

The Rapture

Lesson 01 of the series: "The Second Coming"

A. Jesus promised His disciples that He would one day return to take them home.

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."

John 14:1-3 (NLT)

B. The day Jesus returns to take believers home is known as the rapture.

"For 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 Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, 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. So encourage each other with these words."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NLT)

"**caught up**" = "snatch away" = "rapturo" (*Latin*)

- a. At the rapture, Jesus will return from heaven in the same way the disciples saw Him go.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

Acts 1:8-11 (NLT)

- b. At the rapture, believers who are still living will be reunited with believers who have died.

"And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For 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. 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." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 (NLT)

- c. At the rapture, believers will receive amazing new bodies that will never die again.

"...our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It 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. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:50-57 (NLT)

- d. The rapture will happen suddenly and unexpectedly.

"However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left." Matthew 24:36-41 (NLT)

"Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don't really need to write you. For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night." 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 (NLT)

- e. At the rapture, Jesus will come for believers like a groom coming for His bride.

“The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. The five who were foolish didn’t take enough olive oil for their lamps, but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight they were roused by the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!’ All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’ But the others replied, ‘We don’t have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’ But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’ So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.” Matthew 25:1-13 (NLT)

Life Application: It is urgent that we commit our lives to Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

“As God’s partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God’s kindness and then ignore it. For God says, ‘At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.’ Indeed, the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NLT)

“But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12 (NLT)

“I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.” John 5:24 (NLT)

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:11-13 (NIV)

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Quotations Worth Noting:

“Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, because He lives, all fear is gone; because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because He lives!” Bill Gaither

“But someone may ask, ‘How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?’ What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have... It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.” Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44 (NLT)

Connect Group Discussion Questions

1. How quickly can things in your life change? Does this keep you living in fear or facing life courageously?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. Do you look forward to Jesus’ return? Why or why not?
3. Read Matthew 24:36-42 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. How does reading about the sudden rapture of the church make you feel? How do you think God wants us to feel about this?
4. Read John 14:1-3 and Philippians 1:21. How does God want believers to view death and the rapture?
5. Read 2 Peter 3: 3-4, 8-9. Why do you think God has not yet returned for his followers?
6. Read Titus 2:11-14. How should we be living in preparation for Christ’s return?
7. When did you commit your life to Jesus? What made you choose to follow him?