

The Rapture of the Church (Howard Liverance 2-14-2024)

Pray to start!

There is a wooden box buried in a small plot of ground in a cemetery in Grand Rapids, MI

- Been there since 2004
- BTW, did you know what the word *cemetery* means? A Sleeping Place! (Gr: *koimeterion*)
 - Jesus was always referring to death as “sleep”. People even laughed at Him!

The body of my first love is lying inside that wooden box

- **I own the adjacent plot**
- *Rom 11:33, Oh, the depth of the riches [ω] both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*



There is military marker in a cemetery Stone Mountain, where Myriam's first love's body lies (since 1997)

- **She owns the adjacent plot**

There is another grave marker in Clairemont, CA,

- *Romans 6:23, the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*



- **Her feet are facing East (been there since 2020)**
 - *Mat 24:27, For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.* (This is probably speaking of the Second Coming, not the rapture event, but nonetheless, this is what Christians have believed for two thousand years)
- **Her body is holding my dad's ashes in an urn, and some are also scattered on an island in Lake Huron**

QUESTIONS?

What will happen to these saints of God?

What about all of us here in this room? What will happen to us?

What do we all have in common with the dead saints? One way or another, we will all be raptured!

QUESTION? How do we know that the resurrection from the dead is even a thing? The bible is very clear!

- Dan 12:2, Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting ^[a]contempt.
- John 5:28-29, Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

QUESTION? Did Jesus die? Did he rise from the dead? We have prophecy, we have witnesses, we have an empty tomb

- Rom 6:4-5, ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become ^[a]united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be ^[b]in the likeness of His resurrection,
- Rom 6:8-9, ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, ^[a]is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.
- Rom 8:29-30, For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.
 - **Firstborn** means pre-eminent. One who goes first and leads the way.
 - **Glorified**, what does that mean that we will be glorified?
 - To make glorious, to impart glory to something, render it excellent.
- 1 Cor 15:12-14, Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.
- 1 Cor 15:32, If ^[a]from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.
 - If this is not real, we should pack up and go home

QUESTION? How do we know the rapture of the living is even a thing? We have Enoch, Elijah

- Gen 5:24, Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.
- Heb 11:5, By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.
- 2 Ki 2:11, (Elijah) As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a ^[a]whirlwind to heaven.
 - **BTW, Elijah went up without his cloak, which fell from the sky as he was taken. Elisha caught it.**

We also understand from the bible, the rapture is the very next event (we will talk more about this in a bit), and is the first event that marks the beginning of all the other end-times events. Even the early church understood this (raising of Lazarus):

- *John 11:23-26, Jesus *said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha *said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

It is a **signless** event. Nothing else has to happen first! The bodies of both the dead and the living will literally be beamed up!

- Some denominations do not believe this (Adventists, for example). They call us “Beam me up Scotties”

And then you have the mockers, who don’t believe *any* of this

- *2 Pet 3:3-4, Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”*

QUESTION? When will it happen?

- **Acts 1:7**, *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons the Father has fixed by his own authority*
- **Mat 24:36**, *of that day and hour no one knows!*
- **Mat 25**, But we must be ready for it can happen at any time! Parable of 10 virgins. Some weren’t ready!

QUESTION? What is God waiting for?

- *Rom 11:25, For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;*
- *2 Pet 3:9, The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

QUESTION? What will we be like when we are raptured?

- *Phi 3:21, For our ^[a]citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform ^[b]the body of our humble state into conformity with ^[c]the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

QUESTION? What does the term “rapture” mean?

- Key verb in 1 Thess 4:17 “harpazo”, means to be “caught up, or snatched away” (harpoon)
- Paul uses it in 1 Cor 12:2 and 12:4, when describing being “caught up” to the third heaven, and other places

QUESTION? How will it happen?

- We’ll talk about that in a few minutes!

That was the intro!

