

The Rapture

Introduction

The prophecies of the Bible can be trusted.

From an earlier week:-

In the First Advent of the Messiah the prophet Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Daniel said the Messiah would be "cut off" 483 years after an edict was issued to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25). He also stated that this would take place before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. And David stated in Psalm 22:16 that the Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.

The edict it refers to was issued in 457 BC. Counting 483 years from that date brings us to 27AD. The Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. So, the Messiah had to be "cut off" (that is, killed) sometime between 27 AD and 70 AD. The method of execution at the time David wrote Psalm 22 was stoning. Crucifixion was not even invented by the Romans until 700 years later. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He was executed in 31 AD, during the "historical window" between 27 AD and 70 AD. He was executed by crucifixion. The fulfilment of these signs in the life of Jesus are an indication that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah.

1 What is the Rapture?

The word means to be "caught up". The word rapture is not a bible word, it is the name of a doctrine. It is from the Latin word "rapto" - to seize forcefully! Some traditions use the term "Translation". This doctrine comes about because there seems to be two separate, different events described concerning the 2nd coming of Jesus.

"A" rapture is described in Paul's first letters to the Thessalonians.

See 1 Thess 4:13-18

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

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 for ever.

Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Not all Christians will die, but all will be changed, 1 Cor 15 :50-52

"I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 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."

"Beam me up Scottie!"

2 When is the Rapture?

The answer depends upon which teachers you ask, whether it is believed to be distinct and separate event from the Second Coming (or Parousia, from the Greek, presence).

The Bible speaks of an awful period during which a world leader called the “Beast” holds power. It is a period of God's judgement upon the earth. Mankind gets what it has always craved, freedom from God's care. Rev 3:10; Isaiah 34:2; 24:1,4,5,16-21.

It is known as the 70th week, Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; Rev 13. The more common modern name among Christians is “The Tribulation”.

Other titles for the 70th week

Wrath	Rev 6:16,17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 1 Thess 1:9-10; 5:9; Zeph 1:15,18
Judgement	Rev 14:17; 15:4; 16:5-7; 19:2
Indignation	Isaiah 26:20,21; 34:1-3
Punishment	Isaiah 24:20,21
Hour of Trial	Rev 3:10
Hour of Trouble	Jer 30:7
Destruction	Joel 1:15
Darkness	Joel 2:2; Zeph 1:14-18; Amos 5:18

In relation to Israel, it is called “Jacob's trouble” Jer 30:7. *“How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it.”*

There are various theories about the Rapture and when it takes place. A popular late 20th Century view considered it to be distinctly separate from the final appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and happening immediately before, immediately after or during the Tribulation.

Of present day Bible teachers, many preach no Rapture and many preach there will be one separate from the Second Coming. I have no idea which view has the most adherents. Some preach a partial Rapture, but that is, and always has been, a minority view.

3 What does the Rapture mean to me?

Perhaps not a great deal as distinct from the Second Coming. It is the fact of His return which is the priority in my thinking. The end will come, however God decides to do it.

Rapturists look to the following scriptures which can also be interpreted to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70.

Matt 24:36-44

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a 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 this: 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 at an hour when you do not expect him.

1 Thess 4:13-18.

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Therefore encourage each other with these words.

It will be sudden.

It will be unexpected.

It will be unmissable

It will end my opportunities to serve Jesus.

Not something to dread, but to look forward to.
"Therefore encourage each other with these words"