

Certainty of the rapture

The rapture is the event in which the Lord Jesus Christ will appear in the cloud at the voice of the archangel and the last trumpet sound to take all Bible believing, born again Christians away from the surface of this earth before the Almighty God unleashes his anger on a sinful, unrepentant and Christ-rejecting world.

The rapture is an event that will take place very soon and very suddenly. It will be the most astonishing event in the history of the world which will turn the entire planet on its head. The Bible teaches this very clearly and it is the hope of every believer in the Lordship of Jesus Christ to be among those who experience the rapture.

The rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ will be the first in a series of events on God's calendar which will signal the end of time as we know it and will climax into the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish his Kingdom on earth. After the rapture it will, by any stretch of the imagination, no longer be 'business as usual' on the face of this planet for those left behind.

A major event of such magnitude deserves the attention of everyone:

- The rapture is going to strike without warning.
- The rapture will happen suddenly.
- The rapture will be one of the most startling events to ever occur in the history of man.

Are you ready to be raptured?

Confusion about the rapture

Are you confused about the rapture? Don't be, Satan is not. In fact, Satan and his demons know very well that the rapture is a sure event that will take place soon. He is not arguing it. He knows what the rapture implies for his reign of terror on humanity. So he has been busy intensifying the operation of his Ministry of Misinformation. He is going about setting up his lying machines like never before, producing and circulating counterfeit information about the truth and the messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ who preach and teach the truth.

All the enemy's efforts are designed for no other reason but to confuse you about the truth of the rapture. Satan doesn't care what you believe about the rapture as long as what you believe is not the truth. Anything he does to keep you from eagerly expecting the Lord Jesus Christ in the rapture is a success for him. If he can stop you from knowing the truth about it, be careful that he does not also stop you from going in the rapture. If he can stop you from allowing the thought about the rapture to influence the way you live your life today, watch out lest he also stops you from being among those raptured.

What is the rapture?

If you are not familiar with the word or the idea, you must be wondering what on earth we mean by Rapture. Rapture is a word used to describe that sudden moment, one of these days, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in mid air (the atmosphere just above our planet earth) and takes His followers away from the face of this earth to heaven where he lives. According to John 14:1-3 in the Bible, the Lord Jesus said to His followers:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Did you notice the words "receive you unto myself?" This is really what the rapture is all about. The Lord Jesus Himself will come to receive His own people unto Himself. These people received the Lord into their hearts as their Saviour while it was an unpopular thing to do here on earth. They believed in His name and were washed in His blood and received the authority or the right to be the children of God (John [1:12](#)). They lived their lives in obedience to His word – some even doing so while facing mockery, torture and death.

The Bible tells us that one day, the Lord Jesus will appear in the clouds above us and snatch these people away from the earth to take them to heaven where He has prepared mansions for them so that from then on, they will be with Him wherever he is, beholding the glory which His Father has given Him (John [17:24](#)). This is the rapture. The act of 'snatching away' is the rapture. The expression "caught up" is found in the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonian Christians (1Thess [4:13-18](#)). Look at what he says there:

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command ("Come up hither" in Revelations 4:1), with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore encourage (or comfort) each other with these words."

The word rapture comes from the root word for "caught up". The root word for "caught up" in the Greek language is harpazo, which means "to snatch away" or to take away suddenly. In the Latin Vulgate Bible, the words "caught up" are translated as rapturo. Christians have since chosen to describe this soon-coming event of the Lord suddenly snatching away His true followers from the earth as the rapture.

The reality of the rapture, the knowledge that this is an event that will certainly take place, has a comforting effect on the believer. It is a source of encouragement to him. It is the hope of every believer (Colossians [1:27](#); 1 Corinthians [15:19](#)). The thought of the rapture and the expectation of it purifies the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ (1John 3:3). The enemy and his

agents will ridicule it, make it appear irrelevant to your daily living and seek to prevent you from thinking about, thereby, denying you its present comfort and its future bliss. Don't let him.

The rapture is the event that answers the prayer of our Lord Jesus which he prayed in John [17:24](#), "Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world."

