

Christ's Return

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, Titus 2:13, 1 Corinthians 15:51, Luke 21:28

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God's Word, this Bible, is a book of hope. It reveals the hope of forgiveness and eternal life, it gives us the hope of God's promises, and it gives us the glorious hope of an eternal kingdom that'll never end.

But one of our greatest hopes, as believers in Christ, is the promise of His return. Jesus' return isn't a superstitious myth or a fairy tale. I assure you that Jesus will return as sure as the sun rises.

Yet, we must understand that between now and the day He returns to this earth as the King of kings, there are certain events that must take place.

Like the alignment of a ten-kingdom empire of global authority from which a lawless man of great deception will rise to power.

There'll also be world wars and famine, with terrible deception and great destruction.

These are just a couple of the many events that must take place before Jesus' second coming.

But there's one other event that must take place, and for the believer, it's the most exciting event found in the word of God.

It's called "*the catching away of the saints,*" or the Rapture. This is the next great event on God's prophetic calendar.

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Biblical prophecy reveals that the rapture will be the most dramatic, world-shaking event in human history. It'll be of such magnitude that the world will never be the same.

It'll far surpass the shock of Pearl Harbor and 9-11. It'll divide every person on earth between those who believe in Jesus, and those who don't.

Those of us who believe in and follow Christ will instantly vanish from this earth where we'll be immediately ushered into His glorious presence. What a day that will be!

Those who reject Christ, they'll be left behind to face a world that'll be far different than anything they could ever imagine.

Those left behind will confront a new world order of despair, evil, and lawlessness. Those left behind will have to deal with a global demonic ruler, the antichrist, and his satanic program of terror.

Those left behind will experience the floodgates of God's wrath upon this evil and godless world through 21 divine judgments that are beyond my ability to describe.

But for those of us who know Christ, we have the promise of a blessed hope in a kingdom of glory that'll never end.

This is why we need to live godly lives as we wait for Christ's return, and as a warning to those who choose to reject Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.

To fully comprehend Jesus' return, we must understand that His coming will take place in two distinct and separate events.

Most people know about the Second Coming of Jesus that happens at the end of the tribulation period when He physically returns to this earth and sets up His kingdom for a thousand years.

But there's another event called the Rapture that's different from the Second Coming.

The rapture is a unique event that happens when Jesus returns for His church in what the Bible calls "*the great catching away of the saints*" and "*our blessed hope.*"

This "*blessed hope,*" that we call the rapture, is a supernatural event when Jesus appears in the sky, and in a moment faster than the blink of an eye, He'll catch away His church to be with Him forever in His glory.

This mind-bending, earth-shattering event is described in 1 Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, "*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*"

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There are several powerful points that we must not miss about this future event outlined in this passage.

First, verse 16 reveals that only those who are "*in Christ*" will experience this glorious event that we call our blessed hope. The big question is, what does it mean to be "*in Christ*?"

To be “*in Christ*” means you’ve repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus alone for your salvation. To be “*in Christ*” means you believe in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God.

To be “*in Christ*” means you believe in His finished work at the cross. To be “*in Christ*” means you believe that He physically and bodily rose from the dead. It means you believe He’ll return as the eternal King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Only those who are “*in Christ*” will experience this blessed hope when we’ll be instantly caught up to be with the Lord forever in His kingdom of glory. Whatever you do, make very sure, you’re “*in Christ.*”

Second, we’ll be instantly changed. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians how, in the twinkling of an eye, we’ll be instantly transformed from a body of corruption and sin into a brand-new perfect body that’ll last forever.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, *“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.”*

In the twinkling of an eye, we’ll be instantly changed. The Greek word for twinkling is the word, “*atomos*” which is where we get our word atom.

The meaning is that this event will happen in a moment faster than time can be measured.

We’ll be instantly transformed from this old body of sin, into a new heavenly body, a perfect body just like Jesus’, to meet the Lord in the air, where we’ll be ushered into His eternal and glorious presence.

