

## **Revelation: Christ in his Purpose:**

### **The Rapture**

*“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” **Revelation 4:1***

#### **Introduction**

One of the significant things any interpreter of the book of Revelation will notice is the abrupt shift in focus which takes place between chapters three and four. Chapters two and three, which describe “the things which are” (Rev. 1:19), are focused entirely on the Church. Then, abruptly, chapter four opens, John ascends to heaven “in the Spirit,” and the Church is no longer mentioned until the close of the book. This shift in focus and absence of all mention of the Church would in itself be somewhat remarkable. But when it is combined with what Scripture elsewhere teaches concerning the character and destiny of the Church, it provides additional evidence that the Church will not be present on the earth during the events of Revelation 4 through Revelation 19, including the period of the tribulation.

Twenty-four verses in the book of Revelation refer to the church. . . . Twenty of the 24 verses refer to the church in the present church age. (Rev. 1:4, 11, 20; 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22; 22:16, 17).

Two verses refer to the church in the marriage of the Lamb, which will take place in heaven, not on the earth (Rev. 19:7, 8).

Two verses refer to the church in the eternal state (Rev. 21:2, 9).

It is important to note that there are no references to the church on the earth in chapters 4 through 18, the chapters relating specifically to the 70th week of Daniel 9, including the seals, trumpets, and bowls.

The church is mentioned 17 times in the first three chapters of Revelation, but after John (a member of the church) is called up to heaven at the beginning of chapter 4, he looks down on the events of the Tribulation, and the church is not mentioned or seen again until chapter 19, when she returns to the earth with her Bridegroom at His glorious appearing. Why? The answer is obvious: She isn't in the Tribulation. She is raptured to be with her Lord before it begins!

In our day, the Rapture has come under attack by many. Some think it represents the novel teachings of “defeatist Christians.” Others think it is pure fantasy. Still others seem to savor the idea of the Church going through the events of the Tribulation in order to “prove her metal” or

refine her. It is difficult to understand why there is such opposition by Christians to the idea that the bridegroom would come for His bride prior to pouring forth His wrath (John 14:1-3). Why is it so difficult for so many to see?

*“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”* **John 14:1-4**

*“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”* **Acts 1:9-11**

*“Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.”* **I Corinthians 9:10**

*“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”* **Romans 8:24, 25**

*“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”* **Galatians 5:5**

*“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;”* **Colossians 1:5**

*“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”* **Colossians 1:27**

*“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”* **Titus 2:13**

*“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* **I John 3:1, 2**

If the Church is to come through the tribulation judgments that are to come upon the earth, then, say it plainly...

**...there is no blessed hope in the Bible.**

Some are SO determined, however, not to have this blessed hope, or even to allow others to have it, that they would rather hold that this “great and terrible day of the Lord” is our only “hope” and have been driven to interpret the “thief” [Rev. 3:3•] or Christ coming as a friend to fetch us away as he steals precious jewels. And this is done in the face of the opposite statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:4, that day shall “not come as a thief” on the church. . . . this thief is to be watched against: but Christ is to be watched for!

The Rapture is an important aspect of understanding the Revelation given by John and especially the nature and purpose of the Tribulation period which it describes. Tonight, we will outline aspects of the Rapture which are relevant to understanding the book of Revelation.

*Is there such a thing as ‘The Rapture’?*

The word ‘Rapture’ does not appear in the english Bible.

1. While the term “rapture” does not appear in the english text, it IS a biblical term.
2. The teaching of the Rapture is found in Scripture even if the term itself is absent.

The term “Rapture”, comes from I Thessalonians.

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel,*

*and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” I Thessalonians 4:13-18*

Caught up – Gr – harpazo – *phonetic*: har-pad'-zo

1. To seize, carry off by force.
2. To seize on, claim for one's self eagerly.
3. To snatch out or away.

It is rendered as “Rapture” in the Greek text, as well as in the Latin Vulgate text.

