
WHAT IS THE MYSTERY CALLED THE RAPTURE?

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References:

- Dave Hunt's book *When Will Jesus Come? Compelling Evidence for the Soon Return of Christ*.
- "The Church Must Be Removed," Dave Hunt, Chapter 12.
- *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey
- *The Berean Call Radio program, transcripts from program #s 1951 & 1952*

John 14:2-3: *"In my Father's house are many mansions.... I go to prepare a place for you.... and I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall 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."*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52: *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep [that is, die] but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: ...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

So, what of this mystery known as the Rapture?

The mystery Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 15: *"I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep...."*

We won't all die, but we shall all be changed, that was an absolutely new thought, that something was going to happen to transform all Christians to give them new bodies.

It was not made TO Israel (as in Old Testament promises);

It was made in Jesus' and Paul's time – John 14:2-3, for instance:

"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 you may be also."

Why would you need a new body?

Not to show off here on earth; but **because we're going to be taken to heaven.**

Heaven cannot, or will not, sustain anything corruptible!

Romans 8:21 – *That the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

1 Corinthians 15:42 – *So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.*

How will our new bodies happen?

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (above).

Philippians 3:21 – *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

How can anyone who is a Christian, who knows the Bible, object to the Rapture?

- **If they thought it was not in the Scripture;**
 - Many claim to know it, and even read it, but don't, or have glanced or read through it once and think they know it.
- **Implies that they do not know the Scriptures;**

Is it true that the word "Rapture" isn't found in the Bible?

Many skeptics are quick to point out that this is so.

'Rapture' actually **IS** in the Bible, in the Latin New Testament. Right there in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 the Latin work *Rapturos* is found.

This word, in Latin or Greek, which is "rapture us away" or "to catch us up," has the same meaning.

Latin is just as good a language as English, and it simply means "an ecstatic catching away."

So as we look at the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, we find the words of Paul extremely comforting

. . . the dead in Christ shall rise first:

*Then we which are alive [and] remain **shall be caught up** together with them in the clouds . . .*

That sounds pretty clearly like we're meeting Him in the air.

He's not coming to this earth—because He's fulfilling His promise: "I'm going to take you to My Father's house of many mansions" (John 14).

So He's not coming to the earth at that time to reveal Himself yet.

This is not when His feet touch the Mount of Olives, as Acts 1:11 tells us.

This is just what it says, we're caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

What will the Rapture look like?

The church is going to vanish.

How is it going to vanish?

Christ is going to take us all away.

Even the graves will become empty, according to the above passages, and also according to the fact that Christ rose bodily, but **not** with His old body!

Remember, it's a mystery that's being revealed, but not every detail. But we don't need to know the details for the promise to be kept.

How do some people that don't believe in the Rapture, but consider themselves to be Bible-believing Christians, explain John 14:2-3?

Without considering their motives, the bottom line is that they must spiritualize the Scriptures.

Many times, for example, those who reject the Rapture, also reject Israel as God's chosen people unto the end.

They might say that the promise of the land to Israel is only symbolic of the promise of spiritual blessings for the Church. This is what "spiritualization" or rationalizing is.

What is the mystery being revealed 1 Corinthians 15:51-58? Isn't it arrogant to think that we can understand a mystery set forth by God's Word?

The mystery is 1 Corinthians 15:51:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. . .

The way it will happen is 1 Corinthians 15:50, 52-58:

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?

56 The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law.

57 But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

So Paul is "going to show you a mystery."

Mysterium, mysterios, in the Greek.

It does NOT mean something that you cannot understand.

It *is* something *being revealed*.

Something that was unknown before, is now going to be revealed.

The next question then might be, "how is this is going to happen?"

- New bodies!
- The dead raised incorruptible!
- We *shall* be changed!
- We won't all sleep or die!
- But we'll all be changed, transformed!

And what body do we get?

John 12:24

All of this is predicated on the fact that God cannot allow corruption of any sort into heaven—thus, we cannot hope to get there with our current bodies of flesh!

