

# Heaven: The Life Beyond

## Part 7 “The Rapture”

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4.13-17; 1 Corinthians 15.51-52

**Survey:** The word “rapture” comes from the Latin *raptura*, which means a seizing. The word was adopted by the Church to express the catching away or the seizing of all believers. The word also means a wonderful feeling or excitement about a certain subject. No doubt this is a superb usage of the word to describe the seizing and transporting of all believers to Heaven! Paul referred to this event as a mystery. The Greek word for this is *musterion*, which means something not previously known. It was not a mystery that there would be a resurrection. The mystery was that we who remain at the coming of the Lord will be seized or caught up to be with the Lord without experiencing death. Paul said we would be changed in a moment and in the twinkling of an eye. The change will take place suddenly and without forewarning. Until the New Testament, there was no real understanding of exactly how the end of the age would unfold. Paul, under inspiration from God, wrote that this previously unknown fact was now being revealed or unveiled for all to know.

**Subject:** It is an exciting time to be alive. We are witnessing things today that are the precursor to the coming of the Lord. At any moment the Church of Jesus Christ could literally disappear into thin air. The world will stand in wonderment as to what happened that suddenly caused millions of believers to vanish. There will however, be ample evidence from the teaching of this well-propheesied event that Christ has taken His Church. Will the world believe such an event? Sadly, the answer for many will be no. The book of Revelation plainly records the events that will transpire following the Rapture. This indicates that the world, as a whole, will not believe, but will in fact plunge even deeper into chaos, tyranny and degeneracy. However, there will be a spiritual movement that will cause many to turn in faith to Christ. They will believe and will be saved. But they will have to endure the horrors of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24-25). There will be millions of Jews who will turn to Christ and recognize Him as the true Messiah. As a nation they will turn in mass numbers to the faith in *Masiah* (Hebrew) or the anointed One, Christ.

What about those who are left behind at the time of the Rapture? Jesus came to seek out and to save anyone who would believe in Him and receive Him as Saviour. As previously stated, there will be a sweeping movement for people to come to the knowledge of Christ. The astonishment for those left behind is due to their lack of genuine faith. Professing to be a believer and actually being a true follower of Christ are two entirely different things. A person must have a new birth, a spiritual birth. This is a spiritual awaking for a real need for Christ’s forgiveness and personal salvation. Those left behind who had knowledge of salvation will realize their previous insincerity or their sincerity in a false hope. The Bible continually gives to everyone who will listen this blessed invitation, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10.13; Acts 16.31; John 3.16).

**Spotlight: Words that describe the two events; The Rapture & the Second Coming:**

1. *Parousia* (Greek meaning near presence) is used 24 times in the New Testament. It is a general term used to describe both the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 2.19; 4.15; 5.23; James 5.7,8; 1 John 2.29) and the return of Christ (Matthew 24.3, 27,37,39; 1 Thessalonians 3.13; 2 Thessalonians 2.8; 2 Peter 1.16).
2. *Apokalupsis* (Greek meaning to unveil or to reveal) is used to describe the Rapture (1 Corinthians 1.7; Colossians 3.4; 1 Peter 1.7, 13) and is used to describe the Second Advent (1 Peter 3.14; 2 Thessalonians 1.7; Luke 17.30).

**Substance:**

**1. The Rapture Precedes The Tribulation: Revelation 3.10; 1 Thessalonians 5.9; Luke 21.24**

**Pre-Tribulation Rapture:**

A. There is a misunderstanding between the Rapture (Translation) and the Second Coming. It is a common mistake by many that these two events are one and the same. They are two separate events. The difference is seen in the following: This view is referred to as the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

1. The Rapture removes believers; the Second Advent reveals Christ in all His glory.
2. The Rapture catches away believers in the air; at the Second Advent He returns to earth.
3. In the Rapture Christ comes for His Bride, the Church; at the Second Advent He returns with His Bride (Jude 14).
4. The Rapture is imminent; many signs will precede the Second Advent.

5. The Rapture is for the Church; the Second Advent is for Israel.
6. In the Rapture believers will be in the presence of the Lord; the Second Advent places men in the eternal Kingdom.

B. The Purpose of the Tribulation:

The purpose of the tribulation is a time to prepare the nation of Israel for the coming Messiah (Jeremiah 30.7). It is a time when the trouble will turn multitudes of the nation to Christ thus fulfilling the prophecies, covenants, and promises (Malachi 4.5-6). The national conversion will be a witness to the Gentiles of God's faithfulness and grace. It is also a time of judgment of the Gentiles for their unbelief (Revelation 3.10; 21.8). Revelation 4-19 does not mention the church as going through this time, which supports the fact that the Church will be taken prior to the Tribulation.

## 2. The Majesty of Christ In Heaven: Matthew 17.1-9; Luke 9.28-36; Acts 9.3; 22.6; 26.13

- A. The transfiguration is an insight into the majesty of Christ.  
 "And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garment became as white as light" (Matthew 17.2). "The appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming...they saw His glory...."(Luke 9.29, 32).
- B. Paul's experience on the Damascus Road gives insight. "And suddenly a light from Heaven flashed around him (Jesus)" (Acts 9.3; 22.6; 26.13).
- C. Peter wrote of his experience on Mt. Herman. "For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased'—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from Heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1.17-18).
- D. John wrote sixty years after Christ's resurrection. Revelation 1.12, 13a; 14-17 "I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze... and His voice was like the sound of many waters...When I saw Him I fell at His feet like a dead man...I am the Living One...I am alive forevermore."

## 3. Heaven: A Place Prepared For You: John 14.1-6

Things that we hold dear in Heaven:

- A. Our Treasure (Matthew 6.19-21). Our treasures are the spiritual labors and love that we have exercised here on earth. We served, sacrificed and suffered for Jesus Christ and this labor is not in vain (Galatians 6. 6.9-10).
- B. Our Rewards (Matthew 5.12). The rewards are waiting for us to receive after a lifetime of service for Christ. The rewards may be crowns, recognitions or special gifts. All these will be accompanied with the words from the Lord saying, "Well done, you good and faithful servant."
- C. Our Citizenship (Philippians 3.20). Citizenship in the Roman world during the early church years was a possession to be highly valued. As a citizen of Heaven and the future Kingdom we are privileged to be part of God's eternal world.
- D. Our Inheritance (1 Peter 1.3,4). "To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you."
- E. Our Names (Luke 10.20). "But rejoice that your names are recorded in Heaven."
- F. Our Spiritual Family (Hebrews 12.22-24). "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all and to the spirits made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament..."
- G. Our Savior, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9.24; Acts 1.11). "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."
- H. Our Heavenly Father (Matthew 6.9). Never before had anyone addressed Jehovah as "our Heavenly Father" until Jesus introduced His disciples to this marvelous father-child relationship (Romans 8.15; Galatians 4.6).