But to the unbeliever, this knowledge can only provoke fear and horror. And he can respond by either deciding to give up his resistance to inviting the Lord Jesus into his life, or by postponing this decision or even completely discarding the whole message and the prompting of the Holy Spirit to yield to God, as a non-issue that would disappear from his mind after a while. Whichever, make sure you are not one of those trapped in non-response to the plea to make peace with God after you have heard the message of the rapture.

"Therefore, you also must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:44).

The imminence of the rapture

The Oxford dictionary defines the word imminent as "...an event about to happen." It is an event "likely to happen very soon" without warning, unexpectedly, catching people by surprise. So, when we say that the rapture is imminent, we mean that the return of our Lord Jesus Christ for His Church is an event that can happen at any moment, without any warning. There are no warning signs or indications of a short-term countdown.

As Christians, we are required to remain on a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week alert. If anyone therefore tells you not to bother about it, do not listen to him. Paying attention to such advice has caused many not-too-well-established believers to make a shipwreck of their faith. The rapture will take place very soon, very suddenly and without warning. Jesus will come in the air, catch up his Church (born again Christians) from the earth, and then return to heaven with them.

Does the Bible teach the imminence of the rapture? Listen to the Lord Himself in Luke 21:34-35, "Watch out! Don't let my sudden coming catch you unawares; don't let me find you living in careless ease, carousing and drinking, and occupied with the problems of this life, like all the rest of the world." The Lord makes it clear in those words that the rapture will take place suddenly, catching people unawares. It will be like the surprise attack of a thief in the night. The suddenness of his coming and the unpredictability of its timing provides the basis for the warning on the immanence of His return.

Timing of the rapture

Although the rapture of the Church is imminent, the Lord has chosen to keep us from knowing the exact date and hour when it will take place. The Lord Jesus Himself made it absolutely clear that: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36). Paul puts it this way in chapter 5 of his first letter to the Thessalonian Christians: "Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not

need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1Thess 5:1-2).

The rapture will occur when no one is expecting it. However, it is sufficient for us to know that as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be when the rapture takes place. According to the Lord, "The world will be at ease – banquets and parties and weddings – just as it was in Noah's time before the sudden coming of the flood; people wouldn't believe what was going to happen until the flood actually arrived and took them all away. So shall My coming be. Two men will be working together in the fields, and one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be going about their household tasks, one will be taken, the other left. So be prepared, for you don't know what day your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:37-42).

"The world will be as indifferent to the things of God as the people were in Noah's day. They ate and drank and married, everything just as usual right up to the day when Noah went into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot: people went about their daily business – eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the hour of my return" (Luke 17:26-35).

People will be living as normal: working, partying, buying and selling, planting and building. And just like in the days of Noah, they will not take notice of all the cries by their fellow men to repent and make peace with God. Then, out of nowhere and without any warning, millions of men, women and children will disappear, throwing the entire world into an unbelievable magnitude of chaos. People's lives will be characterised by selfishness, love and worship of the good things of life, and a lack of interest in anything concerning God except where it promotes and encourages their selfishness and material needs. Does this look like the days we live in? I think it does.

Jesus Christ said: "And since you don't know when it will happen, stay alert. Be on the watch out for my return."

How should we live in times like this?

There is no question that no one can predict the timing of the rapture just as there is no doubt about the surprise which this event will be to the majority of people living in the world when it happens. Seeing that the rapture is imminent but the timing unpredictable, how should we be living our lives? There is a lot of warning about how we should live and how we should not live as we wait for the rapture of the Church to take place.

Watch out for His return: The Lord warns: "Don't let my sudden coming catch you unawares; don't let me find you living in careless ease, carousing and drinking, and occupied with the problems of this life, like all the rest of the world. Keep a constant watch." Don't be like the rest of the world who are asleep concerning these matters (1Thess. 5:6). You are not in darkness concerning it so as to allow that day to surprise you like a thief in the night. Instead, always be on the alert. Just as a man can prevent trouble from thieves by keeping watch for them, so you can avoid trouble by always being ready for My unannounced return, says the Lord" (Matthew 24:43-44; Mark [13:32](#)).

Be on your guard, be on the alert: Peter warns us to always be self-controlled and alert. The reason is because our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to tear apart (1Peter 5:8). Live your life with a sense of urgency that the Lord could come any time. When we were growing up as Christians, we were taught to live our lives as though the Lord will return today. What a timely advice. That way, you are constantly aware of the temporary nature of your stay here on earth. You realise you are living in borrowed time and ought to make the best use of your time while you still have it.

