

IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

A message exploring the Harpazō (the Rapture) and what we should understand about this climactic event from scripture

Headings

- Introduction
- Differing Views of the Harpazō
- Key Scriptures
- The Biblical Basis of the Pre-Tribulation View
- Expectancy & Nearness

Introduction

- Harpazō?
 - The Greek word used by Paul – meaning ‘caught up’

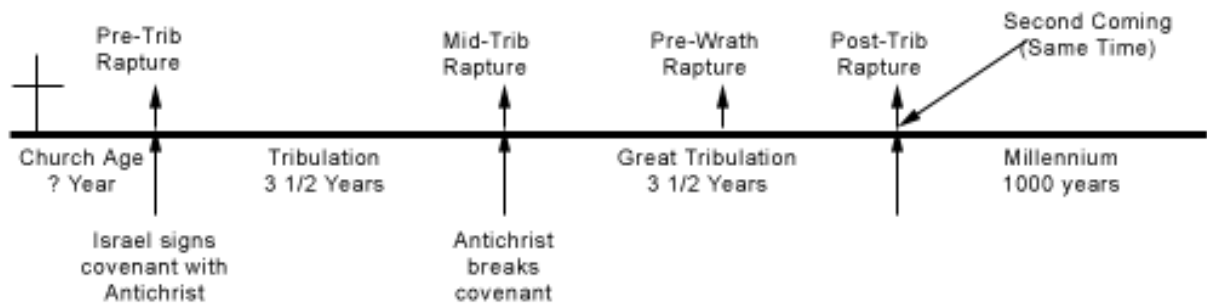
*Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds **to meet the Lord in the air**. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

1 Thessalonians 4: 17

- Harpazō means ‘to be caught away (or up), snatched away, carried off’
 - It occurs 18 times in the New Testament always in the sense of being caught away or caught up, or taken (by force) or being plucked out
- So why do we talk of Rapture?
 - The term ‘rapture’ comes from the Latin word ‘*rapturo*’ which is the translation of the original Greek word ‘*harpazō*’, as seen in the Latin Vulgate translation, a late-4th-century Latin translation of the Bible
- It is an event where, at the sound of a trumpet and in the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ (Christians who have died) will be raised from the dead – then those who are alive in Christ will be ‘caught up’ (1 Thessalonians 4: 17) or ‘changed’ (1 Corinthians 15: 52)
 - Believers will have their bodies changed to immortal and incorruptible bodies much akin, if not exactly like, the body that Christ has now and has had since his resurrection
 - We, living believers, also require this change because we remain now in our sinful, imperfect bodies that are unfit for glory
- What Happens When a Christian Dies?
 - Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and the spirit
 - The Christian’s soul and spirit are not ‘in heaven’ in the sense of being in the Holy City (Revelation 21 & 22); but are in a place Yeshua refers to as ‘Abraham’s bosom’ (Luke 16: 23) or as ‘Paradise’ (Luke 23: 43)
 - In both cases the believer is aware and sentient and in the presence of the Lord
 - The body remains in the grave until the event called by Paul the Harpazō, or as it is more commonly known...the Rapture
 - In this ‘catching up’ the soul and spirit are reunited with a changed body (an incorruptible, glorious and eternal body)

Differing Views of the Harpazō

- There are Several Differing Views of the Timing of the Harpazō
 - There are 5 main views for the timing of the Harpazō (Rapture)
 - The diagram below lays them out on a timeline with Daniel's 70th week (commonly called the Tribulation Week) – see *Daniel 9: 27*
 - My Purpose in this message is not to focus on the differing views – I will mention them briefly but more details are in the notes for this message



