

**Old Testament Reading – Daniel 12:1-4 – New Testament Reading
– 1 Corinthians 15:50-58**

**God’s Unfolding Drama of Redemption
“The Rapture of the Church”**

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the rapture of the Church.

- When God the Father tells Jesus to go get His Bride, the Bible says, Jesus will *descend* from heaven (not return) and call for His followers to *“Come up here!”* (Rev. 4:1)
- The Apostle Paul said, *“In the twinkling of an eye,”* the bodies of all believers, both living and dead, will be changed from physical to spiritual; from mortal to immortal, and be “snatched up,” or “fetched away,” to meet the Lord in the air, *“and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*
- Since no warning signs lead up to this event, the rapture of the Church is always “imminent,” which means it could happen at any moment, and it will happen quickly.
- Jesus said it would be like a *“thief in the night!”*

The term “rapture” is derived from the translation of Paul’s two words in 1st Thessalonians, 4:18 – “caught up.”

- After assuring his readers that believers who died before the rapture would rise from their graves first, Paul said, *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.”*
- The words “caught up” were translated from the Greek word “harpazo,” which means to “snatch up,” “carry off,” or to “fetch away.”
- So, “harpazo” became the Latin word for “raptus,” and “raptus” became the English word for “rapture!”
- Jesus will soon descend from heaven with a shout, and in *11/100ths of a second*, He will “fetch away” His Bride, to *“keep [her] from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”* (Rev.3:10)

1. The Lord’s Promise of a Reunion – John 14:1-3 – “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.”

- Jesus and the disciples were in the Upper Room where they had been so many times, but it was much different this time.

- Over the years, Jesus had told them He would be leaving them, but now that the hour had come, they were heartbroken with grief, for they could not conceive of life without Him.
- Sensing their sorrow, Jesus told them He would ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be their comforter, who would abide with them forever.
- Then Jesus promised He would return and receive them unto Himself, that where He was going, they would also be.
- The Rapture of the Church is one of the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith; it defines the purpose of the Christian Faith, which is to deliver us from the darkness and evil of this world into the light and loveliness of God's presence forever.
- For Jesus to complete the redemptive purpose, He had to return to the Father and then return to earth for us, and the Rapture of the Church is the next event on God's prophetic calendar.
- While this verse is used to comfort the family in the death of their loved one, its original meaning was to assure the disciples that Jesus would return to earth and receive them unto Himself.

2. The Lord's Pattern for the Rapture – 1s Thessalonians 4: 13-18 – “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope...Therefore, comfort one another with these words.”

- The Thessalonian believers knew about the return of Christ, and they were eager for it to happen.
- The Apostle Paul praised them for their *“work of faith, [their] labor of love, and [their] steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:3)
- They eagerly anticipated Christ's return so they could be a part of His glorious kingdom.
- However, they had two dilemmas:
 - Some Christians had already died! *Would they miss out on the blessings of the rapture?*
 - Some Christians had suffered such persecution they thought it was the wrath of God. *Had they missed the deliverance of the rapture?*
- Paul told them of a “mystery” God had revealed to him that affirmed the Christians' rapture before Christ's return to earth as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- That “mystery” is based upon three foundational truths:
 - The death of Christ – verse 14

- Our only hope of victory is the death of Christ as payment for our sin.
- The resurrection of Christ – verse 14
 - Our only hope of eternal life is in Christ’s resurrection from the grave.
- The revelation of Christ – verse 14
 - Our only hope of comfort is to believe Paul received this truth by divine revelation.
- Based on Christ’s death and resurrection and the confirmation he received from his encounter with Christ, Paul assured the Thessalonians that those who died before the rapture would receive the same blessings as those who were alive when Jesus came for them.