I always use the illustration of a person who goes shopping at five minutes to closing time. If you are conscious of the fact that the shop closes in five minutes time, you do not start a long conversation with your friend whom you suddenly bumped into at the shop, even if you had not seen him or her for a very long time. You know it is not time to sample all the items displayed on the shelf. That is also no time to start enquiring about the different product ranges on offer. You simply and hurriedly go through the shelves picking up the most important things you need in order to make it on time to the counter before they close. Such practical response to a sense of urgency should characterise your approach to your every spiritual service you are engaged in.

Stay sober: Do not spend your life in wanton excesses and extravagance. Be free from inordinate passion. Learn to be quiet. Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do. Always be protected by the armour of faith and love, while wearing as your helmet the happy hope of your salvation.

Do not be deceived: Don't let anyone deceive you into believing that you should not be thinking about the rapture or be concerned about it. As Paul said, if we who are abiding in Christ have hope only in this life and that is all, then we are of all people most miserable and to be pitied (1Corinthians [15:19](#)). Whatever else you do here while we wait for the Lord to come for us, the most important thing is to be found ready when He comes. To be found worthy to be raptured should be the most preferred priority in your life.

The thought of the rapture purifies the man who thinks about it. It provokes you into action seeing that you realise that time is short. It draws you closer to the Lord and sharpens your commitment to Him. Thinking about the rapture always provokes a sense of urgency in your attitude to His work and keeps you from being occupied with the problems of this life.

The Lord told His disciples when they were rejoicing that demons were subject to them in His name, that they should rather rejoice that their names were written in heaven. Your heavenly citizenship and your final arrival there should be the source of great joy in your life and the motivation for everything else that you do. It is our glorious hope.

"Occupy till I come." This is the attitude the Lord expects us to have as we wait for His coming. While we watch and wait for His coming, we are not to stay idle. We are to do business till He comes. We are to faithfully discharge our responsibilities, inspired by the knowledge of His coming. The Lord illustrated this point in the story taken from Luke 19:12-27, "A nobleman living in a certain province was called away to the distant capital of the empire to be crowned king of his province. Before he left he called together ten assistants and gave them each \$2000 to invest while he was gone". The Lord has given us talents, gifts

and abilities which He expects us to utilise wisely to promote His kingdom on earth till He comes. How are you trading?

"But some of his people hated him and sent him their declaration of independence, stating that they had rebelled and would not acknowledge him as their king". Does this sound like the lifestyle of some people today? I think so. We live in a power-crazy world today. In the mad race for power, everyone wants to be in control, to exercise power over others while recognising no authority over himself. The lust for fame, publicity, celebrity, awards and rewards, have forced many to break the boundary lines, remove the ancient land marks and openly but grotesquely declare themselves as gods. Even in the body of Christ – the Church – a lust for self-importance and self-recognition has resulted in unhealthy rivalry and competition among many leaders, to the extent that one wonders exactly which master they serve. How are you trading?

"Upon his return he called in the men to whom he had given the money, to find out what they had done with it, and what their profits were. The first man reported a tremendous gain – ten times as much as the original amount! 'Fine!' the king exclaimed. 'You are a good man. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, and as your reward, you shall be governor of ten cities'. The next man also reported a splendid gain five times the original amount. 'All right!' his master said. 'You can be governor over five cities'" (Luke [19:15-19](#)).

The Lord encourages us to make an active investment into our treasury in heaven. By actively pursuing activities that promote the kingdom of God in the lives of other people here on earth, we are doing business for and with the Lord until He returns. And if the business of enriching our heavenly bank accounts appeals to us very strongly, our minds will rightly be preoccupied with and inspired by heaven-driven projects (Luke 12:33-34). This is what will keep us in constant readiness for the coming of our Lord.

Have your lamp trimmed: To trim means to put in order. The summary of all we have been saying is that you must be in constant readiness for the coming of the Lord for the Church, His bride. Make sure that everything around you and within you is ready and set to go when the Lord arrives. The Lord Himself illustrated the implications of readiness and unreadiness with the story of the ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. But only five of them were wise enough to fill their lamps with oil, while the other five were foolish and forgot.

