

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

— Revelation 13:3 —

What About the Rapture

Perhaps you have seen a bumper sticker with this message, “In case of rapture this vehicle will be unmanned.” The scenario goes something like this. One completely unsuspected day, millions of people all over the world disappear, leaving the rest of the world wondering what could have happened to them. Cars rolling down the interstate without drivers, crash and burn. An airline pilot and some of the people on board his plane vanish, leaving the rest of the passengers to die when the plane crashes. At the same instant all around the globe, people from all walks of life disappear leaving their companions in shock. This is how the unbelievers of the world would see the rapture.

To believers in the rapture, they are the ones who will disappear. Jesus may come for them at any moment like a thief in the night. He will come when they least expect it in the midst of whatever they happen to be doing in the course of the day. They are changed instantly from mortal to immortal beings without passing through death. Thereafter, they are taken to heaven to be spared from the great tribulation which is about to come upon the people of the earth.

From Genesis to Revelation, the term rapture is nowhere to be found. There are, however, abundant scriptures describing something similar.

The Change

The account of the death and resurrection of Lazarus is only to be found in the Gospel of John, chapter 11. It happened that a very close friend of Jesus, by the name of Lazarus, had been sick. Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus sent a message to Jesus saying, “he whom thou lovest is sick.” But Jesus delayed coming to him for two days until Lazarus had died. When Jesus finally arrived He found that Lazarus “had lain in the grave four days already.”

John 11:21-26 Then Martha said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, **I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.** Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And **whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.** Believest thou this?

Here Jesus gave us the first indication of the change of the living believers at His return, but many Bible scholars suggest that the apostle Paul was the first to teach this doctrine.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 Behold, I shew 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.** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and **this mortal *must* put on immortality.**

This passage shows when the change from “mortal” to “immortal” will come about - “at the last trump.” The key word here is last, indicating that there are no more after it. Paul also mentions sleep.

Jesus made clear the meaning of sleep in John 11:11-14.

Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit **Jesus spake of his death**: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, **Lazarus is dead**.

Paul mentions this trumpet again in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

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.

The change of the living believers at Christ's return cannot happen before all of the dead in Christ have died. Revelation 14:13 tells us,

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

We now have a sequence for the change. It begins at the "last trump" when the "dead in Christ" are resurrected. After that, "**we which are alive**" at "**the coming of the Lord**" shall "put on immortality." Jesus said,

John 11:26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me **shall never die**. Believest thou this?

If the "dead in Christ" are not resurrected until the "last trump," how is it that we believe Christians go immediately to heaven¹ when they die? And concerning the non-Christians, Revelation 20:5 says,

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished...

Why do we believe that the "unsaved" go immediately to "hell fire"² at death?

Abomination of Desolation

The Bible gives us signs to watch for to know when the coming of Christ is imminent. Jesus told us,

Matthew 24:15 When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by **Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place**, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

What is the abomination of desolation? The book of Daniel is full of information about the return of Christ. In Daniel 10:5-6, he saw a vision.

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man **clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz**: His body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and **his eyes as lamps of fire** and his arms and his **feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude**.

Compare this to John's vision in Revelation 1:13-18.

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, **clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.** His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and **his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;** And **his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;** and **his voice as the sound of many waters.** And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, **I am alive for evermore, Amen;** and have the keys of hell and of death.

It is obvious that they both saw a vision of the glorified Christ. And in Daniel 12:11-13, this man clothed in linen said to him,

And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and **the abomination that maketh desolate** set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.³ But go thou thy way **till the end *be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.**

There are several passages describing what the abomination of desolation is. In Daniel's vision concerning "the time of the end," the man clothed in linen said,

Daniel 11:31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place **the abomination that maketh desolate.**

Daniel 11:36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 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.**

The last verse is a literal description of the abomination of desolation. Concerning the coming of Jesus and "our gathering together unto him," we have learned that it will not happen before "that man of sin" causes the abomination of desolation. As Jesus said, "whoso readeth, let him understand."

Other Signs

We now have two signs which must occur before the "rapture:" "the last trump," and "the abomination of desolation." Another group of signs, in evidence of His return, is found in Matthew 24:29-31.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels **with a great sound of a trumpet**, and they shall **gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other**.

The Bible is very specific about when all of this will happen: “immediately after the tribulation,” after the abomination of desolation, and at the last trump. If we will take time to read Revelation, we will find out what comes before the last trump. The “rapture” is not going to get you out of tribulation, but there is still much hope. Speaking again of the man of sin, Revelation 13:5-10 says.

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him **to make war with the saints, and to overcome them**: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. **Here is the patience and the faith of the saints**.

If the saints are raptured before the tribulation, there is no way he could “make war with the saints and overcome them.” This is reinforced in Daniel.

