

What Is, and Was, and Is to Come
The Rapture – Who, What, When, How and Why

VII b. The Rapture

What?

The rapture (“catching up”/“gathering”) is one of the most anticipated prophetic events in the life of a believer. The hope of His glorious appearing (Titus 2:13), our removal from this earth and our gathering to Him is one of the single most sustaining beliefs for the Christian. It is therefore important to understand the purpose, timing and manner of the rapture.

Who?

The rapture involves all (and only) believers, those living at the time and all of those dead since the beginning of time. The souls of those who have died will be in heaven and their bodies in the grave. Those living at the time of the rapture will be taken alive, body and soul.

*1Thessalonians 4:16-17 ... and the **dead in Christ** will rise first. After that, **we who are still alive and are left** will be **caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (NIV)*

When?

A parallel study of Revelation 6 and 7 and Matthew 24, seems to indicate that the **rapture will occur after the mid-point of the 70th week and after the opening of the 6th seal**. There will, however, be some indeterminate amount of time between the abomination of desolation, the opening of the 5th seal (first wave of martyrs and the beginning of the Great Tribulation), and the opening of the 6th seal.

Matthew 24:29-31 "Immediately after the distress of those days [following the abomination of desolation at the midpoint vs. 15], the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other". (NIV)

Revelation 6:12-14 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair; the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. (NIV)

How?

The souls of the dead in Christ (all deceased believers who at the time will be in heaven) will be reunited with their bodies (in the grave) and brought back to life. Immediately following that, those who are alive at the time will be caught up with them and, simultaneously together, all will be instantly changed and given immortal, eternal, incorruptible, supernatural, spiritual bodies suitable for the Kingdom and eternity. At that point we will all ascend to meet the Lord, waiting in the air.

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*1 Corinthians 15:51-55 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but **we will all be changed** - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, **the dead will be raised imperishable, and we** [who are still alive at the time] **will be changed**. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O Hades, is your sting?" (NIV)*

Why?

The scripture tells us that it is impossible for our natural, fleshly bodies to enter heaven, eternity and the presence of God. Just like a seed has to be planted and then grows [resurrects] in a different form, so our bodies, upon our resurrection, need to take on a different form in which to spend eternity. (1 Corinthians 15: 35-58)

*1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44, 49-50 But someone may ask, "**How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?**" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.*

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

*And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the Man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, **that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.** (NIV)*