

You Asked For It
The Rapture
Matthew 24:4-14

Jesus answered: ***“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, proclaiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All of these things are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase in wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And the Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”***

The rapture can be a scary and confusing thing to Christians across the board.

Mostly because the book of Revelation Consists of a lot of scary imagery and prophecy that can be difficult to understand and because of that our imagination can take over and get the best of us.

When I first became a Christian I was reading the book of revelation at night right before I went to bed. That night I had the most vivid dream I’ve ever had and I want to share it with you.

(Share story)

There are generally four different beliefs about the rapture:

1. Pre-Trib. Meaning Christians will be rescued before the tribulation.
2. Mid-Trib. Many Christians will be rescued in the middle of the tribulation before the second half when it gets really bad.
3. Post-Trib. Meaning Christian’s will be rescued after the tribulation Period.
4. Pan-Trib. Meaning those That really don’t know but believe it will all pan out in the end.

The Assemblies of God hangs their hat on the pre-tribulation teaching which I also believe based on ***Matthew 24:40-44 which says, “Two men will be in the field, one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with the hand***

mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your lord will come. But understand: if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come in an hour when you do not expect him.

“BE READY”

If you are a believer in Jesus, you should be ready because ***“the Son of Man will come in an hour when you do not expect him.”*** Let’s put this into today’s terminology. In an instant you and your coworkers could be in the office and one could be taken while the other one is left behind. Or two will be playing golf and one will be taken and one will be left behind. Or two will be playing fortnight, one will be taken and one will be left behind.

I fear we have lost our urgency to be ready. Armies don’t do drills because there is currently a war on. They do drills for impending wars to come. ***1 Timothy 4:16 says, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”***

So how do we prepare? We prepare by keeping our lives holy. Observing the word of God and being obedient to it. We prepare by not being hearers only but being doers of the word of God.

So this is what’s going to happen after that. Christian’s will be with God forever. Turn with me to ***1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 “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. Therefore, encourage each other with these words.”***

I don’t want you to miss this. Look at the scripture again. ***“We will meet him in the air.”*** This Jesus that we have prayed to but never have seen before will now be standing before us face to face, eyeball to eyeball. Now look at the next piece of scripture ***“with the Lord forever.”*** How Long will we be with the Lord? Forever! So what are the implications of this? Think about it, there will be no more pain, no more sin, no more brokenness, no more disease, no more sickness, no more poverty, no more starving children, no more divorce, no more loneliness. We will be with him forever! The Lord is coming back. Be ready!

So what should we do when we're living in the end times? Should we dig a bunker and stockpile food and ammo and live out the rest of our days isolated and suspicious of everyone? No! We should (Look again at the scripture) ***"encourage each other with these words."***

We should live with an urgency to share his Good News! Craig Groeschel told a story about the time he and his family went to Ecuador on a missions trip. The community was severely impoverished. He and his family along with the mission's leader were standing in the living room of a poor single mother. When it would rain the water would wash through the village picking up all the garbage and human waste and it would flow through her house. Craig said he was fighting back the urge to vomit when he was standing in her home. The leader asked Craig if he would like to minister to her. Craig said at that moment he froze because he had no clue what to say to this lady who had nothing and living in these terrible conditions. After several awkward moments the mission's leader stepped in to pray and this is what he said. I know you love Jesus and I want to remind you that he's coming back for you! And one day you will be with him forever where there will be no more tears. Your children will never go hungry again and no man will ever beat you again and you will be comforted by the Lord.

If people here only knew how wonderful heaven is, they wouldn't be so attached to this world. They would long to be with the Lord forever!

So what's the application with this? What do we do with this? ***1 Corinthians 15:51-58 tells us the answer. "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 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, then the saying that is written will come true. "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where O death is your victory?" "Where O death is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."***

We need to start living our lives as if we will never die and as though we still have tomorrow. The Bible says ***“Our life is but a vapor, here one minute and gone the next.”*** **If you knew the Lord was coming back next Tuesday how would that change the way you live today?** I encourage you today to serve him, praise him, give in his name, share his love and live with intensity!

We become lukewarm, apathetic, and indifferent because we have forgotten that at any moment, in a flash, in a twinkling of an eye, and at the trumpet sound
Jesus will come again!

In the end, you can live a life that won't count in eternity or you can live for the Lord today and bring great glory to him while it is still called today!

The rapture isn't meant to bring fear, intimidation and uncertainty to believers but rather hope and an urgency to live our lives to the glory of God.