So, when the bridegroom was delayed, they lay down to rest until midnight, when they were roused by the shout, 'The bridegroom is coming! Come out and welcome him!' All the girls jumped up and trimmed their lamps. Then the five who hadn't any oil begged the others to share with them, for their lamps were going out. But the others replied, 'We haven't enough. Go instead to the shops and buy some for yourselves'. But while they were gone, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Later, when the other five returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Sir, open the door for us!' But he called back, 'Go away! It is too late!' So stay awake and be prepared, for you do not know the date or moment of My return'.

Do not be like the five foolish virgins who had to go and get oil for their lamps when it was too late. See to it that you are living your life in obedience to the word of God, loving Him passionately and serving Him with adoration with all you are and all you have.

Dear reader, you have to understand that the rapture is only the first phase of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth. The first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ took place when He came as the sinless Lamb of God to take away the sins of the whole world. But you know that when He came the first time, the world rejected him. He came unto his own, the Scriptures say, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name (John [1:11-12](#)). During that first visit, He promised to come again.

This time around, the Lord Jesus Christ is not coming as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the whole world. He is coming as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is coming to take vengeance against his enemies – those who spoke harshly of Him and His people (Jude v. 15), and to establish His Kingdom for a one thousand-year reign on our planet earth.

A letter from the Rapture Force

Dear Reader,

One of the most profound realities of our time is the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom on earth. This event will be preceded by the rapture, or sudden departure, of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ one of these days from this planet. However, neither the Second Coming of the Lord nor the rapture of the body of believers in Him receives the attention it deserves among Christians today.

Many unbelievers are not aware of what the rapture is all about and some have not even heard of the word, least of all how it will affect them. They are not in any position to appreciate the individual and global implications of the event called the rapture before or when it takes place. More worrying is the fact that many Christians do not know even the most basic things about the rapture. Among some Christians who have heard some form of teaching on the topic, the rapture is considered a controversial and confusing topic which they would rather not discuss. This poor knowledge of a profound event like the rapture is a clear demonstration that Christians are no longer searching the Scriptures as they should (John [5:39](#); Acts [17:10-11](#)).

In Africa, as in the rest of the world, there are about five major categories of responses to the topic of the rapture of the Church. These include:

1. The Christians who have clear knowledge of the rapture, believe what the Scriptures teach about it and live their lives in response to it.
2. The Christians who have never heard about the rapture, or do not have adequate knowledge of it and genuinely want more information to broaden their understanding, but lack access to useful information.

3. The Christians who are confused about the rapture or have been taught wrongly or have been persuaded by thoughtless statements from other Christians that they need not get concerned about the rapture. Consequently, they live their lives in ways that show that they are not expecting the Lord any time soon. To this category of Christians, discussions about the rapture is often seen as a controversial issue which should rather not be discussed in the normal conversations of daily life.
4. The non-Christians who have heard about the rapture but whose knowledge has not yet translated into an invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ into their lives as their Lord and personal Saviour.
5. The unbelievers who have never heard about the rapture.

Much of the indifference on the topic of the rapture among many Christians today is influenced by the invasive materialistic culture which is dictating the tone of society and setting the pace for our daily existence. The materialistic view of life in the world today makes survival and pleasure-seeking the hallmark of our existence. Any thought or consideration of life beyond here is drowned and perceived as irrelevant or fanatical.

Our aim at The Rapture Force is to actively target people in categories 2, 4 and 5. The reason is quite simple. The majority of the world's population is poor and lacks access to basic information. Although we live in an age of information explosion, the level of ignorance about major events that threaten the very existence of life on earth remains very high among the majority of the world's population. Or put the other way, information is still very poorly circulated with the result that many people are at best ignorant or at worst misinformed about issues that have very grave implications for their lives. Most people are much more preoccupied with how to provide the next meal for their families than to bother with how to get to heaven.

As a result, if the rapture should take place today, the majority of people left behind who would end up taking the mark of the Beast quite easily will be among those living in terrible poverty and those who never heard anything about the rapture before it took place. This latter category of people will be left behind and would be most vulnerable to the lies which the Antichrist would offer as an explanation for what had happened.

