

*The Rapture—What Does It Mean?*¹

Studying the second coming of Christ and future events as they are revealed to us in the prophetic books of the Bible is a perfectly legitimate subject. Not only because His coming is mentioned 318 times, but because it also occupied so much of the Apostle Paul’s teaching ministry. The first book written in the New Testament was 1 Thessalonians, addressed to a small Greek church in the city of Thessalonica. Paul was there only three weeks before he was driven out of town by irate Jews. While he was with them, he had taught that Christ would come and rapture Christians out of this world to go with Him to His Father’s house. After he left, however, some of their members had died. Consequently, these young Christians were perplexed about the status of their dead Christian members, so they wrote him (Paul) a letter requesting an explanation. First Thessalonians is Paul’s answer. In it he gives the most detailed description of the Rapture of the Church found in all Scripture.

13) “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. 14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 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. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18) Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

To appreciate the contrast between this event and the Glorious Appearing at the end of the Tribulation, we should read our Lord’s own description of that event in Matthew 24: 27-31.

27) “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28) For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. 29) Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30) Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31) And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:27-31).

PHASES OF THE SECOND COMING

Rapture<----Seventieth Week Of Daniel----->2nd Advent
 ← Seven Year Tribulation Period →

RAPTURE PASSAGES		SECOND COMING PASSAGES	
John 14:1-3	2 Thessalonians 2:1	Daniel 2:44-45	Acts 1:9-11
Romans 8:19	1 Timothy 6:14	Daniel 7:9-14	Acts 3:19-21
1 Corinthians 1:7-8	2 Timothy 4:1	Daniel 12:1-3	1 Thessalonians 3:13
1 Corinthians 15:51-53	2 Timothy 4:8	Zechariah 12:10	2 Thessalonians 1:6-10
1 Corinthians 16:22	Titus 2:13	Zechariah 14:1-15	2 Thessalonians 2:8
Philippians 3:20-21	Hebrews 9:28	Matthew 13:41	1 Peter 4:12-13
Philippians 4:5	James 5:7-9	Matthew 24:15-31	2 Peter 3:1-14
Colossians 3:4	1 Peter 1:7, 13	Matthew 26:64	Jude 14-15
1 Thessalonians 1:10	1 Peter 5:4	Mark 13:14-27	Revelation 1:7
1 Thessalonians 2:19	1 John 2:28-3:2	Mark 14:62	Revelation 19:11-20:6
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Jude 21	Luke 21:25-28	Revelation 22:7,12,20
1 Thessalonians 5:9	Revelation 2:25		
1 Thessalonians 5:23	Revelation 3:10		

¹ Revelation Unveiled. By Tim LaHaye; Zondervan Publishing House; Grand Rapids, Mich.; ©1999, Tim LaHaye.