapture will occur is not known to us. When we search the Scriptures and read
4 the passages describing the Lord Jesus' return, we find verses that tell us we don't know
5 the day and hour of that event. Matthew 25:13 **Watch therefore, for ye know**
6 **neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. - Jesus** A lot of
7 people today attempt to pin down the date of the Rapture; however, they are only
8 guessing. We do not know when the time will be.
9

10 The words "rapture" and "resurrection" speak of the same event. The rapture will
11 involve an instantaneous transformation of our bodies to fit us for eternity. 1 John 3:2
12 **Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:**
13 **but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as**
14 **he is.** What a comforting hope that promise is to all who love the Lord!
15

16 Note clearly that the rapture is to be distinguished from the second coming of Christ. At
17 the rapture, we meet the Lord in the air. At the second coming, the Lord descends all the
18 way to the earth to once again stand on the Mount of Olives, resulting in a great
19 earthquake followed by a defeat of God's enemies Zech. 14:3-4 **Then shall the Lord**
20 **go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. [4]**
21 **And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before**
22 **Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof**
23 **toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half**
24 **of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.**
25

26 Why should we believe in this? Is there reason for it? Yes!
27

28 **JESUS TAUGHT THAT HE WOULD RETURN**

29 He was careful to warn His disciples to be constantly prepared for this. Matthew
30 24:42-51 **Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. [43]**
31 **But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief**
32 **would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be**
33

1 broken up. [44] Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the
2 Son of man cometh. [45] Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath
3 made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? [46] Blessed is that
4 servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. [47] Verily I say unto
5 you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. [48] But and if that evil servant
6 shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; [49] And shall begin to smite his
7 fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; [50] The lord of that servant
8 shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware
9 of, [51] And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites:
10 there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

11
12 The assurance of His return was one of the truths with which He comforted His followers
13 before His death. John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were
14 not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and
15 prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I
16 am, there ye may be also.

17
18 At the time of Jesus' ascension two angels came to the group of watching disciples on the
19 Mount of Olives to repeat the promise that He would return. They declared it would be
20 in the same manner that He went away. Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of
21 Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up
22 from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into
23 heaven. This passage clearly teaches Christ's second coming (not the rapture) will be
24 literal, physical and visible.

25 26 THE EPISTLES TEACH THAT JESUS WILL RETURN

27
28 The New Testament epistles often refer to the Second Coming and the theme of
29 imminence runs through all the passages of Scripture dealing with this subject. Though
30 there would be a period of time between the first and second comings, the whole body of
31 teaching concerning the return of the Lord emphasizes that it will happen suddenly,
32 without warning; that believers should be in a state of continual readiness: Philip. 4:5
33 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Hebrews 10:37
34 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. James 5:8
35 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.
36 Rev. 22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book:
37 for the time is at hand.

38
39 Believers in the early days of the Church lived in this state of expectancy.
40

REMOVAL OF BELIEVERS FROM EARTH

A comparison of passages of Scripture relating to the Second Coming shows that some speak of a visible event seen by all mankind and involving the judgment of sinners. Others reference a coming known only to believers and resulting in their deliverance from earth.

As I have already noted, the word “rapture” is not found in Scripture; however, the word has been used so widely that one of the definitions of “rapture” in *Websters Third New International Dictionary Unabridged* is “Christ’s raising up of His true church and its members to a realm above the earth where the whole company will enjoy celestial bliss with its Lord.” Jesus said His coming (rapture) will result in one individual being taken from a location while another is left. This indicates a sudden removal of believers from the earth, with unbelievers left to face tribulation. Matthew 24:36-42 **But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. [37] But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [38] For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, [39] And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [40] Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [41] Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [42] Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.**

In the I Thessalonians passage (noted on page 1 of these notes) nothing is said about the wicked seeing Christ at this time. Paul described Jesus as coming in the air, but nothing is said about His feet touching the earth, as we are told elsewhere they will at His return. No, the rapture is exclusively the business of the saints of God, the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

DEJA VU

One who would lift a skeptical eyebrow at the concept of the rapture should carefully study the supernatural removal of godly individuals from earth in the past. Enoch was such a case study: Genesis 5:23-24 **[23] And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: [24] And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.** The author of the New Testament book of Hebrews called this experience a translation, bypassing death. Hebrews 11:5 **By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.** Although some aspects of Elijah’s translation differed from Enoch’s, it also involved the

