

FAQ's

Since the Bible does not use the word, "rapture," what is the basis for this teaching, and when will it occur?

Although the English Bible does not contain the word, "rapture," it is found in the Latin version of the Bible, which is where this widely used term came from in the first place. In I Thessalonians 4:17 the Apostle, Paul, referred to Christians being "caught up" to meet Christ in the air. The Greek word, *harpagesometha*, is translated "raptured" in the Latin Bible, and literally means "snatched away."

The first reference to the rapture in the New Testament was spoken by Jesus Christ, recorded in John 14:1ff. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:3) Christ promised His disciples that He would return someday to take believers on earth at that time to be with Him in heaven.

Paul makes another reference to the rapture in II Thessalonians 2:1. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him";

While explaining the necessity of the resurrection for Christians in I Corinthians 15, Paul connected the resurrection with the rapture. In verses 51-52, he wrote, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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." In the context, "sleep" is a euphemism for death. Again, Paul paints the same picture as in I Thessalonians 4:17. Christians who have already died before the rapture will be resurrected to glorified bodies. Those who have not died, but "are alive and remain" at the time of the rapture will be changed or translated from mortal bodies to glorified bodies.

The question concerning the time of the rapture has divided Bible students into at least four camps: 1. Partial-tribulation, 2. Mid-tribulation, 3. Post-tribulation., and 4. Pre-tribulation.

The partial-tribulation position teaches that only spiritual Christians who are actively serving and walking with Christ will be raptured. The other Christians who are not prepared for the rapture will be left to go through the tribulation period as a purification process.

The mid-tribulation position teaches that Christians will be raptured in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period. Since the tribulation is divided in half by the prophecies, and the latter half is referred to as the time of God's great wrath (Revelation 6:17), it is supposed that Christians will be required to endure the persecutions of men in the first half, but will be spared the wrath of God and His judgments in the last half.

The post-tribulation position teaches that the rapture occurs at the end of the tribulation period and concurrently with the second coming of Christ. References to saints in the tribulation are understood to refer to the church.

The pre-tribulation position teaches that the rapture will occur before the beginning of the tribulation period. This publisher believes that the pre-tribulation position has the best support in Scripture. Here are just a few of many examples which could be given. First, this is the only view which allows a consistent, literal interpretation of all the Bible passages on the tribulation period.

Second, it is consistent with passages which teach that the church will not be subjected to God's judgmental wrath, which characterizes the tribulation. Romans 5:9 states "we shall be saved from wrath"; When reminding the Thessalonians of their conversion to Christ, Paul wrote that Jesus "delivered us from the wrath to come." (I Thessalonians 1:10) Again in 5:9, he wrote, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." When Jesus in His earthly ministry taught about the judgments which would occur before the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, He suggested that there is a way for His faithful followers to escape the "wrath" (Luke 21:23) which was coming. In Luke 21:36 He said, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." After His resurrection and ascension, Christ addressed the church at Philadelphia in the apostle John's vision recorded in Revelation 3:10. He promised Christians who follow His teachings about enduring in their faith, "I also will keep thee from the hour

of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

Third, the pre-tribulation view is consistent with the exhortation to look for the imminent appearance of Christ. For example, Paul wrote in Titus 2:13, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ…” “…Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 1:7). “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead…” (I Thessalonians 1:10). These admonitions would not have much meaning if what we are encouraged to wait and look expectantly for will be preceded by a period of unprecedented judgments and calamities.

In conclusion, the rapture of the church is a great source of encouragement and hope for Christians. We are not looking forward to the appearance of the Antichrist or the Tribulation. We should be expecting the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to return to take us to be with Him in heaven. This expectation is also a motivation to live godly lives pleasing to Him, because when He suddenly comes for the church, there will be no time to reform.

Will my pet be in heaven?

Although this may not be the most profound question, it seems to be one of the most often asked. The answer does raise some significant issues about God’s plans for the future of His creation.

Unfortunately, there is no explicit teaching in scripture concerning this specific question. The usual rather glib answer is, “If we need our pets to be happy in heaven, then God will see that we have them.” There are teachings in Scripture from which we can make some inferences which suggest the possibility, even the probability that pets will be included in God’s plan to restore the fallen creation.

Here is a summary of key passages which touch on the subject:

- God created man and animals to live together in harmony and to enjoy companionship. (Genesis 1:21-26; 2:19-20)
- Animals came under the curse when man sinned, but will be freed from the curse through Christ. (Romans 8:20-22; Colossians 1:20; Acts 3:20)
- The harmonious relationship between man and animals will be restored in the millennial kingdom. (Isaiah 11:6-9)
- It is reasonable to expect that when God re-creates a new heaven and earth, that the harmonious relationship between man and animals will be no less than in the original creation or the millennial kingdom. (Revelation 21:1, 5)
- God keeps a record of every animal that has ever lived. (Luke 12:6)