1 John 3:2, *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*

It'll be a glorious body; a body that'll never know sin, sickness, pain or sorrow.

It'll be a heavenly body that'll last forever! This is why I'm so excited about the future. This is why I'm looking for Jesus and His promise of a blessed hope!

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Now, the word “rapture” isn't found anywhere in the Bible. Skeptics take great delight in pointing this out. They say there's no such thing as “the rapture.”

However, that's not true. Yes, the word “rapture” isn't found in the English Bible, because it's not an English word.

The word, “rapture” is a Latin word translated from the Greek word, *“harpazo,”* found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, which means to *“take out”* or *“to snatch away without warning.”*

It's from this Greek word, *“harpazo,”* that we get the Latin word, *“rapturo,”* and our English phrase, *“caught up”* found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

The point is; although the word *“rapture”* is not in the English Bible, it's very clear that the teaching of the rapture is. So, why is the rapture important? Why should we be looking for our blessed hope?

The rapture's important because it fulfills God's promise to deliver the church from His coming wrath and judgment upon the whole world.

1 Thessalonians 1:10, *“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”*

This is God’s promise to deliver those who love His Son, Jesus Christ, from the terrible wrath that’ll come upon the whole world, and God will not forsake His promise.

Revelation 3:10, *“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.”*

The word *“from”* used here is the Greek word, *“ek”* which means to physically remove something, or to take something out of.

In other words, Jesus said, *“I will take you out of the world and keep you from the hour of trial”* that’ll come upon the whole world.

This is why Paul called this promise our *“blessed hope”* in Titus 2:13, *“while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*

The rapture of the church isn’t something we’re to fear or dread; it’s a blessed hope of God’s glorious promise to rescue us from His coming wrath that’ll be poured out upon a sinful and evil world.

This is why Jesus said in Luke 21:36, *“Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”*

Think about this for a moment. Jesus warned of a future generation that would be so bad that we should pray to escape it and all that would come upon the whole world.

I believe we’re that generation, and we should pray for, and look forward to, the coming of Christ.

The rapture is important because when it happens, it'll literally be a life changing event that triggers the final days of planet earth as we know it. The rapture will be the catalyst that sets everything into hyperdrive.

For example; It'll set into motion the economic collapse of world governments. It'll bring about a final world empire of a one world government and a one world currency.

It'll set into motion the rise of a world dictator known as the antichrist. It'll set into motion a seven-year tribulation of such unimaginable wrath and judgment, that Jesus said it would be the worst time period in human history.

This is why we're encouraged to look for our blessed hope in Jesus Christ. As believers in Christ, we'll not experience the coming wrath of God. We won't have to worry about the antichrist.

In Luke 21:20, Jesus warns us, *"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*

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Which brings us to the question, *"How will the rapture trigger end time events?"*

In the theater of your mind, imagine a day like any other day, when suddenly, and without warning, Jesus, the eternal King of kings, appears in the clouds of heaven, like a flash of lightning.

Suddenly, the sound of a heavenly trumpet vibrates across the heavens.

In the twinkling of an eye, every born again, Bible-believing Christian instantly vanishes from this earth faster than the speed of light and is immediately ushered into Jesus' eternal presence.

Imagine the shock of those left behind. Those who witness this world-shattering moment as friends and family members suddenly vanish before their eyes.

Children, parents, spouses, friends, coworkers, all who love Jesus Christ will disappear. Across the world a hundred million conversations will stop in mid-sentence.

Doctors, nurses, and patients will suddenly vanish in the middle of an operation. Thousands of empty cars will careen wildly out of control as drivers instantly vanish. Classrooms will suddenly be without teachers and students.

Text messages will be left unanswered as families try to contact their loved ones. Every person on planet earth will be affected by this event.

Panic will grip the world as it encounters chaos unlike any other time in history. In the days that follow, the world economy will collapse as governments and nations seek to deal with this devastating nightmare.