Many souls that could truly come to the Lord as a result of the rapture would be denied such opportunities because they did not know in the first place that the rapture was an act of God. Provision of pre-rapture information is an important way of increasing the number of those who could come to the Lord not only before but also after the rapture. We believe that Africa and the rest of the world deserve to have sufficient information on the rapture and the opportunity to decide either to accept or reject the message of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Presently, there are many Christians in Africa who will live their lives differently if they knew the truth about the rapture. But because of the opposition of those who have been lied to about the rapture, attempts to prepare Christians for the rapture have taken a back seat in many Church fellowships. The message of the rapture provokes people who receive it to holy living. Church leaders who want to encourage holy living among their lukewarm

members – whose major interest is their economic and social well-being – can easily do so by placing emphasis on the rapture. As a result of the rapture not being taught in our Churches, many Christians depend on hearsay and only a few get access to good literature to improve their knowledge.

The unfortunate result of this poor level of information on the rapture is that many Christians in Africa do not have sufficient understanding of the rapture, or the warm and glorious encouragement that such knowledge provides for our daily walk with the Lord while we wait for Him to rapture us.

The more frightening reality is the people who actively oppose the rapture message in different ways. These are the sales agents of darkness. While Christians are busy arguing about whether the rapture will be a pre-, post- or even mid-tribulation event, these servants of the kingdom of darkness are out in full force dishing out lies and confusing and deceiving a lot more people and persuading them to reject the truth of the rapture.

Some Questions About the Rapture

1. Is the term "rapture" found in the Bible?

Yes and no. It is not found in the English translation of the Bible (KJV), but it is derived from a Latin verb (*rapere*, to snatch, seize) which was used in the Latin Bible to translate the Greek verb "caught up" (*harpaz*) in 1 Thessalonians 4:17-- "Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be CAUGHT UP [raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." It is very interesting to see how this verb "caught up" is used in the New Testament. Study the following verses: Acts 8:39 ("caught away"), 2 Corinthians 12:2,4 ("caught up"), Revelation 12:5 ("caught up"); John 10:28-29 ("pluck out of"), etc.

2. Has a rapture-like event ever taken place in history?

Yes, on several occasions. Enoch was suddenly removed from earth by God. God took him (Gen. 5:21-24). Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Philip was raptured (suddenly removed) from one place to another (Acts 8:39). Paul was raptured to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2,4). The Lord Jesus was raptured to heaven at the ascension (Rev. 12:5). But that a whole generation of believers will suddenly be removed from earth to heaven without seeing physical death is an event unprecedented in the history of the world (compare 1 Cor. 15:51).

3. What do people mean when they say "secret rapture"?

This is a common term used by men who deny the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church. In what sense is the rapture a secret? In 1 Corinthians 15:51 the truth pertaining to the Rapture

is called a "mystery." This means that it was a truth that was unrevealed to men in previous ages. Moses, David, Isaiah and John the Baptist knew nothing of the rapture of the Church. It was a secret or mystery that had not yet been revealed. However, a New Testament "mystery" is something that was once hidden but now revealed. God has made it known to His saints and it is a secret no more. Paul said, "I shew you a mystery." If he showed it to us, then it is no longer hidden. It is clearly revealed to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

The Rapture is also a secret event in the sense that it will occur suddenly and be unannounced to the world. There will be no forewarning. It will take place at God's appointed time and it will take the world by surprise. It will be over before the world has time to realize that it happened.

4. Will the Rapture be a "silent rapture"?

When Christ calls His Church to Himself there will be sounds and noise involved. "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" (1 Cor. 15:52b). "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16).

How much of this noise the unsaved will hear is not revealed in Scripture. The event will happen so suddenly and will take place so quickly that it is probable that the only thing the unsaved will notice is the sudden disappearance of those who are true believers. So it was in the case of Enoch. He was there and suddenly "he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24).

5. How quickly will the Rapture take place?

This is answered in 1 Corinthians 15:52, "in a **moment**, in the twinkling of an eye." The word "moment" is interesting. It is the Greek word "*atom*." The word *atom* means "not cut, you cannot cut it anymore." Suppose you were to keep cutting up a pie into smaller and smaller pieces. If you had a knife sharp enough (that is, with a small enough blade) you could keep cutting the pieces down to the point where you could not cut the pieces or particles any smaller. We call this an "atom." [However, we now know that you can even cut atoms into smaller particles].