Rough Outline of Future Biblical Events

1. Church on Earth (Rev 1-3)
2. **Rapture (John 14:1-4, 1 Cor 15:51-54, 1 Thess 4:13-17)**
3. Tribulation on Earth (Rev 6-19)
4. Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:1-6)
5. Final Rebellion and Judgment (Rev 20:7-15)
6. Eternal State Rev (21-22)

Christ speaking to the churches:

1. Ephesus - Church of the Lost Love. Many good works but they have left their first love for Christ.
 - a. Command: Remember from where you have fallen and do the first deeds again
2. Smyrna – The Suffering Church. Poor, but rich in Spirit, persecuted.
 - a. Command: Be faithful unto death for the suffering you will endure.
3. Pergamum – The Worldly Church. They accepted the ways of the world and promoted false teaching.
 - a. Command: Repent! Or Christ will come with a sword.
4. Thyatira – The Tolerant Church. Good works, love, faith, service, but tolerant of sexual immorality.
 - a. Command: Those who don't repent will endure "a great tribulation".
5. Sardis – The Dead Church. They have a reputation for being alive, but they are dead.
 - a. Command: Wake up! And strengthen the things that remain, or I will come as a thief.
6. Philadelphia – The Faithful Church. Little power (small in number) but have kept the Word and affirmed Christ.
 - a. Commendation: "***Rev 3:10, Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I will also keep (tereo - to keep, to guard) you from (ek – "from", rather than en – "in", or dia – "through") the hour (season) of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the face of the earth. I am coming quickly.***"
 - b. Command: Hold fast to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
7. Laodicea – The Lukewarm church. Neither hot nor cold. "I am rich and in need of nothing."
 - a. Command: Be *zealous* and repent! Or I will spit you out! "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

The overall message to the churches is:

- There is a remnant of true believers in the churches
- That remnant is called to be faithful, even through trials and persecution, and even if your "church" is lacking in zeal
- The faithful will be kept from the "hour" of testing.
- Those who are not faithful are called to repent.

A time of testing is coming!

- Those who don't repent will endure a time of testing that will come upon the whole world.
 - The test is in the future
 - The test is for a limited time
 - The test is designed to expose people for what they really are
 - The test is worldwide in scope
 - Its purpose is to test "those who dwell on the face of the earth"
 - This phrase is used throughout Revelation for unbelievers (6:10, 8:13, 11:10, 13:8)
 - Unbelievers will either pass the test by repenting (6:9-11, 7:9-10, 14:4, 17:14)
 - Or they will fail the test by refusing to repent (6:15-17, 9:20, 16:11, 19:17-18)

From this literal reading of the letters to the seven churches, and other passages, **we believe the saints will experience a pre-Tribulation rapture.**

- **Dan 12:1**, "*Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.* (this could be specific to believing Israel but may also point to the church at large). **Rescued=escape, deliver**
- **1 Thes 1:10**, "*wait for His Son from ^[e]heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*"
- The Rapture is NOT *described* in Revelation, but it is *implied* in Chapter 3.

- Once the Church Age is complete, then comes the Rapture
- **After Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the church is never mentioned again!**
- The Rapture of the Church marks the beginning of the time of testing (the Tribulation). Rev 4 ->

Let's look at some key verses!

John 14:1-4 NASB *“Do not let your heart be troubled; ^[a]believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If 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. ⁴And you know the way where I am going.”*

- **QUESTION? What is Jesus telling us here?**
- Jesus is preparing an actual physical place for us in His Father's house
- He is coming again to receive us to Himself
- That we might dwell with Him forever

1 Cor 15:51-54 NLT, a mystery revealed *But let me reveal to you a wonderful **secret**. We will not all die, but we will **all be transformed!** ⁵²It 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. ⁵³For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. ⁵⁴Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die,^[a] this Scripture will be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”^[b]*

- **QUESTION? What do we see in this passage?**
- Paul tells us a secret, something revealed to him by God
- We will be transformed, changed into something new
- This will happen in a fraction of a second (1/10 sec) when the trumpet is blown
 - compare Jewish Wedding
- The dead in Christ will be transformed = Changed into something new
- AND those alive at the time will also be transformed
- Why? transformation converts our mortal, perishable bodies into eternal, imperishable bodies

1 Thes 4:13-17 NLT, comforts believers ¹³*And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died^[a] so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died.^[b] ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died^[c] will rise from their graves. ¹⁷Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.^[b]*

- Because Jesus died and bodily rose from the grave, so shall those who die in Christ before His return
 - We know where his grave is, it's empty!
- Christ will come with:
 - a commanding shout
 - the voice of the archangel (probably Michael - see Dan 12)
 - Plus, why would Michael argue with Satan over the body of Moses in Jude 9?
 - God himself buried the body of Moses, and no one knows where his grave is.
 - How is it that Moses appeared with Jesus and Elijah at the Transfiguration?
 - Michael must have won the argument!
 - the trumpet call of God (all of these are present in the ancient Jewish wedding ceremony)

- Those who have died in Christ will be raised first
 - Their bodies will rise out of their graves as transformed
- Then we who are alive will be “caught up” together with them in the clouds, also as transformed
 - We will all meet the Lord in the air, and be with Him forever
- Christ comes down from heaven, but does not come down to earth, we rise to meet Him in the air!

