

End Times

The Rapture – Part 1

The Day of the Lord

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Description

The end times are about the revelation of Jesus Christ and God's plan to bring all things into completion. The climactic event will be the return of Christ to the earth. It is very clear what the Bible teaches about the Second Coming of Christ but is this the same event as the Rapture? Does the Bible actually teach multiple returns of the Lord to the earth?

Questions

1. Does the Bible teach about a secret appearing of the Lord to gather the church before the Second Coming?
2. Will Jesus literally return?
3. How will He return?
4. Are others coming with Him when He returns?
5. When is His return? Can we know the day and hour?
6. Is the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture two different events or the same?

Main Text - The Day of the Lord

1Thessalonians 5:1–11

¹But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

²For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

³For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

⁵You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

⁸But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

⁹For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁰who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

¹¹Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

The Lord's second coming is the main topic of this letter. This particular subject is mentioned in every chapter in this book.

- The Lord's coming or appearing is specifically called the "Second Coming"

Hebrews 9:28

²⁸so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

- Jesus will return again – He uses the word "again"

John 14:3

³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And where I go you know, and the way you know."

- This word "again" means a second time.

- The Second Coming of Christ:

- It is mentioned or referred to in almost every New Testament book
- The chapters in which it is explained most fully are:
 - Matthew 24, 25
 - Luke 21
 - 1 Thessalonians 4-5
 - 2 Peter 3.

- Christ's return is the great event that Christians hope for and it is mentioned in:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:10
- 2 Corinthians 5:8
- Philippians 1:23 – it will be sudden to scoffing unbelievers
- Christ's return will be sudden - Colossians 3:4 and John 14:3
- The Second Coming of Christ is viewed as the climax and culmination of His redemptive work and it is considered by most to be a literal bodily return of Christ as He gathers His church
 - This suggests that unless Christ returns, He will not complete His work upon the face of the earth; therefore, His redemptive work would be unfinished
- The description of His coming:
 - With a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet of God Matthew 24:16 - This is similar to words in Matthew 24:30-31
 - The angels will be with Him in all the glory of Heaven - Matthew 25:31
 - Those that remain alive (in the flesh) will also be changed and will put on immortality
 - Enoch and Elijah are examples of people that were taken up to heaven and did not face death (2Kings 2:11, Hebrews 11:5).

- The return of Christ will be sudden:

- The coming of the Lord is certain, but it is an hour and day that is NOT known:
 - Matthew 24:36: 42-43: 25:13; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:39; 46:21; 25-35
- Signs will proceed His coming (see Matthew 24 and Mark 13)
- Believers are warned to be watchful and to stay alert, to be self-controlled and not be caught off guard
- To scoffing unbelievers, Christ's return will be sudden
- It will come as a thief in the night
- Their destruction will occur at a time when people are convinced that they are at peace and that they are safe.

Scriptures Used to Explain the Rapture

Some people use Luke 17:34-36 as evidence of a secret Rapture. Let us look at the text:

³⁴"I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left.

³⁵"Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.

³⁶"Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."

This Scripture seems to suggest a secret rapture. However, when we read more of the text, we find that it is not referring to a secret Rapture at all (see text below):

Luke 17:26-37

²⁶And **as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:**

²⁷**They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.**

²⁸Likewise as it was also **in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;**

²⁹**but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.**

³⁰**Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.**

³¹In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.

³²Remember Lot's wife.

³³Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

³⁴I tell you, **in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left.**

³⁵**Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.**

³⁶**Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."**

³⁷And they answered and said to Him, "**Where, Lord?**" So He said to them, "**Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.**"

- We can see that Jesus is drawing a parallel between the Second Coming and the days of Noah, also between the Second Coming and the days of Lot
- In Noah's time there were two classes of people:
 - Noah and his family were taken into the ark and saved, while all the rest who refused to enter the ark were left outside to be destroyed by the flood
 - They did not get a second chance
 - Once the door closed on the ark, they were doomed.
- In Lot's time there were two classes of people:
 - Lot was taken out of the city of Sodom, and saved, while all those who remained in the city were destroyed by fire.
 - Again, those who remained in the city were destroyed. They did not get a second chance.
 - Jesus says that it will be the same when He returns.
 - God's people will be taken to heaven to be with Jesus, while all the others will be destroyed. "two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Again, there is no second chance.
 - Notice that in Matthew 24:37, the disciples asked:
 - **"Where, Lord?"** They wanted to know about those who did not go to heaven, where were they going to be left. Notice the clear answer that Jesus gives: **"Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."** So, Jesus taught that the bodies of the wicked are going to be left on the ground for the eagles to consume.
 - This is similar to in Revelation where the remnant (the wicked) who are slain, are fed to all the fowls (birds of prey).
 - And **the remnant were slain with the sword** of him that sat upon the horse, **which sword proceeded out of his mouth:** and **all the fowls were filled with their flesh.** Revelation 19:21
 - Jeremiah also helps to show that there will be no one left on the earth after Jesus comes. It is interesting that he uses the same words used in the book of Genesis to describe the earth. The earth was without form and void.

Jeremiah 25:33

And **the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth:** they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

Jeremiah 4:23- 26

²³I beheld the earth, and indeed **it was without form, and void**; And the heavens, they had no light.

²⁴I beheld the mountains, and indeed **they trembled**, And **all the hills moved back and forth**.

²⁵I beheld, and indeed **there was no man**, And all the birds of the heavens had fled.

²⁶I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, And **all its cities were broken down at the presence of the LORD, By His fierce anger**.

