

FREE

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RAPTURE

AN URGENT MESSAGE FOR CHRISTIANS



BY PASTOR RYAN SPEAKMAN

THESE
FINAL DAYS
MINISTRIES

Is There a Rapture in Our Future?

In these final days, Satan is working hard to spread every imaginable false doctrine about the End Times. Many Christians do not believe that there even is a Rapture, or they believe that this event already took place—at least symbolically—many centuries ago. But the Rapture is a real—a Biblical—event, and it is set to happen sometime in our future.

The very core of Christian theology is that Jesus came as a physical person, that He died on the cross, and that He rose from the grave on the third day. Jesus' physical body was resurrected from the dead. Then forty days later, He ascended in His physical body to Heaven:

Acts 1:9-11

9 Now when He [Jesus] had spoken these things, while they [Jesus' Disciples, standing with Him on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem] watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men [angels] stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Jesus, in His resurrected physical body, ascended into the sky and disappeared in a cloud. The angels standing nearby told the Disciples that one day Jesus would return in exactly the same way: He will descend from the sky and set down upon the Mount of Olives in his physical body. No one can rationally claim that this—the Second Coming of Christ—has happened already, so we know that this is something that will take place sometime in our future. The Apostle Paul tells us that when Jesus returns, two other events will happen at the same time, the Resurrection and the Rapture:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep [died], lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him [the spirits of] those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord [the Second Coming] will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For 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 [the Resurrection]. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [the Rapture] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The phrase "caught up" in verse 17 is translated from the Greek word *harpazo* in Paul's original Greek text. In the fourth century Latin Vulgate, Saint Jerome translated this word into the Latin as *rapiemur*. The word "Rapture" is simply the anglicized (English) form of the Latin word *rapiemur*. So, we see that the Rapture is 100% Biblical; we use the word "Rapture" to succinctly

describe a very real event. (Because the term “Rapture” comes from this passage, many scholars consider this to be the Bible’s quintessential [most important] Rapture passage.)

We also see in Paul’s words that he couples the Rapture (along with the Resurrection) with the Second Coming. So, if the Second Coming is a future event—and we know from the Acts passage above that it is—then the Rapture, too, is something that is destined to happen sometime in our future.

When Will the Rapture Take Place?

Most End Times teachers say that there are no chronologies in the Bible that tell us when the Rapture will take place in relation to the seven-year Great Tribulation—before, during, or after—but this could not be further from the truth. In fact, the Bible provides us three clear chronologies that tell us exactly when the Rapture will happen, taught by three of the most credible witnesses in the New Testament: Jesus, Paul, and John.

In His great End Times teaching, known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus tells us:

Matthew 24:15

15 “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand)...

The “Abomination of Desolation” is when the Antichrist—an actual person; essentially, the personification of Satan on Earth—will seize the rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and proclaim himself God. According to the Prophet Daniel (whom Jesus mentions in this verse), this will happen exactly halfway through the seven-year Great Tribulation.¹ Jesus continues:

Matthew 24:21-22

21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.

Here, Jesus coins (invents) the term “Great Tribulation”, and then He tells us how this period will end:

Matthew 24:29-31

29 “Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days [the Great Tribulation] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of

¹ See the “70-Weeks Prophecy” in Daniel 9:24-27; in particular, verse 27, which describes the 70th and final week (the seven-year Great Tribulation). Pastor Ryan Speakman explains this prophecy in great detail in his book, *These Final Days, Part 1* (available on Amazon.com).

heaven with power and great glory [the Second Coming]. 31 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 throughout the Earth; the Rapture], from one end of heaven to the other [the Resurrection].²

So, Jesus plainly teaches that the Rapture will take place at the same time as His Second Coming, at the end of the seven-year Great Tribulation. Realizing this, many Christians today have begun to reject the words of Jesus (claiming that they are meant not for Christians but for Jews) and focusing on the teaching of the Apostle Paul instead. But (as we should expect) Jesus and Paul are in full agreement about the Rapture. In fact, when we compare Jesus' words above with Paul's words in our quintessential Rapture passage (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, which we read above), it is clear that they are talking about the same thing. Comparing just two verses from each passage—Matthew 24:30-31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17—we find that they share no less than five significant points in common:

- Both accounts begin with Jesus appearing in the heavens
- Both describe highly conspicuous events (widely visible, loud)
- Both depict an accompaniment of angels
- Both include mention of a trumpet in conjunction with the angels
- Both conclude with believers being gathered together to meet Jesus in the air

Jesus and Paul are talking about the same thing—the Second Coming and Rapture—and, again, Jesus tells us that this event will take place *at the end* of the Great Tribulation. Paul also provides his own chronology:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [the Second Coming] and our gathering together to Him [the Rapture], we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Second Coming/Resurrection/Rapture] *will not come* unless the falling away *comes first*, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God [the Abomination of Desolation³].

So, Paul, too, tells us that the Rapture will happen at the same time as Jesus' Second Coming, and these events will not take place until *after* the rise to power of the Antichrist (the last half of the seven-year Great Tribulation).

² Mark's version of verse 31 reads, "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven" (Mark 13:27); and Luke's version reads, "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).

³ See Matthew 24:15 (above) and Daniel 9:27

Finally, the Apostle John—in his great work on the End Times, the Book of Revelation—offers the most detailed chronology of all, and we should not be surprised that he agrees with Jesus and Paul about the Rapture. Most End Times teachers claim that the Book of Revelation is not in chronological order, but this is simply not true. It is not a simple, linear chronology, but it is not so complex, either. The Book of Revelation is structured as follows:

Chapters	Topic
1-4	Introduction to the Prophecy
5-7	Prelude to the Great Tribulation
8-10	First Half of Tribulation
11	First Half of Tribulation (Abomination of Desolation)
12	Second Half of Tribulation (Abomination of Desolation)
13-18	Second Half of Tribulation
19	Conclusion of Great Tribulation
20-22	The Millennium and Beyond

Why do teachers claim that Revelation is not chronological? Because John places the Rapture—depicted in Revelation as the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb”—in a location that they don’t like: at the same time as Jesus’ Second Coming at the end of the seven-year Great Tribulation and the time of the Antichrist:

Revelation 19:1-21

The End of the Great Tribulation

1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! 2 For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.” 3 Again they said, “Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!” [the end of the world system, which marks the conclusion of the seven-year Great Tribulation] 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!” 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!” 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

The Rapture is Announced

7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb [the Rapture] has come, and His wife [the Church] has made herself ready.” 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.” 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The Second Coming

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He [Jesus Christ] who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven [the spirits of all deceased saints, who will return with Jesus to be rejoined to their resurrected bodies; this is the Resurrection], clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses [the Second Coming]. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron [the Millennial Reign]. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The End of the Antichrist's Reign

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." 19 And I saw the beast [the Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army [the Battle of Armageddon]. 20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

So, we see that three of the most important teachers of the New Testament—Jesus, Paul, and John—all provide detailed chronologies that clearly place the Rapture at the end of the seven-year Great Tribulation, concurrent with Jesus' Second Coming. Scripture does not contradict Scripture, so we should not be surprised that we do not find a chronology anywhere in the Bible that places the Rapture at any other point on the End Times timeline: the Bible does not say that the Rapture will happen before the Tribulation, and it does not say that the Rapture will happen during the Tribulation. The Rapture happens at the end.

We Will Face the Antichrist

The vast majority of End Times doctrines and teachers promise that we will not have to face the Antichrist. This is a lie of Satan designed to ensure that the Body of Christ is not prepared for the greatest test of our faith. In Paul's chronology above⁴, he mentions a "falling away" that will take place during the reign of the Antichrist. The Greek word here is *apostasia*, from which we get the English word "apostasy". It means a defection from Christianity, a departure from our faith. In other words, it describes Christians—likely, a large number of Christians—losing

⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

(forfeiting) their salvation during the time of the Antichrist. The mechanism that the Antichrist will use to accomplish this is the Mark of the Beast:

Revelation 13:15-18

15 He [the Antichrist's False Prophet] was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast [the Antichrist], that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark [the Mark of the Beast] on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

After three and a half years of the most frightening, most difficult time in human history⁵ (the first half of the seven-year Great Tribulation), the Antichrist will offer each one of us two choices:

Willingly accept the Mark of the Beast, and begin to get back to a normal life. Start working again, start buying and selling again, be able to feed and care for our families.

