

WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

The Bible teaches us that the rapture is a supernatural event where Jesus will instantaneously transport all Christians to Heaven. When the rapture takes place, the trumpet will sound, Jesus will come mid-air and snatch away the Christians from Earth. Both living and dead Christians will be caught away and will return to Heaven with Christ. The rapture will remove Christians from Earth before Christ pours out His righteous judgment during the tribulation period.

While the word “rapture” is not found in the King James version of the Bible or in modern translations, the event is vividly described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. The word “rapture” comes from the Vulgate, which is the Latin translation of the Bible commissioned by Pope Damasus I and produced by Saint Jerome in the early 400s. The Vulgate’s translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 uses the word “rapiemur” which means “to seize or carry off by force.” The word “rapture” comes from “rapiemur.”

How Does the Bible Describe the Rapture?

The rapture is described primarily by Paul to the early Christians in Thessalonica and Corinth. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18(NIV), Paul explained:

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For 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 word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until 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, 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 we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53(NLT), Paul further explained:

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Jesus also described coming to receive His children unto himself in John 14: 1-3(NLT):

***“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.*”**

Taking these scriptures together, we have a clear picture of what the rapture will be like.

- Jesus does not want Christians to be uninformed about the last days or experience inconsolable grief over Christians who have died (I Thessalonians 4:13).
- Jesus wants Christians to be informed, ready and eagerly awaiting the rapture of the church (I Thessalonians 4:14, 16).
- Jesus will descend from His Father’s House (Heaven), where He is preparing a place for us (John 14:1-3, I Thessalonians 4:16).
- Jesus will come and receive us unto Himself (John 14:1-3).
- Jesus will raise from the dead those Christians who have died (I Thessalonians 4:14-15).
- Jesus will shout as He descends (I Thessalonians 4:16).
- Christians will hear the voice of the archangel (I Thessalonians 4:16).
- Christians will also hear the trumpet call of God (I Thessalonians 4:16).
- Christians who have died will rise and be caught up first and receive new glorified immortal bodies (I Thessalonians 4:16-17, I Corinthians 15:52).
- Christians who are alive will also be receive glorified immortal bodies (I Corinthians 15: 51-53).
- Christians who are alive will be caught up in the clouds together with Christians who have died (I Thessalonians 4:17).
- All Christians dead and alive will meet Christ in the air (I Thessalonians 4:17).
- All this will happen in the “blink of an eye” (I Corinthians 15:52).
- Jesus does this to receive us unto Himself that we may be with him (John 14:3).
- We will be with the Lord forever (I Thessalonians 4:17).

We should be comforted by our knowledge of the rapture because it is the culmination of all that we as Christians have worked and prayed for: eternal life with Christ. The Rapture is the supreme act of God’s grace, love and mercy toward His children; therefore, be encouraged! (I Thessalonians 4:18).

When will it happen?

The rapture could take place at any moment. The Bible does not indicate precisely when the Rapture will happen, but we are living in the end times. We know that the rapture will occur prior to Christ's second coming and prior to the end of the age. In Matthew 24, Jesus gave his disciples some examples of things that would occur when his second coming and the end of the age is imminent. The signs include: false doctrines and cults that will deceive millions (Islam is one such cult), famine, earthquakes all over the world, wars, persecution of Christians, etc. Jesus said that when we see these things occurring, we will know His return "is very near, right at the door" (Matthew 24:33).

The rapture will take place prior to the beginning of the Tribulation period because God does not wish for His children to suffer the wrath of the Tribulation. The Tribulation is a seven-year period of persecution, war, natural disasters, famine, disease, and death described in the book of Daniel, Revelation, and in other scriptures. People who are not saved because they never chose Jesus, will be left behind after the rapture. However, if a person honestly and genuinely repents of his or her sins and receives Christ as his or her personal Savior and Lord at any point during the Tribulation, that person will without a doubt be forgiven of all sin, be regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, and be saved from ultimate judgment, which is eternal damnation in Hell. God's love, grace and mercy toward mankind will continue even after the rapture.

Who will be caught away in the rapture?

Jesus answered this question by using a parable concerning ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25: 1-13 (NLT). He explained:

Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. The five who were foolish didn't take enough olive oil for their lamps, but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight they were roused by the shout, 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!'

All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. Then the five foolish ones asked the others, 'Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.'

But the others replied, 'We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.'

But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!'

But he called back, 'Believe me, I don't know you!'

So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.

The five wise bridesmaids represent Christians who chose Jesus! They accepted Christ and their Lord and Savior and they dedicated their lives to living for Christ and obeying His word. Therefore, they were caught away in the rapture when the bridegroom (Jesus) came. The five foolish bridesmaids did not choose Jesus and were left behind. Only those Christians who chose Jesus will be prepared for the rapture.

Are you ready?

What would happen to you if the rapture took place at this very instant? Would you be caught away to meet Jesus in the clouds or would you be left behind? Do not be left behind to live through the horrors of the Tribulation. Choose Jesus today! Visit the "How to be Saved" page at www.ChooseJesusToday.com to learn how to Choose Jesus today!