Though the term ‘Rapture’ is absent from the English Bible, it doesn't mean that the *doctrine* of the Rapture is not biblical.

There are numerous examples of *doctrines* taught by scripture without the associated words being written.

The terms *trinity*, *Omnipresence*, and *Omniscience* are all absent in the English text, but they are all taught throughout it.

In general biblical use, this word describes:

How violent men take the kingdom by force (Mat. 11:12)

Carrying off property from the strong man's house (Mat. 12:29)

How the evil one snatches away what has been sown (Mat. 13:19)

And how the people approached Jesus to take Him by force and make Him king (John 6:15).

In a more supernatural sense, this word describes:

Events where God takes people in the Spirit and transports them either physically or in a vision.

Philip was caught away from the Ethiopian eunuch to Azotus (Acts 8:39)

The Apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven (2Cor. 12:2)

Those who are alive and remain will be caught up to meet Christ in the air (1Cor. 15:51-52; 1Th. 4:17)

The same term is used to describe the ascension of Christ who was caught up to God and His throne (Rev. 12:5).

If we expand it's use to include both the OT and NT, it describes the catching away of:

Enoch (Gen. 5)

Elijah (2K. 2)

Isaiah (Isa. 6)

Jesus (Acts 1:11; Rev. 12:5)

Philip (Acts 8)

Paul (2Cor. 12)

The Church (1Th. 4)

And the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11)

*Just how many 'Comings of Christ' are there, anyway?*

This is a source of some confusion within the church.

Typically, when we speak of the comings of Christ, we speak of only two.

1. Christ coming at his birth.
2. Christ coming at the end of the age to establish His kingdom.

For many of us, we say ‘the second coming of Christ’ or ‘Christ is coming again’, and we don’t distinguish between the Rapture and the second coming of Christ. But there ARE some very important distinctions between the two.

**\*\*To be clear, we teach from scripture that the Rapture IS NOT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST!\*\***

### Contrasts Between the Rapture and the Second Coming

<b>Rapture</b>	<b>Second Coming</b>
Christ comes for His own (John <a href="#">14:3</a> ; 1Th. <a href="#">5:28</a> ; 2Th. <a href="#">2:1</a> ).	Christ comes with His own (1Th. <a href="#">3:13</a> ; Jude <a href="#">1:14</a> ; Rev. <a href="#">19:14</a> ). <sup>11</sup>
Christ comes in the air (1Th. <a href="#">4:17</a> ).	Christ comes to the earth (Zec. <a href="#">14:4</a> ; Acts <a href="#">1:11</a> ). <sup>12</sup>
Christ claims His bride (1Th. <a href="#">4:16-17</a> ).	Christ comes with His bride (Rev. <a href="#">19:6-14</a> ). <sup>13</sup>
Removal of believers (1Th. <a href="#">4:17</a> ).	Manifestation of Christ (Mal. <a href="#">4:2</a> ). <sup>14</sup>
Only His own see Him (1Th. <a href="#">4:13-18</a> ).	Every eye shall see Him (Rev. <a href="#">1:7</a> ). <sup>15</sup>
Tribulation begins (2Th. <a href="#">1:6-9</a> ).	Millennial Kingdom begins (Rev. <a href="#">20:1-7</a> ). <sup>16</sup>
Saved are delivered from wrath (1Th. <a href="#">1:10</a> ; 1Th. <a href="#">5:9</a> ).	Unsaved experience the wrath of God (Rev. <a href="#">6:12-17</a> ). <sup>17</sup>
No signs precede rapture (1Th. <a href="#">5:1-3</a> ).	Signs precede Second Coming (Luke <a href="#">21:11, 15</a> ). <sup>18</sup>
Focus is Lord and Church (1Th. <a href="#">4:13-18</a> ).	Focus is Israel and kingdom (Mat. <a href="#">24:14</a> ). <sup>19</sup>
World is deceived (2Th. <a href="#">2:3-12</a> ).	Satan is bound so he cannot deceive (Rev. <a href="#">20:1-2</a> ). <sup>20</sup>
Believers depart the earth (1Th. <a href="#">4:15-17</a> ). <sup>21</sup>	Unbelievers are taken away from the earth (Mat. <a href="#">24:37-41</a> ). <sup>22</sup>
Unbelievers remain on earth.	Believers remain on earth (Mat. <a href="#">25:34</a> ). <sup>23</sup>
No mention of establishing Christ’s Kingdom on earth.	Christ has come to set up His Kingdom on earth (Mat. <a href="#">25:31, 34</a> ). <sup>24</sup>
Christians taken to the Father’s house (John <a href="#">14:1-3</a> ).	Resurrected saints do not see the Father’s house (Rev. <a href="#">20:4</a> ). <sup>25</sup>
<b>Imminent</b> —could happen at any moment.	Cannot occur for at least 7 years. <sup>26</sup>
Precedes the career of the man of sin. (2Th. <a href="#">2:1-3</a> ).	Terminates the career of the man of sin (Rev. <a href="#">19:20</a> ).