The term "*atom*" is also used of time. We can cut time into years and into days and into hours and into minutes and into seconds. An "*atom* of time" is the smallest measurement of time (the point where you can't cut time anymore). In English we might call this a "split-second." How fast will the Rapture take place? In a split second, in the twinkling of an eye. If the unsaved blink, they will miss it!

6. As the Rapture takes place, what is the order of events?

This is answered in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

FIRST, God (in the Person of Christ) will come down from heaven and He will bring with Him the souls of those "which sleep in Jesus," that is, who have died in Christ (see verse 16 and verse 14).

SECOND, those who have died in Christ will rise first (v. 16). Their bodies will be raised from the graves.

THIRD, those believers who are alive and remain unto the coming of Christ will be caught up or raptured. Thus those who have died in Christ and those who are alive when Christ returns will together meet the Lord in the air, to be with Him forever (v. 17 and see John 14:3).

7. When was the Rapture first revealed?

The Rapture was not revealed until the Lord spoke the words "receive you to Myself" found in John 14:1-3 the night before He died on the cross. Don't make the mistake of looking for the Rapture in Matthew chapter 24. His coming mentioned in Matthew chapter 24 is His coming to the earth following the great Tribulation.

8. What about those who set dates for the Rapture?

Edgar Whisenant wrote a book entitled, *88 Reasons Why The Rapture Could Be In 1988*. Of course, the Lord did not come in 1988 so a new book might have been written: *89 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Take Place in 1989*. Someone surmised that the added reason given in the new book could be this: "Reason #89--Because He did not come in 1988."

Many others have foolishly tried to set dates. ⁽¹⁾ How unwise to try to announce that which God has chosen not to reveal? God has not told us the time. He wants us to be ready always.

9. What will happen to infants at the time of the rapture?

The best selling book *Left Behind* and the film by the same title depict all infants and young children being removed and raptured from the earth, including infants and children of unsaved people. Mothers were running around in panic crying out, "Where is my baby?", etc. But does the Bible really teach this?

The rapture is when Christ comes to remove ("catch up"—1 Thess. 4:16-17) the church (all true believers) from earth. He will come to receive His bride and bring her to heaven. Thus, the rapture is for those "in Christ," those who are part of the body and bride of Christ.

Infants are not saved and they are not in Christ; nor are they part of the church. It would be wrong to point to a living infant and say, "That baby is saved and has eternal life and his sins are forgiven!" On the contrary, every baby is born in sin and every infant has a wicked sin nature (Rom. 5:12, Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; Psalm 58:3). Babies are not saved and they do not possess eternal life. If this were true, then does this mean that when they get older they become UN-saved and forfeit eternal life? This is Biblically absurd. It would also be absurd to say that all the unsaved children around the world growing up in Hindu and Muslim and Buddhist homes are part of the church that is in Christ.

Keep in mind that an infant that is a year old at the time of the rapture will be approximately 8 years old at the time when Christ returns to this earth to rule and reign, and thus will be certainly old enough to make a responsible decision for or against Christ at that time or even prior to that time.

Whether or not Christ takes infants that belong to saved parents is not revealed in the Scriptures, though it does seem reasonable to suppose that God would take such infants instead of leaving them parentless and defenseless. Compare 1 Corinthians 7:14 where the child of even one believing parent is said to be "sanctified" or "holy" (set apart in a special way). One thing we do know for sure is that **God will do what is right** (Gen. 18:25; Rom. 9:14). God is certainly far more concerned for every infant and young child (saved or unsaved) than we are.

What kind of concept of God does the *Left Behind* book and film convey to the world when unsaved mothers are going around in deep panic crying, "Where's my baby?" It makes God look like a kidnapper! This gives Reformed men and others all the more reason to mock our "secret rapture theory" (as they call it).

It is important to realize that the issue under discussion is not what happens to infants who die. Though it is not our purpose here to defend the doctrine of infant salvation, yet we are assured, based on Scripture, that they will be SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS (see the helpful book by Robert P. Lightner entitled *Heaven For Those Who Cannot Believe*). The issue is this: What happens to infants that are alive at the time of the rapture? This is an entirely different question.

