

## THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

### I. WHAT IS THE RAPTURE

- A. What is the Rapture? The Rapture describes what happens to the saints worldwide when Jesus appears in the sky at His Second Coming.

***1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*** “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. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

1. **Greek** – The Greek words for “caught up” are *arpaw harpazo* (strong’s 726). This means, “to seize”, catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force), gather.
  2. **Latin**- In Latin the term “caught up” is translated *rapio*. It is from *rapio* that we get the word *Rapture*.
  3. **Meeting Jesus in the sky**- Paul understood that being *caught up* meant meeting Jesus in the air.
- B. **The *parousia* of Christ**- The Greek word *parousia* is the most popular word used to describe Jesus’ Second Coming.
1. **Historical usage**- Historically this word was commonly used to describe the visit of a king to a city in his domain. As the king would approach the city he would be met some distance outside the town by a select group of dignitaries and close relatives, who would then accompany him in his procession through the city gates to be seen by the resident population.
  2. **NT usage**- The historical usage of the word *parousia* clearly pictures what the New Testament describes as occurring at the Second Coming. Believers, both those who have died and those who are still living, will “meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thes 4:17) and accompany Him on the last part of His journey back to earth.

### II. DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE “TIMING OF THE RAPTURE”

- A. There is almost a universal conviction among premillennial scholars that the final week of Daniel is the timeframe that concludes this age. In other words, human history in this age will end with a unique 7 year period of time. The discussion concerning the rapture involves discerning at what point before, during, or after this seven years the Rapture occurs.
- B. **Views on the Rapture**- There are four different views on the timing of the Rapture according to those who subscribe to premillennial eschatology.

1. **Pre-Tribulation**- Views the Rapture as occurring seven years before Jesus' Second Coming.
2. **Mid-Tribulation**- Views the Rapture as occurring 3 ½ years before Jesus' Second Coming and half way through the tribulation period.
3. **Pre-Wrath**- Views the Rapture as occurring at an undefined period of time after the 3 ½ year mark of the Tribulation and before the end of the tribulation. This view sees the Rapture as occurring at the sixth seal in the Book of Revelation.
4. **Post-Tribulation**- Views the Rapture as occurring after the Tribulation at the Second Coming of Jesus.

### III. TRUTH #1: THE SECOND COMING IS A SINGULAR EVENT OCCURRING AFTER THE TRIBULATION

*Matthew 24:29-31* “Immediately after the tribulation of those days 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. <sup>30</sup> 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 heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> 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 one end of heaven to the other.”

- A. Jesus describes His Second Coming as a singular event occurring after the tribulation. At no point in His teaching ministry does He ever reference another timeframe for His return.
- B. After His resurrection Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples and informed them: “This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11) The angels described a singular event in which Jesus would come back from heaven to the earth.
- C. Paul’s teaching harmonizes with what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse.

*1 Thessalonians 4:15-18* “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 will by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

1. In Matthew 24 we see that Christ is descending from heaven with angels and a trumpet gathering together His followers.
2. In 1 Thes. 4 we see that Christ is descending from heaven with angels and a trumpet, gathering together His followers.

- D. Conclusion- Any position subscribing to a view that necessitates two Second Coming events is rooted in theory not scripture. This is an important distinction to make. Nowhere does the Bible delineate between two separate Second Coming events. However the Bible does emphatically describe one event, which occurs after the tribulation, not at any point before it.

#### IV. TRUTH #2: THE RAPTURE OCCURS AFTER THE TRIBULATION

- A. Jesus describes the Rapture as an event that is synonymous with His Second Coming. The Apostle Paul also describes the Second Coming and the Rapture as one synonymous event. Both Jesus and Paul use the same word for “gather” *episyngago*.

***2 Thessalonians 2:1 “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you”***

- B. If the Rapture occurs after the tribulation what does that mean? It means the Church is here for the tribulation. Jesus, in fact, prefigures the presence of believers during the tribulation.

***Matthew 24:29-31 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days 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.<sup>30</sup> 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 heaven with power and great glory.<sup>31</sup> 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 one end of heaven to the other.”***

***“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation... And pray that your flight may not be in the winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be a great tribulation, since has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be... Then if anyone says to you, “Look here is the Christ!” or “There!” do not believe it... For as the lightning comes from the east and flashed to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Mt 24:”15, 20-21, 23, 26-27)***

#### V. TRUTH #3: THE RESURRECTION OCCURS AFTER THE TRIBULATION

Both Daniel 10 and Revelation 20 reveal that the resurrection of the saints occurs after the tribulation. The Apostle John calls this the first resurrection (Rev 20:6). It is not logical that the post-tribulation resurrection could be called the “first resurrection” if another one just occurred 7 years earlier.

***Daniel 12:1-3 “At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the***

*brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.”*

*Revelation 20:4-6 “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<sup>4</sup> thousand years.<sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.<sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”*

## VI. TRUTH #4: THE LAST TRUMPET OCCURS IN CONTEXT TO THE SECOND COMING

- A. Again, the two parallel passages of Matt 24:29-31 and 1 Thes 4:15-18 indicate that a trumpet is sounded at the return of Christ signaling the simultaneous resurrection and rapture of the saints. 1 Cor 15:51-52 refers to this as the “last trumpet”.

*1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 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.*

*Matthew 24:29-31 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days 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.<sup>30</sup> 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 heaven with power and great glory.<sup>31</sup> 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 one end of heaven to the other.”*

*1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 “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 will by no means precede those who are asleep.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.<sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*

1. In a pre-tribulation rapture perspective, the last trumpet occurs 7 years before the post-tribulation return of Jesus. It couldn't really be said that this is a “last trumpet,” if Christ is returning 7 years later to the sound of another trumpet.

- B. The last trumpet recorded in scripture is the seventh trumpet in the Book of Revelation. At that time we know that the nations come under Jesus' manifest leadership, the earth is judged, the saints are rewarded, and the mystery of God is completed. (Rev 10:7, 11:15-18)

***Revelation 10:7*** ***“but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.”***

We know that at least part of the “mystery of God” is the resurrection and consequent translation of the saints according to 1 Cor 15.