### Side Bar: The Spirit and the Rapture

First, the Spirit of God has ALWAYS been present.

In Genesis we see Him at the beginning, moving upon the face of the waters.

*What was the Spirit’s relationship with God’s people prior to the day of Pentecost?*

To indwell and empower, or fill, certain individuals, on a temporary basis, for the purpose of showing forth the power of God, and advancing His agenda.

*The Spirit has ALWAYS been the caretaker of the people of God.*

On the Day of Pentecost, when it had fully come, however, the relationship between the Spirit and God's people underwent a dramatic change.

**On the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit came to indwell and empower, or baptize, ALL of the Church ON A PERMANENT BASIS!**

**It's important to note two things about this transition in the Spirit's relationship to us.**

- The Holy Ghost ministered on earth before the formation of the Church and He will continue to minister on the earth after the departure of the Church at the Rapture.
- The Holy Ghost NEVER permanently indwelt, or baptized, believers prior to the Day of Pentecost. The Church is a unique spiritual organism which began on the Day of Pentecost and which has a unique relationship to the Spirit.

*Who is the restrainer?*

*“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know **what** withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **he** who now letteth will let, until **he** be taken out of the way.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7*

**Notice the duality of what Paul is saying here. He is saying “what” in relation to the restrainer. He is also saying “he” in relation to the restrainer.**

- The Restrainer is referred to as both neuter “what is restraining”, and masculine, “He who now restrains”.
- The Restrainer existed in Paul’s day.
- The Restrainer has been continually and effectively restraining for over 2,000 years so far.
- The Restrainer is powerful enough to suppress the spiritual powers of darkness seeking to promote the man of sin.
- The restraint is global.

**It is clear that this ‘restrainer’ must be supernatural. It is also clear that the restrainer is both a “what” as well as a “he”.**

*I believe the ‘restrainer’ is both the Holy Ghost (the ‘what is restraining’) and the body of Christ (the ‘he who now restrains’) that is indwelt BY the Holy Ghost. The body of Christ is the FORM, the Spirit of God is the LIFE.*

Take into consideration that,

1. For the entire NT from Acts until the end of Revelation 3, believers are being baptized with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues.
2. There will clearly be some saved during the Tribulation period, including, collectively, the nation of Israel.
3. But there is absolutely NO indication that ANY of these “Tribulation Saints” will be baptized in the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues.

All indications are that, though the Holy Ghost will continue to minister during the time of the Great Tribulation, the relationship with the saints will be much more akin to that during the OT, before the Day of Pentecost.

In other words, it appears that, in the capacity of the work of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that the Spirit, along with the church is gone, since the Spirit is currently permanently indwelling those who have the baptism.



With the body of Christ thus gone, and along with it, the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues, the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2 will no longer be restrained.