- We can see that Luke 17 is looking at the same Second Coming that all the other verses in the Bible refer to
- Some will be taken and saved, but all the rest will be left and be destroyed
- We can see that the Rapture is at the same time of the Second Coming of Jesus - it is the same event.

Some people use 1 Thessalonians 5:2 as evidence of a secret rapture when the Lord comes as a thief in the night. Here is the text:

For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night**.

- They assume that this must be a quiet, secret coming
- But when we start opening the Bible to read more of the explanation, we find that it definitely does not speak of a quiet, secret coming at all.

Let us look to see what it really says:

1Thessalonians 5:1-5

2Peter 3:9-10

Matthew 24:27, 42-44

<p>¹But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.</p> <p>²For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.</p> <p>³For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.</p> <p>⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.</p> <p>⁵You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.</p>	<p>⁹The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.</p> <p>¹⁰But 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.</p>	<p>²⁷"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.</p> <p>⁴²Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.</p> <p>⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.</p> <p>⁴⁴Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.</p>
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- **The thief in the night** means that it comes in an unexpected time
- It is not talking about how Jesus is coming. This can be understood from the text itself: **"be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief"**
- Each time **the thief in the night** is mentioned violent signs are spoken of, such as:
 - **"Sudden destruction comes upon them"**
 - **"As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west"**
 - **"The heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat"**
- It does not sound like a secret rapture! All these verses are really referring to the Second Coming of Jesus that will come at the end of time.

- It should be clear that the Rapture occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation when Jesus comes back.
- Remember the verses in Daniel and Revelation that speak of God's people living through that great time of tribulation
- When Jesus comes, the righteous are taken up to heaven while all the rest are slated for destruction. Those who are still living are killed by the brightness of His coming.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom **the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**

Revelation 19:21

And **the remnant were slain with the sword** of him that sat upon the horse, **which sword proceeded out of his mouth:** and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

A very interesting addition to the thief in the night subject is found in Revelation 16. During the time of the plagues, the seven last plagues in the Great Tribulation, between the sixth and seventh plague, Jesus says this:

Revelation 16:13-16

¹³And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

¹⁴For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

¹⁵"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

¹⁵And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

After 6 of the plagues, demons are gathering the kings of the earth together for this great battle of Armageddon. It is at that time that Jesus says:

"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame"

Right after this event, then the seventh and last plague occurs:

Revelation 16:17

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

- The Second Coming of Jesus clearly comes at the end of the Great Tribulation.

The Origin of the Rapture

- It is a fact, and no Christian churches, congregations or fellowships existing prior to the year 1830 proclaimed a Rapture doctrine and all accepted the Biblical truth that Christians would be on earth during the time of the Great Tribulation period before 1830. The single Rapture scripture of 1Thessalonians was accepted as resurrection verses.
- Dave McPherson, after a complete and scholarly research on the origin of the Rapture doctrine, is able to write, after taking all available facts into consideration, "I can say it occurred on an unknown evening between February 1 and April 14 in 1830." He traces this Rapture doctrine origin back to Margaret McDonald of Port Glasgow, Scotland.
- The Rapture doctrine only appeared around 1830 to 1840
- Through visits to Margaret McDonald, John Darby, organizer and promoter of the Plymouth Brethren Movement, received this new revelation of a pre-tribulation Rapture - he expanded and promoted it and the two-phase Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to include a secret rapture.
- Edward Irving of the Catholic Apostolic Church, a contemporary of Darby, accepted the pre-tribulation Rapture doctrine in spite of the fact that he and all Christians before him had accepted and taught that the Day of the Lord would not begin until after the tribulation
- C. I. Scofield, who included it in his very popular annotated footnote Bible, and American Finis Dake also promoted the Rapture doctrine in his annotated Bible and commentaries.
- Fundamentalist churches and pastors began to teach this doctrine and it was included in seminary and Bible schools.

Quotes Regarding the Rapture

“But he reads this passage Daniel chapter 12, even half asleep, cannot fail to see that the kingdom of antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time assail the church” ~ Augustine (354 – 430)

“Wear for let us pray to God that he keep us in the hour of temptation which is coming upon all the world” ~ John Wycliffe

“We ought to follow in our inquiries after antichrist, especially were such pride proceeds to a public desolation of the church” ~ John Calvin

“The Book of Revelation is intended as a revelation of things that are to happen in the future and especially of tribulations and disasters for the church” ~ Martin Luther

“The Scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus will not come until the Apostacy shall have taken place” ~ George Mueller

“The secret rapture was bad enough, but this (John Darby’s equally novel idea that the book of Matthew is on Jewish ground) instead of church ground was even worse” ~ Benjamin W Newton

“There is not a passage in the New Testament to support Scofield. The call to John to “come up hither” has reference to mystical ecstasy, not to a pre-tribulation rapture” ~ Dale Moody

“I no longer teach Christians they will not have to go through the tribulation” ~ C. S. Lewis

“Perhaps the Holy Spirit is getting his church ready for a trial and tribulation such as the world has never known”. ~ Billy Graham

“The rapture doctrine is a false teaching that Jesus warned us to expect in the latter days” ~ Corrie Tenboom

Questions

- 1) Describe 3-5 attributes regarding the Second Coming of Christ?
- 2) Explain the origins of the Rapture. Why did the Early Church not teach or believe it?
- 3) What does the term, “a thief in the night” mean?
- 4) Is the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture the same event? Why or why not?
- 5) Jesus said that His return would be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot. Describe what those days were like.
- 6) Do you believe that there is more than one return of the Lord?