Important Distinctions

- What’s the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming?
 - At the Rapture, Christ comes FOR his saints
 - We meet him in the air. He does not come down to earth.
 - At the Second Coming (at the end of the tribulation) Christ comes WITH his saints
 - He sets up his earthly Jerusalem, the capitol of his Millennial Kingdom

The New Testament teaches about the Rapture of the church and yet also speaks of the Second Coming of Christ. These two events are different in a number of ways. (*Thomas D. Ice, Liberty University*)

Rapture/Translation

- 1 Translation of all believers (dead and alive)
- 2 Translated saints go to heaven
- 3 Earth is not judged
- 4 Imminent, any-moment, signless
- 5 Revealed to us in the New Testament
- 6 Affects believers only
- 7 Preceding the day of wrath
- 8 No reference to Satan
- 9 Christ comes for His bride (the Church)
- 10 Christ comes in the air only
- 11 Only His own see Him
- 12 Tribulation begins

2nd Coming/ Establishing the Earthly Kingdom

- 1 No translation at all
- 2 Translated saints return to earth with Christ
- 3 Earth is judged & righteousness established
- 4 Follows definite predicted signs including tribulation
- 5 Predicted often in the Old Testament
- 6 Affects all men
- 7 Concluding the day of wrath
- 8 Satan is bound for 1,000 years
- 9 Christ comes with His bride
- 10 Christ comes to the earth
- 11 Every eye shall see Him
- 12 Millennial Kingdom begins

- Where do we go when we die or are translated?
 - Those who die in Christ are separated from their earthly bodies, and go straight to heaven
 - **Luke 23:43 NASB** *And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.*
 - **2 Cor 5:8 KJV** *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*
 - **We go into the timeless place.** No one in heaven is “waiting” for anything.
 - John MacArthur describes heaven as “a single moment that lasts forever”
- Where is heaven?
 - Scripture mentions heaven more than 500 times! Revelation mentions heaven more than 50 times.
 - Paul describes the 3rd heaven (2 Cor 12:2) – heaven and paradise are used synonymously
 - First heaven: earth’s atmosphere (Gen 1:20, Job 12:7, Ez 38:20)
 - Second heaven: interstellar space (Gen 15:5, 22:17 Deu 1:10, 4:19, Ps 8:3, Isa 13:10)
 - Third heaven is the dwelling place of God (Deu 4:39, 1 Ki 8:30, Job 22:12, Ps 14:2)
 - Heaven is an actual place, not some form of “spiritual consciousness”
 - It is far beyond the created world, and probably in another dimension
- What actually happens at the Rapture?

- First, the spirits of the dead in Christ are **reunited with transformed earthly bodies** and are “caught up”
- Those that are alive in Christ **are simply transformed wherever they are**, and are also “caught up”
- **What about Mat 24:40?** One taken, the other left. This passage is in the context of judgment!
 - It *could* mean that believers are rescued out of the judgment to come, ie. The Tribulation
 - Or, more likely it refers to the judgment at the end of the tribulation when all the unrepentant unbelievers are all killed by the breath of Christ, leaving behind only believers- **See Rev 19:21**
- **What about those whose bodies were cremated?** Is there anything impossible for God?
 - Can't He re-assemble molecules from our original form?

QUESTION: Are there people who believe differently than this? Yes.

- Why? Mostly because they confuse the Rapture event with the Second Coming

QUESTION: What about those who die during the Tribulation or the Millennial Kingdom?

- Strong evidence suggests they are all gathered for the Great White throne at the end of 1,000 years.
 - We'll talk more about this as we get into those chapters in Revelation.

Pray and give thanks!