- **The Pre-Tribulational Rapture** – the Rapture will occur before the seven year Tribulation period begins.
- **The Mid-Tribulational Rapture** – the Rapture will occur at the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation
 - Some use the timing of the two witness's resurrection as being the exact point (*Revelation 11: 12*)
 - The major argument however is that with the seal and trumpet judgments in the first half of the Tribulation Week, they see the 7th trumpet judgment being sounded at the 'midpoint'
 - Verses they use to back this include *1 Corinthians 15: 52* where we read, "...at the last trumpet" from which they conclude the Rapture occurs at the seventh trumpet
 - I think this is a misunderstanding of the chronology of the tribulation – see my chart 'A Suggested Chronology of the Great Tribulation Period'
- **The Post-Tribulational Rapture** – the Rapture will occur at the at the end of the Tribulation right before the second coming of Christ back to earth; believers will be raptured up to meet Christ in the air and then will return immediately with Him back to the earth
 - I think this view necessarily involves misinterpreting so many of the Pre-Tribulational scriptures that it discredits this view
- **The Partial Rapture** – faithful, devoted believers will be raptured before the Tribulation, but the rest of believers will be left to go through the purging of the Tribulation
 - Personally, I dislike this view the most – and I cannot find any biblical basis for this view
- **The Pre-Wrath Rapture** – the Rapture will occur about three-fourths (five and a half years) of the way through the Tribulation, when the wrath of God begins to be poured out on the earth
 - What discredits this view is that the outpouring of God's wrath clearly begins with the opening of the first seal of the scroll and the arrival of

the rider on a white horse (the Coming World Leader often called 'the Antichrist')

- Note that theoretically the Pre-Tribulational Rapture view is also a type of Pre-Wrath argument, as it suggests that we will be removed 'prior' to God's wrath outpouring upon the earth

- Of these views, it still seems that the Pre-Trib and Post-Trib Rapture positions are the most common views in evangelicalism today
 - The view I personally favour is the Pre-Trib view – and I will speak of the biblical basis for that view after we have read the key scriptures

Key Scriptures

- There are many scriptures which speak of the Harpazō (Rapture) – I will focus on three of them, but the others are listed in the notes for this message

- Firstly **John 14: 1-3**

*“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.**”*

John 14: 1-3

- Secondly **1 Corinthians 15: 51-53**

*‘Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.’*

1 Corinthians 15: 51-53

- Thirdly **1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18**

*‘But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that **we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.** Therefore comfort one another with these words.’*

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

- These Passages Clearly Relate to the Same Event
 - They describe the Lord preparing a place for believers and coming again to receive them to Himself
 - **Jewish Wedding Custom** - this is very much in keeping with Jewish wedding practice

- After the betrothal the bridegroom goes back to his father's house to prepare a place for himself and his bride – and then later returns to claim his bride and what follows is the marriage and marriage supper
- **They describe an event where, at the sound of a trumpet and in the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ (Christians who have died) will be raised from the dead – then those who are alive in Christ will be 'caught up'**
- **They describe how we will have our bodies changed to immortal and incorruptible bodies** – much akin, if not exactly like, the body that Christ has now and has had since his resurrection
- **They describe an event where believers will be with the Lord forevermore**
- **Other Passages Which Speak of the Harpazō (Rapture)**
 - *Romans 8: 16-25 and 14: 10-12;*
 - *1 Corinthians 3: 13-15, 4: 5, 7: 29-31 and 15: 22-23;*
 - *2 Corinthians 4: 14, 5: 1-5, and 5: 10;*
 - *Ephesians 4: 30 and 5: 27;*
 - *Philippians 1: 6 and 10, 2: 16, and 3: 9-11;*
 - *Colossians 3: 4;*
 - *1 Thessalonians 1: 10, 2: 19-20, 3: 12-13, 5: 9 and 23;*
 - *1 Timothy 6: 14-15;*
 - *2 Timothy 1: 12 and 4: 8;*
 - *Titus 2: 13;*
 - *Hebrews 10: 25 and 37, and 11: 35;*
 - *James 1: 12;*
 - *1 Peter 1: 5, 7 and 13, 4: 7 and 5: 4;*
 - *2 Peter 1: 11;*
 - *1 John 2: 28 and 3: 2-3;*
 - *2 John 1: 8;*
 - *Revelation 4: 1-11, 5: 1-14 and 22: 12.*

The Biblical Basis of the Pre-Tribulation View

- **These Passages Clearly Relate to the Same Event**
- **When one reads through the primary and supporting verses of the Rapture and takes into account the other eschatological prophecies relating to Daniel's 70th week (The Tribulation) and the Second Coming – it seems to me quite clearly apparent that the Pre-Tribulation viewpoint is the most valid argument**
- **I will borrow an acronym used by Dr. Mark Hitchcock (of The Berean Call) in which he identifies 8 key points of proof**
 - **P** Place of the Church in the Book of Revelation
 - **R** Removal of the Restrainer
 - **E** Exemption from the Divine Wrath
 - **T** Twenty-four Elders
 - **R** Rapture of the Church versus the Return of Christ
 - **I** Imminence
 - **B** Blessed Hope