Then Paul outlined the pattern of events for that glorious day:

- Verse 16 – *“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.”* (Notice it is a descent; not a return)
 - While the rapture of the Church will not be silent or secret, the trumpet and call may only be heard by born-again believers in Christ.
 - This “last Trump” signals the close of the Church Age.
- Verse 16 – *“And the dead in Christ will rise first.”* Also, see 1 Corinthians 15:51ff.
 - Our glorified spirit will be united into our new and imperishable bodies. (1 John 3:2)
- Verse 17 – *“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”*
 - While it may sound dramatic and even fictional, either this verse from the pen of the Apostle Paul is true, or nothing else he wrote can be trusted.
- Verse 17 – *“And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*
 - That implies that we are already with the Lord and that Christ lives in us, giving us the hope of glory.
 - That gives hope to the dying, that even our death will not separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus. (See Romans 8)

- Verse 18 – *“Therefore, comfort one another with these words.”*
 - The only way such a “snatching away” makes sense is if it delivers all believers from every portion of God’s wrath, which will be poured out on the earth during the Tribulation.
 - How could Paul’s words comfort them if they had to endure God’s judgment before they were delivered?
 - Only the “Pre-tribulation” position of the rapture fits into God’s prophetic timeline.
- Two supporting passages:
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – Paul said these Christians had turned from their idols *“To serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*
 - They were not waiting on the Antichrist, or even the return of Christ, but for Christ to come and deliver them from the wrath to come.
 - 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 – if Paul knew these Christians were going to face the horrors of the Great Tribulation, he would have warned them about the greater suffering ahead, rather than affirming them of Jesus’ promise of rest.
 - To accomplish its purpose, the rapture of the Church must precede the arrival of the Antichrist and the seven years of God’s wrath that will follow.

3. The Lord’s Picture of Redemption – Revelation 19:7 – “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

- Throughout his epistles, the Apostle Paul portrayed the Church as the Bride of Christ.
- In Ephesians 5:21-32, Paul quoted Genesis 2:24, where God said, *“For this reason (for marital unity) a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*
- Paul said the “great mystery” was that he was not just speaking about the union of a man and a woman in marriage, but more importantly about *the union of Christ and the Church*, the exact promise Jesus made to His disciples in the Upper Room.
- Is it just a coincidence that the pattern of a 1st-century Jewish wedding compares to the marriage of Jesus and His Bride, the Church?
- Revelation 3:10 – *“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”*

JEWISH WEDDING TRADITIONS

AND THE RAPTURE

BETROTHAL	LEAVE FATHERS HOUSE	JESUS LEFT HEAVEN	1ST COMING OF CHRIST
	TRAVEL TO DESIRED BRIDE'S HOME	CAME TO EARTH AS A BABY	
	PAY A GREAT PRICE FOR BRIDE	DIED ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS	
	OFFER ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	OFFERS SALVATION TO US	
	MARRIAGE CONTRACT/LEGALLY BOUND TOGETHER	IF WE ACCEPT, WE BECOME THE CHURCH ("BRIDE OF CHRIST")	
	GROOM BACK TO FATHER'S HOUSE TO PREPARE HOME	JESUS WENT BACK TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR US	
WEDDING	FATHER SENDS SON BACK WHEN ALL IS READY	GOD KNOWS THE "DAY AND HOUR" HE WILL SEND THE SON	RAPTURE AND CHURCH IN HEAVEN DURING TRIBULATION
	GROOMSMEN ANNOUNCE GROOM'S ARRIVAL	THE ARCHANGEL WILL SHOUT AND A	

**TRUMPET WILL
BLOW**

**BRIDE
IMMEDIATELY
TAKEN BACK
WITH GROOM**

**THE CHURCH/BRIDE
OF CHRIST WILL BE
RAPTURED**

**THE TWO ENTER
WEDDING
CHAMBER FOR 7
DAYS**

**THE CHURCH WILL
BE IN HEAVEN
DURING THE
TRIBULATION**

**GREAT WEDDING
FEAST AT END OF
7 DAYS**

**THE CHURCH WILL
ATTEND THE
WEDDING FEAST OF
THE LAMB**