But in John 12, Jesus speaks of the seed that falls into the ground and dies, which then bears much fruit because it grows up into a new body.

This is a type of resurrection

So the dead who have been planted, (those dead in Christ) are going to be raised in the likeness of Christ's resurrection.

What about those of us who are alive and remain? How are we going to get into this new body and get to heaven?

Paul said, "*the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality.*" (1 Corinthians 15:52-53)

Then Paul reveals that mystery that was already written, but not yet known, **but CAN be known**, in Verses 54-55:

...then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?

Death will be conquered. Christ resurrected. The body that was laid in the grave is no longer there. The grave is empty.

And so will our bodies be raised as new bodies after the likeness of Christ's glorified body!

Where do we go from here, given the context of this study in 1 Thessalonians?

Am I ready for the Lord?

Am I longing for Him at any moment?

When, then, will He finally come back?

NOT when people expect Him!

Matthew 24:44

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

What's the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming?

The Rapture cannot be called the second coming because that takes place in the midst of Armageddon, after the Great Tribulation!

If Christ was going to come back, all the way, at the Rapture, there would be nothing left to expect.

Jesus warned us to watch and be ready, because He will come when we least expect it!

There are all kinds of camps out there: pre-Trib / mid-Trib / post-Trib but pre-wrath / amillennial, yet not very many people are taking this warning very seriously!

not many are even thinking about it.

Many are just too embroiled in their to-do lists or bucket lists or 5 to 10-year plans, etc.

At some point, they've been persuaded that the Lord has delayed His coming!

The wedding feast of the Lamb must take place, or begin, before the Tribulation—another reason why the Rapture is separate, as well as confirming that we are NOT appointed to the wrath of God to be poured out on the world.

In order for His saints to come with Him from Heaven when He returns, they first have to be taken to heaven.

Both the wedding and the judgment seat of Christ must take place before He returns.

The more serious and urgent question is, is this Bride of Christ eager for the wedding or not?

CHALLENGE

If the Rapture occurred today, would it disturb some important plans you have?

Are we making excuses or alibies like in the parable?

Luke 14:18-20

What does Paul mean by a reward for loving His appearing?

Paul said in Titus:2:13, *“Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God our Savior, Jesus Christ.”*

And in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Paul says, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I've kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”*

This is not a reward for loving His Second Coming. It's a reward for loving His appearing to Rapture His people!

Contrast two situations:

1. End of the Tribulation period, the world police chasing you, about to kill you; but you're joyful, and really looking forward to—love the appearing of Christ.
2. The stock market goes up, your investments gathering momentum; your house's value doubled in just a few years; business is going well; family's going well; you take vacations; but in the midst of all of it, you love His appearing.

The first case doesn't seem to warrant any special reward. There's no other desire you want, except to escape the pain and suffering.

The second case, is when there are so many attractive things to make you comfortable and rich, yet you turn your back on them, and long to be with Christ in heaven. That is a powerful argument for a pre-Trib Rapture, as opposed to a post, or even a mid-Trib Rapture.

What is the Blessed Hope?

Paul said in Titus:2:13, *“Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God our Savior, Jesus Christ.”*

With all of the verses that deal with the Rapture, how do we rightly apply them to our lives?

We are to occupy.

We are to be ready for His coming.

We are to expect it at all times.

We are to look forward to it (love His appearing)—*This IS the blessed hope!*

It’s a motivation for living in Christ, with an expectancy that He’s coming at any moment!

And there’s excitement in that.

If I really love somebody, and that love is ever increasing, I can’t wait for them to be here, and it will cause me to be as fruitful, by every means within my ability, in my life in ways that please that somebody!

This is far from escapist theory or getting out of paying back my debt, cause *“the Lord is gonna take me outa here...”*

It’s a situation that makes us want to be fruitful in our lives, all motivated by our love for Him, which was ultimately motivated by His love for us in the first place.

Why Must the Rapture Happen *Before* Antichrist is revealed?