The book LEFT BEHIND is a fictional book based on prophecy, but it does teach doctrine. One of the very questionable doctrines it teaches is that at the time of the rapture pregnant women will suddenly become un-pregnant (that is, the unborn babies will be taken in the rapture, leaving the unsaved mother many pounds lighter!). A rapture for embryos! The following is found on pages 46-47 of the book LEFT BEHIND:

Most shocking to Rayford was a woman in labor, about to go into the delivery room, who was suddenly barren. Doctors delivered the placenta. Her husband had caught the disappearance of the fetus on tape. As he videotaped her great belly and sweaty face, he asked questions. How did she feel?

Then came the scream and the dropping of the camera, terrified voices, running nurses, and the doctor. CNN reran the footage in superslow motion, showing the woman going from very pregnant to nearly flat stomach, as if she had instantaneously delivered. "Now, watch with us again," the newsman intoned, "and keep your eyes on the left edge of your screen, where a nurse appears to be reading a printout from the fetal heart monitor. There, see?" The action stopped as the pregnant woman's stomach deflated. "The nurse's uniform seems to still be standing as if an invisible person is

wearing it. She's gone. Half a second later, watch." The tape moved ahead and stopped. "The uniform, stockings and all, are in a pile atop her shoes." Etc.

According to this teaching, after the rapture there will be a period of nine months when no babies will be born anywhere in the world (the only exception being some babies conceived after the rapture that may be born pre-mature)! Maternity wards in hospitals will be empty for months! Later in the book there is an argument between Rayford and his flight attendant, Hattie, about Hattie's sister who is out of work because she worked at an abortion clinic and there simply aren't any abortions to be performed. In summary, the film and book teach that at the time of the rapture all infants on earth are raptured and taken to heaven including all unborn children.

The tribulation is a period of time when God's wrath will be put on display. It will be the most severe period of judgment the world has ever known. It will be similar to the plagues that fell on Egypt, only on a world-wide scale and more severe. It is helpful to think back through history on other occasions when God's judgment fell in order to see what happened to infants.²

Is it unthinkable that God should expose helpless infants to a terrible time of judgment? What about the babies in Jericho? Were they supernaturally delivered? What about the children of the kingdom of Bashan and the children of the kingdom of Heshbon (see Deut. 3:6)? In Egypt the firstborn of each household was slain from the palace of Pharaoh and on down. In Bethlehem God allowed babies to be slain due to Herod's jealous rage (Matthew 2).

Children often in Scripture and in life bear the consequences of their parents' unbelief. Is this principle going to be overthrown at the rapture? Unsaved moms going around and saying, "Where is my baby?" eliminates one of the horrors of that time of judgment—having your children suffer with you throughout that period. It undercuts one important reason to be saved—that is, for the sake of our children and other family members (Acts 16:31; 2:39; 1Cor. 7:14 etc.). Was not one of the rich man's worst torments in Hell (Hades) the fact that his brothers were going to join him (see Luke 16:27-31)? One of the greatest reasons to be saved is for the sake of family and friends that we may influence, that they may save themselves from this wicked generation. Cornelius is to be the example of us all, who called together his kinsman and friends to hear the gospel (Acts 10:24).

Why would God deliver infants and unborn of the unsaved just prior to the first half of the tribulation, which is much milder, and have other infants suffer in the last half which is more severe (Luke 21:23)? Why would God allow pregnant women to be ripped up in other historical judgments and do extraordinary things to avoid it in this last one (2 Kings 8:12; 2 Kings 15:16; Hosea 13:16; Amos 1:13; Isa. 13:15-18)? See also Deuteronomy 28:54-56 and Lamentations 2:20 for other examples of children suffering (being literally devoured) in historical judgments.

The fact that people have experienced historical judgment does not automatically mean they have come under damnation. Moses is the classic refutation of this. He came under historical judgment which involved death, but certainly he was a saved man (Hebrews 11:

24-26; Matt. 17:3-4). Are we to believe that all the infants that drowned in the flood are in hell because they experienced an historical judgment? Certainly not.