1 sudden removal of a believer from the world without experiencing death: 2 Kings 2:1-13
2 **And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a**
3 **whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. [2] And Elijah said unto Elisha,**
4 **Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto**
5 **him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went**
6 **down to Bethel. [3] And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to**
7 **Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master**
8 **from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. [4] And**
9 **Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to**
10 **Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.**
11 **So they came to Jericho. [5] And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came**
12 **to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master**
13 **from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. [6] And**
14 **Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan.**
15 **And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they**
16 **two went on. [7] And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view**
17 **afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. [8] And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped**
18 **it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that**
19 **they two went over on dry ground.**

20 [9] **And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha,**
21 **Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I**
22 **pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. [10] And he said, Thou hast**
23 **asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall**
24 **be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. [11] And it came to pass, as they still**
25 **went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire,**
26 **and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.**

27 [12] **And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel,**
28 **and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own**
29 **clothes, and rent them in two pieces. [13] He took up also the mantle of Elijah that**
30 **fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;**

31
32 First Corinthians 15:51-54 deals with the same event as I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Here
33 also Paul spoke of the changes that will take place in both living and dead believers at the
34 Rapture. He called this a mystery in I Corinthians 15:51. That word “mystery” does not
35 mean an Agatha Christie “whodunit.” It means simply “a previously-unrevealed truth.”
36 The Holy Spirit caused the reality of the rapture to be embedded in Paul’s heart and pen.

37
38 In Philippians, Paul connected the Lord’s coming to the time when our bodies would be
39 radically changed - another reference to the rapture: Philip. 3:21 **Who shall change our**
40 **vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the**

1 **working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.**
2

3 **When? Before or After The Tribulation?** 4

5 This appears to be a major issue among those on Christian television. Several of my
6 close friends have bought into the mid or post Trib position. Our position in the
7 Assemblies of God is clearly stated in our written documents:
8

Although God's people may endure severe trials before the Lord comes, the Church will be raptured BEFORE the period called the Great Tribulation.

9 What we hear often today in Christian media is this: "God's people have often gone
10 through severe persecution; we are not immune to it." Granted! There have been twice
11 as many martyrs in this decade as in the last. Oppression of Christians in many places is
12 rampant, to be sure. And we may experience it right here in America. However, man's
13 wrath against believers is not to be compared to God's wrath in the tribulation. The
14 church will be raptured before that time.
15

16 In 2 Thessalonians, Paul indicated certain things must take place before the Day of the
17 Lord (of which the tribulation is a part) can begin. An individual called the man of sin,
18 Antichrist, will appear. Why has he not appeared already? He cannot come until Jesus
19 allows it. **AND THE RESTRAINING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT KEEPS HIM**
20 **AT BAY UNTIL THE TIME APPOINTED.**
21

22 Think of it: one of the most powerful ministries of the Holy Spirit is that of restraint. 2
23 Thes. 2:6-9 (NLT) **And you know what is holding him back, for he can be revealed**
24 **only when his time comes. [7] For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and**
25 **it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way. [8]**
26 **Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will consume**
27 **with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. [9] This evil**
28 **man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and**
29 **miracles.**
30

31 At the rapture, the Holy Spirit's restraining work will be ended - but not His convicting
32 work. The conviction on workers of iniquity will be astounding to the point where
33 sinners will call for rocks to fall on them to end their existence on this earth.
34

35 The book of Revelation makes it quite clear that believers in Christ will be taken prior to
36 the coming of Antichrist. The great biblical scholar, teacher and writer, Dr. Dwight

1 David Pentecost of the Dallas Seminary, has pointed this out for all to observe:
2
3

*Another consideration is found in Revelation 4. After describing the seven-fold condition of the visible Church in chapters 2 and 3, John writes, Rev. 4:4 **Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads.** These significant things suggest that these twenty-four are the symbolic representation of the Church. In Ephesians 2:6 we read that God has "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." In Revelation 19:8 it is stated, "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." And Paul testifies in 2 Timothy 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing." These considerations seem to identify the twenty four elders as the Church. Now when are they seen in heaven in their glorified position? At the very outset of the tribulation, to be described by John in Revelation chapters 4 through 19, they are seen in heaven, seated, robed and crowned. Thus the rapture must precede the Tribulation.*
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4
5 There are so many other scriptural evidences of a pre-trib rapture.
6