The Rapture can happen at any moment.

The Second Coming is predicated on Antichrist being revealed.

Pre-wrath theory says that Antichrist has to come, and we’ve got to face him. And only then can the Rapture occur.

The Bible doesn’t say, *“Look for the Antichrist,”* it says, *“At such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh”* (Matthew 24:44).

Thus, if the Antichrist must come first, we’re not looking for Christ, we’re looking for Antichrist.

That would destroy the teaching of imminency.

In Luke 12:35-36a, Jesus says, *“Let your loins be girded, your lights burning, and you [yourselves] like those who watch for their Lord.”* He could come at any moment.

If Jesus is coming (2nd coming) right after Antichrist, there would be no surprise.

I would simply wait for Antichrist, and then *“I’ll shape up and wait for Christ to come.”*

Practical Consequences:

If Christ could come at any moment, that has a much more powerful effect upon me, than if I think, *“He can’t come until this or that happens.”*

Both Luke 12:45a and Matthew 24:48 say, *“But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays His coming;”*

That attitude can easily lead the spiritually weak and immature to think, *“Well, my lord is not here now! I’ll just live as I please.”*

But 1 John 3:3 says, *“Everyone that has this hope in him purifies himself.”*

The hope of an **imminent Rapture** has a purifying effect in my life.

I don’t want to be caught doing something I shouldn’t be doing.

But I also don’t want to live in an attitude of thinking *“it’s OK to get caught up in things I shouldn’t be involved in, because when Antichrist appears, then I’ll just clean up my life and get ready for the Rapture!”*

That attitude is nonsense, give what the Scripture tells us!

There is no indication that there will be any warning for this!

Why is there no such thing as a partial Rapture?

There's a belief that says that there will be a partial Rapture, meaning that only those Christians who are worthy, those who are fruitful and productive, such as the hundred-folders, or the sixty-folders, will be Raptured.

There is absolutely no biblical support for such a theory.

Another fallacy is that Christ will only return once the Church is cleaned up. This theory has its roots in 1st century purity traditions.

The problem with either of these is, how will people be taken to heaven then?

And why should we have to get cleaned up before we get to heaven in order to join people already in heaven, who didn't get cleaned up until they got to heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ? This breaks down pretty quickly.

More importantly, Paul makes no exceptions in his teaching about being *"Absent from the body, present with the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

And what about establishing the kingdom in order to welcome the King here on earth?

Problem: A kingdom without a king in the first place, is not a kingdom. It may be a lot of things, despotic, Marxist, Socialist, dictatorship, etc., but not a kingdom as the Bible describes.

Christ is going to have to do it. And the disciples knew it, as they asked, *"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6).

So it comes right back to what it says in 1 Thessalonians 4, and in John 14, Christ said, *"I'll come again and receive you unto myself."*

Sounds pretty clear that He is going to gather them up. And He says, He's going to take us all there, to His Father's house, where there are many dwelling places.

A bigger problem exists in that, if any kingdom is built on earth, by men, it will be a Satanic one!

Christians who are looking forward to meeting Jesus, not in the air, but with their feet planted on planet Earth, when He has come to take over the kingdom they've established, will find that the kingdom they've been establishing is none other than antichrist's!

Satan must establish his kingdom on this earth before the Second Coming, because 2 Thessalonians 2:8 tells us, *"Then He who now restrains will restrain until He's taken out of the way."* That's the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, and the Rapture will take us all out of the way. *"Then shall that wicked be revealed."*

So Antichrist cannot be revealed until after the Church is Raptured.

And that same Antichrist will establish his kingdom of lies until the end of the Tribulation period, and THEN *"the Lord shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming."*

So there is no Second Coming until Antichrist sets up his kingdom.

So how can any Christian expect to see Christ come to the earth without having taken them to Heaven first, and without the kingdom of Antichrist having been established? The only way for that to happen is within the strong delusion that compels them to believe such a lie, just as 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 speaks of.

And that is a sad and tragic delusion!