Or... refuse to take the Mark, be declared an enemy of the world, and face the possibility of being killed—beheaded—along with our loved ones.

For even the most devout Christian, this will not be an easy choice to make.

The Bottom Line: Don't Take the Mark!

The Mark of the Beast is a privilege. It won't be forced on anyone. It will require a conscious decision—by non-Christians and Christians alike—to willfully accept it. Fear, ignorance, a belief in “once saved, always saved”... none of these will be a defense when we stand before God one day to account for our choices. The Bible could not be clearer on the consequences of accepting the Mark of the Beast:

Revelation 14:9-11

9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast [the Antichrist] and his image, and receives his mark [the Mark of the Beast] on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever [permanent loss of salvation]; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

⁵ See Matthew 24:21-22 above

There is no denying it: any Christian who takes the Mark of the Beast will permanently forfeit his/her salvation. The next verse emphasizes that we as believers must patiently endure this time and stay faithful to God and Jesus:

Revelation 14:12

12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Among those of us who remain faithful, some of us will be martyred (killed). But there is no greater witness to our faith—the Greek word *martyr*, in fact, is translated into English as “witness”—and the Bible promises a great reward:

Revelation 20:4

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years [the Millennial Reign of Christ on Earth].

However, most of us will survive this time⁶ and will live to see Jesus return to Earth to bring an end to the Antichrist’s reign at the end of the seven-year Great Tribulation. Most of us will take part in the Rapture.

Our Best Defense

In Paul’s chronology above⁷, he warns the Christians in Thessalonica not to let anyone “deceive you by any means” about the timing of the Rapture in relation to the Great Tribulation and the time of the Antichrist. The Bible is not a matter of personal opinion. It is not open to interpretation.⁸ There is one correct End Times doctrine, and it is imperative—a matter of salvation, in fact, for those who will go through these times—that we know the truth about these things. God warns us through His prophet Hosea that “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”⁹

But the truth—especially when it is not what we want to hear—can be difficult to understand and accept. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in—our best defense of all is to be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times! In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus tells us a parable about the generation of Christians who will see His Second Coming:

Matthew 25:1-12

⁶ See Revelation 12:13-17; the Holy Spirit will supernaturally protect and provide for God’s people during the reign of the Antichrist

⁷ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

⁸ 2 Peter 1:19-21

⁹ Hosea 4:6

1 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”

In this parable, all ten virgins—representing the Body of Christ—are betrothed to be married to the bridegroom (Jesus); all are “saved”. All have oil in their lamps—symbolic of the anointing of the Holy Spirit; all are “filled with the Spirit” to varying degrees; all are producing light to varying degrees. But it is only those whose lamps are completely and continuously filled who make it into the wedding (the Marriage Supper of the Lamb¹⁰) when the bridegroom comes (the Second Coming). Those virgins who have not kept their lamps full are shut out: those Christians who fail to stay completely, continuously filled with the Holy Spirit will not survive the time of the Antichrist spiritually intact; they will lose their salvation; they will miss the Rapture.

Only the Holy Spirit can give us the courage and the strength to resist the Antichrist; only the Holy Spirit can guide us and direct us in the challenging times that are coming. I encourage you to pray this prayer every day:

“Holy Spirit, please fill me today to overflowing with your holy anointing oil. Bear your fruit through me.¹¹ Manifest your gifts in me.¹² Give me revelation and understanding about God’s Word.¹³ Give me the courage and the faith to face today, and to face the times that are coming. Give me the boldness to tell others about You and about the things that You are revealing to me. Equip and empower me to prepare the way for Jesus’ return and for God’s manifest Kingdom on this Earth. In Jesus’ name I pray.”

¹⁰ See Revelation chapter 19 above

¹¹ Galatians 5:22-23

¹² 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

¹³ John 16:13

Would you like to learn more about the End Times?

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- Pastor Ryan's five-part *These Final Days* book series, available on Amazon:
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