In a split moment of time, the world will be changed forever. It will be a day so catastrophic, that it will always be remembered as THE DAY...

And most importantly, in a single instant, the world will suddenly find itself without the influence of godly men and women.

One of the most intriguing points about the rapture, that many seem to overlook, is that when this moment happens, every believer in Christ will in an instant, be removed from this world.

This means, every single person left on planet earth will be a Christ rejecting, God hating, sin loving unbeliever.

Picture in your mind that in this single moment, the entire world will instantly be fully immersed in a spiritual darkness unlike anything it has ever known.

Image in the theater of your mind a world where every single person on planet earth is an unbeliever who doesn't know God, believe in God, and has rejected the light of God's truth.

In that vacuum of spiritual darkness, evil will grip the world like a steel trap. The world has never experienced anything like it.

In the ensuing days, the most-evil man in history, whom the Bible calls the antichrist and the beast will ascend to world power, and with him, will come hell on earth.

Those who rejected Jesus will quickly discover they've been left behind to face a nightmare of spiritual darkness that Jesus said would be worst time period in human history.

But, those caught up to meet the Lord, will experience the fullness of God's glorious blessing of hope that's promised to every believer.

This great hope is so amazing with glory and truth, that Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "*Therefore encourage one another with these words.*"

When Jesus comes for His bride, the church, He'll come suddenly; He'll come without warning to snatch us away to His dwelling place for eternity.

This is why we're to look for, wait for, and long for our blessed hope in Jesus Christ.

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Conclusion

In closing, since the Bible says we don't know the day or hour of Christ's return, why then should we be looking for the rapture?

I can give you several reasons, but the most important reason is that if we're not looking for Jesus, then most likely we're not prepared for His coming, and that would be a terrible tragedy.

As believers in Christ, we're commanded to watch and pray; to be prepared at all times for Christ's return.

I want to make it very clear that those who aren't in Christ will be left behind. Whatever you do, don't be one who's left behind.

For those of you who reject Jesus Christ and suddenly find yourself left behind in a world of darkness and evil, I want to point out some things that are absolutely vital for you to hear.

First, when the rapture happens, and it will happen; it'll be a day the world will never forget.

But, it may also be your last day in this world. When the rapture happens, the world will explode into chaos and turmoil.

My point is, if you happen to survive the initial chaos and madness on the day of the rapture, you should immediately fall upon your knees and cry out to God for mercy.

For those left behind, life will be full of terror and evil beyond anything the world has ever known.

The moment you know the rapture has happened... the moment you realize you've been left behind... is the moment when you'll realize that everything you've heard today is true.

This is why I'm preaching this message, so that you can take this moment to give your life to Christ and not be left behind to face a world gone mad with evil.

Very soon, the trumpet call of God will sound. Jesus Christ our Savior and King will suddenly appear in the sky, and with a heavenly command, He'll shout, "*Come up here!*"

And in the twinkling of an eye, our bodies will be instantly changed from a mortal corrupt body of sin, to an eternal, immortal body of glory.

In an instant, faster than time can be measured, we'll rise up with believers from all over the world, to meet our eternal Lord and Savior in the air.

We'll rise up to meet the Lamb of God who took away our sins. We'll rise up to meet the Alpha and the Omega. We'll rise up to meet the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

We'll rise up to meet the Prince of Peace, who is our eternal hope of heaven's glory. We'll rise up to meet the one who is the King of all kings, and the Lord of all lords.

Your eternal destiny is at stake. So, I ask, if Jesus came in the next 60 seconds, would you be caught up to meet the Lord in the rapture, or would you be left behind?

Today is the day that God has given you to secure your eternal ticket for the next great, world-shaking event on God's calendar, the rapture of the church, our blessed hope!

Jesus Christ is the only way to escape what's about to happen, therefore let today be the day for you to surrender your life to Jesus.

Romans 10:9-10, "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."