Those who advocate that all babies throughout the world will be raptured might reason in this way: Since infant salvation is true, then infant rapture must also be true. The rapture of infants of the unsaved is a very bold extrapolation on no Biblical grounds and seems an unwarranted sensationalist device for creating a dramatic effect in a book or film. The real horror is not babies disappearing, but remaining to grow up in those awful times. "Woe unto them with child and to them that give suck in those days" (Matthew 24:19).

Consider the message our Lord gave to the women of Jerusalem who were bewailing Him on His way to the cross. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us [compare Hosea 10:8 and Rev. 6:16]. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:28-31). If what God has done in the past is a indication of what He will do in the last great historical judgment, then this passage has great bearing. Children suffered greatly in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD which is a prototype of the last great judgment.

"But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people (Luke 21:23). This passage is significant because Luke seems to connect the sufferings in 70AD with end time events in the future at the return of Christ. The future tribulation will be a time of special suffering for those who are pregnant and for those who have small children who are nursing.

The days of Noah are parallel to the days just prior to Christ's coming to earth (Luke 17:26; Matt. 24:36ff). Certainly the unsaved babies of Noah's day did not escape the terrible judgment that came upon the entire world (and the fetuses did not escape either). They all drowned. I am not commenting on the eternal destiny of any of these children, but the historical judgments in this life certainly are experienced by them. Why would the judgments of the tribulation be any different than those of the past?

It seems far more in line with Biblical teaching to suggest that infants of unsaved parents at the time of the rapture will enter the tribulation along with their parents, and with their parents will face whatever those frightful days will bring. If an infant should suffer physical death during the horrors of the tribulation period, God will take care of this person based on His abundant mercy and the work of Christ on the cross. The benefits of Christ's cross-work (justification, etc.) are applied to this person at the time of death and not before.

10. If a person rejects Christ before the Rapture can he be saved after the Rapture?

There are some who teach that those who do not get saved prior to the Rapture have no hope of being saved after the Rapture. This view is based upon a misunderstanding of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (11) And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: (12) That they all

might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." They understand this passage to mean that if a person rejects the truth prior to the Rapture, he will be deluded and unable to believe following the Rapture. Who then will be saved during the Tribulation? They teach that those saved during the Tribulation will be only those who never heard the Gospel prior to the Rapture.

What does the passage really teach? These verses in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 are not talking about people who reject the truth *before* the Rapture. They are referring to people who reject the truth *during* the Tribulation. These are people who willfully decide to follow the devil's man (see the context of 2 Thess. 2:3-9). These are people who reject the truth and receive the LIE that the man of sin is to be honored as God and worshiped. These are those who deliberately choose to take the mark of the beast and worship this evil man. According to Revelation 14:9-11, those who take the mark cannot be saved. Their destiny is Hell. Thus, during the Tribulation, those who willfully identify with the devil's man are *doomed* and *damned* (2 Thess. 2:12). In that day the issue will be very clear: worship God (Rev. 14:6-7) or worship the devil's man (Rev. 14:9-11). One's choice will determine one's eternal destiny.

If a person refuses to believe on Christ prior to the Rapture, there is still hope that he will trust Christ after the Rapture. His earlier rejection was not final and not fatal. God still reaches out to men in grace during the Tribulation. However, it is always dangerous to reject the truth, no matter when you live. The time to be saved is today, not tomorrow. If a person refuses to be saved today, what guarantee does he have that he will be willing to be saved in the future?

If a person refuses to trust Christ today when it is easy (for many, little or no persecution), why should this person be willing to trust Christ tomorrow when it will be very difficult (great persecution for believers during the Tribulation). Those who reject the Gospel today are in danger of rejecting the Gospel tomorrow. The person who rejects the Gospel before the Rapture could very well be one of those who will worship the man of sin during the Tribulation. Those who are unbelievers today will probably be unbelievers tomorrow.

God can certainly save a person who at one time strongly rejected the truth. Remember Saul of Tarsus. Remember how you yourself once rejected the truth before you were saved! During the Tribulation, God will be willing and able to save all those who will turn to Him. The same is true today: "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

The time to believe is now. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). It is never safe to delay such a decision. The time to be saved is now, prior to the Rapture.

Isaiah summed up the duty of man regardless of what dispensation he lives in: "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: (7) Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

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