Daniel 11:32-35 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but **the people that do know, their God** shall be strong, and do *exploits*. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: **yet they shall fall** by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, *many* days. Now **when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help**: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And **some of them of understanding shall fall**, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, **even to the time of the end**: because *it is* yet for a time appointed.

False Prophecy

2 Thessalonians 2:3 says that there will be a falling away before our “gathering together to Him.” Could belief in a pre-tribulation rapture cause a falling away if the rapture never occurred? It is understandable that anyone would want to avoid these circumstances, but to teach and believe a lie at the risk of being found a false prophet is foolishness.

Jeremiah 23:16-21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: **they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD**. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, **Ye shall have peace**; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, **No evil shall come upon you**. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard *it*? Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. **I have not sent these prophets**, yet they ran: **I have not spoken to them**, yet they prophesied.

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 tells the fate of the false prophet, and how we can know if he is true or false,

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, **How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?** When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD **if the thing follow not, nor come to pass**, that *is* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, **but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously**: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

By telling us that God will not allow His children to go through the tribulation, they are falsely prophesying as in Jeremiah 23:17, "...No evil shall come upon you." God did not promise us an easy passage into the kingdom of heaven, on the contrary:

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, *and* that **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God**.

Taken

Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36 are often misunderstood as having to do with the "rapture."

Luke 17:34-36 I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

In Luke 17:37, Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Where, Lord?" They wanted to know where these people would be taken, and Jesus answered,

..., Wheresoever the body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Matthew 24:28 recounts it this way,

For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

This is referring to an event found in Revelation and Ezekiel.

Revelation 19:17-18 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, *both* free and bond, both small and great.

Ezekiel 39:17-22 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD their God from that day and forward.

If you have any doubt as to what is meant by “taken,” read Matthew 24:36-41,

But that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until **the flood came, and took them all away**; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Luke 17:27 leaves no doubt as the meaning of “took them all away,”

They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and flood came, and **destroyed them all**.

It should be obvious by now that we are talking about death here. In this instance, it would be better to be left than to be taken.

Hope

It would be wonderful if we could escape the tribulation. There is a possibility that we may escape in a different way; that God will protect us through tribulation here on earth. Otherwise there would be no Christians left alive at His return to be changed.

Matthew 24:21-22 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.

We do have hope in Luke 21:34-36.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. **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.

Psalms 91:1-16 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: *I will be* with him in trouble; I will

deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

The return of Christ and our gathering together to Him is not imminent, but it is very near. If we live long enough, we will see the return of Christ. We will put on immortality, but we will endure “much tribulation” before “that day.”

John 16:33 ...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Romans 5:3-5 And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

The Rapture Doctrine

The rapture doctrine says that Jesus will come down into the clouds, without coming all the way to earth. He will take the living believers out of the earth and back to heaven for three and a half, or seven, or possibly more years. Jesus will then return to earth with the changed believers.

It takes a great stretch of the imagination to create such a doctrine. When Jesus comes He will come one time, and He will come all the way! “The dead in Christ shall rise,” we will be changed, and we will all “be caught up” to “meet the Lord in the air” as He returns to claim His kingdom! There is an indication of a forty-five day period, after the first resurrection, before we return to earth on the day of Armageddon.

Daniel 12:11-12 And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days. **Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.**⁴

Subtract twelve hundred ninety from thirteen hundred thirty-five; we get forty-five. These last few days occur after the last trump. The seventh trumpet of Revelation sets off a series of “seven last plagues, aka the seven vials of **the wrath of God**”; a course of judgments that climax with the battle of Armageddon.

The First Resurrection

Matthew, Mark, and John tell of Jesus’ return to Jerusalem after the resurrection of Lazarus. The triumphal entry, as it is called, sets a precedent.

John 12:12-16 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and **went forth to meet him, and cried. Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.** And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt. These things understood not the disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him.

Mark 11:8-10 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way. And **they that went before, and**

they that followed, cried, saying. Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

Matthew 21:8-11 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way. And **the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying. Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;** Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, **This is Jesus** the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

This event was deliberately symbolic of the return of Christ at the end of time. The dead in Christ are resurrected and the living believers are changed to their immortal bodies. Just as the believers in Jerusalem went out to meet the Lord and escort Him into the city, we shall rise up to meet the Lord in the clouds and escort Him as He returns to claim His eternal kingdom. What is being called the rapture is really the first resurrection as written in Revelation 20:4-6.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.** Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

“This is the first resurrection.” If the dead in Christ rise first, what about the rapture? The word rapture has a dual meaning. In one sense it means to take away, but the best definition of rapture is ecstasy. Revelation 15:2-3 shows our ecstasy.

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and **them that had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.** And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

1. Where is Heaven – <https://onlyjesussaves.net/heaven.html>
2. What is Hell – <https://onlyjesussaves.net/hell.html>
3. Day of the Lord timeline - <https://onlyjesussaves.net/times.html#thousand>
4. A Time, and Times, and Half a Time - <https://onlyjesussaves.net/times.html>

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