

The Coming Rapture

Today, we live in what we call the Church Age or the Age of Grace. During this Church Age, God relates to us through Jesus and His Church. Prior to Christ's church, God related to the world through the Jewish nation and His Law. However, after Jesus, God now relates to the world through the Church. Before Jesus, the world learned about God through the Jewish people. They were His mouthpiece. They were the ones who kept God's Word and promises. They were the ones who looked forward to His coming to this Earth to make things right. They were the ones through who He gave the scriptures. After Jesus, all these things became the responsibilities and rights of the Church.

However, God has promised us that this Church age will come to an end. In the beginning of the Book of Revelations, we see the Christ of the Church in chapter 1 and then Christ speaks to the Church in chapters 2 and 3. This speaking to the churches in these chapters represent the Church Age. In the Book of Revelations, after these letters, the church is not mentioned again until after chapter 18. Chapters 4-17 describe what will be happening in Heaven and on Earth and there is no mention of the Church. Why? Because the Church Age would have ended in Chapter 3. After chapter 3, the Church is taken up, taken away, and the world will go through the Tribulation that is described in Chapters 4-17. However, the church will not go through this Tribulation.

Revelations 3:10 This is Jesus speaking to the church of Philadelphia. He is telling them how they have been faithful and what their reward is for their faithfulness. The church of Philadelphia represents the faithful churches that exist just prior to the Tribulation. Jesus' promise to that church during those End Times is that he will not allow it to go through the hour of trial that is coming.

1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10 Paul has heard from other Christians how the people of the church of Thessalonica had really turned from their old ways to becoming real, true Christians. They now served the living and true God and they waited for Jesus to come again. Our point is seen in Paul's description of Jesus' second coming. He tells us that Jesus is coming again to rescue us from the coming wrath. Again, we see that Paul says without a doubt that the believing church would not go through the wrath to come.

It is the way of God to spare those who are faithful to Him. He has done it in the past and He will do it again in the future. It is the unfaithful who God punishes, the faithful, He protects. 2 Peter 2:4-10. God spared the righteous Lot before he brought down His wrath on Sodom and Gomorrah. He also spared Noah and his family before His wrath was poured out on the world. Another example is his saving Rahab from the destruction of Jericho. Over and over, God tells us and shows us that He protects and pulls out the faithful prior to delivering His punishment on the deserving.

So then, if the church is not to go through the wrath to come, that which we call the Tribulation, then what is to happen to it? Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, what will happen. The church is going to be lifted off the earth and taken into heaven with Jesus. Every true believer will be taken up to be with the Lord. We see that first, those

who are dead will return with Jesus. Their souls, their spirits, have been with God since their physical death. 2 Corinthians 5:8. Since the dead are apart from their bodies but together with the Lord, then the only way to get them their resurrection bodies would be to bring them with him! Then we are caught up with those who had already died and all the believers of Jesus during the Church Age will now be with Jesus prior to the Tribulation.

What do our resurrection bodies look like? We get a glimpse of this from 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. We see that not everyone will sleep, which means that not everyone will die. Instead, in a flash, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, the dead will be raised and those who are alive will be changed. This part of the passage reiterates what we've just learned from the previous passage. Now, Paul will tell us about these resurrection bodies. This change that he speaks of is what happens to us when we are raptured. We go to be with God, with Jesus, but when that happens, our bodies must change. Right now, they are perishable and mortal. Bodies such as these cannot be with God. Exodus 33:20. To be with God forever, we need to have new bodies. Our current flesh is one of the reasons we sin. Romans 6:5-7 tells us that our bodies are sinful but when we are apart from our bodies, we are apart from the sin that comes from this body. So by definition, we must have new bodies. Our resurrection bodies must be changed so that they are no longer sinful bodies. The perishable becomes imperishable, the mortal becomes immortal. Paul tells us that when this happens, when we are raptured or resurrected, death is defeated. We who believe will from then on live with Jesus.

This blessed hope is what all believers will experience. However, only true believers will experience this. Only those who have truly believed what God has done for us by His Son, Jesus and have accepted Jesus as their Savior, will be saved. Next week, we will continue our discussion regarding Jesus' Second Coming and realize that there is more to this than we've just discussed.

Revelations 3:10, “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”

1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10 “They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead— Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”

2 Peter 2:4-10 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell,^[a] putting them into gloomy dungeons^[b] to be held for judgment; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ⁶if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ⁸(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— ⁹if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.^[c] ¹⁰This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature^[d] and despise authority.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, “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, 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 each other with these words.”

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 ⁵⁰I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵²in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."^[a]

⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"^[b] ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain

Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

Romans 6:5-7 ⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.