7 In I Thessalonians 5, following the passage on the Rapture in chapter 4, Paul taught about
8 the Day of the Lord (which includes the tribulation). He warned of the terrible
9 destruction brought about by divine wrath: 1 Thes. 5:2-3 **For yourselves know**
10 **perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. [3] For when they**
11 **shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail**
12 **upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.** Paul was quick to assure
13 Christians that those who abide in Christ will not be overtaken by it: 1 Thes. 5:4 **But**
14 **ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.**
15

16 Still speaking of the Day of the Lord Paul wrote: 1 Thes. 5:9 **For God hath not**
17 **appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ....**
18 Remember the tribulation is the seven-year period of GOD'S WRATH being poured upon
19 the earth; however scripture makes it plain here that believers are not going to be here
20 when it happens.
21

22 Christians are told repeatedly in the New Testament to be watchful for the Lord's
23 appearing. Never are they taught to watch fore the Great Tribulation or the appearance

1 of Antichrist. To expect that such things must happen before the rapture destroys the
2 teaching imminence (the next thing to happen prophetically) with which the New
3 Testament is filled.
4

5 Believers are told to wait “for his Son from heaven,” not the Great Tribulation: 1 Thes.
6 1:10 **And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even**
7 **Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.** When the signs of the end of the
8 age are evident, they (we believers) are to look up and lift up our heads in expectation of
9 our redemption – not the Great Tribulation (Luke 21:28 **And when these things begin**
10 **to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth**
11 **nigh.** Jesus said that!
12

13 It is consistent with God’s dealings with His people in the Old Testament to believe that
14 the Church will be removed from the world before the Great Tribulation. God did not
15 send the flood until Noah and his family were safe in the ark. He did not destroy Sodom
16 until Lot was taken out.
17
18
19

IMMINENCE

The weight of Scripture supports a pre-tribulation rapture. Wherever teaching about the Lord’s return occurs in the New Testament, IMMINENCE is underscored. Imminence simply means there is nothing prophetically now to be done that precludes the rapture taking place. In other words, the rapture is the next event in God’s prophetic plan.

Should I board a plane tonight headed for Atlanta, the next scheduled stop for that plane following lift-off is Atlanta. It will take an hour and a half to get there probably - but Atlanta is the next destination. I would say, therefore, “Atlanta is imminent.” In like manner – the rapture is imminent, the “next stop.”

A FURTHER WORD ABOUT THE RESTRAINT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

20
21
22
23 Satan has long planned the destruction of the human race and this planet. He is “the
24 destroyer.” Think about it: the cult of death is filling our culture today. Whether it’s 40
25 million aborted babies in America or the insanity of radical Islam or the almost daily
26 shootings of innocent people, we hear more and more about death! This is Satan’s
27 doing. So what keeps him from fulfilling his ultimate Death Wish? The restraining
28 power of the Holy Spirit. He is the One who preventing the purpose of Satan from
29 coming to culmination and He will keep performing this ministry until He is removed.

1 (Page six of these notes, lines 22-29, taken from II Thessalonians 2). Someone might
2 contend that the “restraint” is due to human government, the law, etc. However, that
3 argument is rendered ineffective because those agencies will all continue, at least in part,
4 under Antichrist’s cruel administrations. As long as the Holy Spirit is resident within
5 the Church, which is His Temple, this restraining work will continue until the man of sin,
6 Antichrist, is revealed. But note carefully: *the Holy Spirit does not cease His ministries*
7 *with the removal of the church, nor does He cease to be omnipresent with her removal,*
8 *but the restraining ministry does cease.*

9
10 **WARNINGS TO CHRIST’S FOLLOWERS**

11
12 While we are looking forward to the coming of the Lord, it is well to remind ourselves of
13 Paul’s words: Titus 2:11-14

14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, [12] Teaching us
15 that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and
16 godly, in this present world; [13] Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious
17 appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; [14] Who gave himself for us,
18 that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people,
19 zealous of good works.

20
21 The imminence of the rapture also gives us stout motive to continue in our well-doing in
22 global evangelism – missions. So many in this world have never heard of Christ Jesus
23 and His death and resurrection and His return. **WHY SHOULD YOU AND I HAVE**
24 **THE RIGHT TO HEAR THE GOSPEL OVER AND OVER AGAIN UNTIL EVERY**
25 **PERSON HAS HEARD IT ONCE?**

26
27
28
29 Next Wednesday we are obliged to take a break in our study to allow for the Church
30 Annual Business meeting. All members are asked to be present. This is our Lord’s
31 business and those who have taken membership have a responsibility to be involved in it.
32 We will continue on April 15th (income tax day) with **THE SECOND COMING OF**
33 **CHRIST.**