- **P – Place of the Church in the Book of Revelation**
 - **The Absence of the Church on Earth in the Tribulation**
 - One overall sense when reading Scripture in reference to prophecies of the Tribulation Week is that none of the key New Testament passages deal with or mention the presence of the Church during that time
 - **At the beginning of Revelation we see Christ giving praise and admonishment to the seven churches in Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 – which concludes with Revelation 3: 22**
 - Notice the frequently overlooked fact that the word 'Church' is plural – the messages to the seven churches are for ALL of the churches to heed and know (including us today)
 - **An important eschatological note is the fact that this is the last time the Church is mentioned until Revelation 19: 14 – which concerns the return of the church with the Lord when He comes to rule and reign**
 - We know this is the Church following Christ because *Revelation 19: 8* tells us it is the saints, now arrayed in fine linen which is clean and white, which represents their righteousness
 - **'Come Up Here' Revelation 4: 1**

'After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." **Revelation 4: 1**

- So why might the church be absent between Revelation 3 and 19? – this verse gives a clue
 - This is not the first time that a voice from heaven is described as a trumpet and it brings to recollection the verse from *1 Thessalonians 4: 16*
 - It is interesting that this Revelation passage describes an event at which a sound like a trumpet occurs, a voice declares, "Come up here", and then John finds himself in heaven
 - Could this imply the Rapture? ... The removal of the Church from the earth as the 'church age' ends? ... I think possibly so! ... I would say it certainly is a viable argument
- **R Removal of The Restrainer**
 - **We Live in an Age of Spiritual Restraint** – though it may be hard to believe, the age in which we now live is described as the age of restraint (*2 Thessalonians 2: 6-7*)
 - Something or someone is holding back the full release of evil that is to come when the Antichrist is revealed
 - This restraining power is the Holy Spirit working through the church
 - **When the Church is Removed, the Holy Spirit will be "removed" from the earth and thus the Restraint is also Removed**
 - At least this is substantially so; although because He is a divine member of the Godhead He can still be active in this world
 - It is expected that the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost will then revert back to the ministry and activity of the Spirit as documented in the Old Testament
 - The indwelled Church would be gone

- **The Holy Spirit is Promised to Reside with us Forever** (*John 14: 16-17*)
 - If He (the restrainer) is taken out of the earth, this promise can only be fulfilled by us going with Him
 - This also finds fulfillment in the earlier verses of John 14 which sets the context of the helper [the Holy Spirit] – see *John 14: 2-3*
 - This passage itself denounces the Post-Trib Rapture position, because if the Rapture occurs at the Second Coming, we will never see 'The Father's House' that was prepared for us, because we spend the rest of eternity on the renovated earth and, in the Millennium, in the New Heaven and New Earth eternally

- **E Exemption from the Divine Wrath**
 - **The Promises in God's Word** – there are repeated promises that God's people, those who have repented and turned to Christ, are exempt from the coming Wrath and, by inference, The Tribulation
 - See *John 3: 36, Romans 8: 1, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 1: 9-10 and 5: 9 and Revelation 3: 10* for starters.
 - **Exempt From Wrath means No Tribulation**
 - It seems difficult to justify a Mid-Trib or a Post-Trib view of the rapture because if the believers are exempt from God's wrath (as scripture clearly says) then they clearly cannot go through the tribulation
 - Some bible students try to say that only the second half of the tribulation is the period of wrath – but this does not stand the tests of either reason of scriptural accuracy
 - Reason makes it difficult to argue that the opening of the sealed scroll brings on anything other than the outpouring of God's wrath (e.g. the four horsemen)
 - A few try to place this as the beginning of the second half of the tribulation – but this does not really stand up to scrutiny.
 - **Scripture declares that the opening of the seals is the outpouring of God's wrath** (see *Revelation 6: 17*)

“For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” **Revelation 6: 17**

- **The Washing of Water by the Word**
 - It is not necessary for the church to go through the tribulation for any purpose of cleansing or refining
 - That is being done continually through the washing of water by the word; that is, the joint activity of Word and the Holy Spirit (see *Ephesians 5: 26*)

- **T Twenty-Four Elders**
 - **In Revelation there are 12 references to a group of beings called the "twenty four elders"** (see *Revelation 4: 4 and 10; 5: 5, 6, 8, 11 and 14; 7: 11 and 13; 11: 16; 14: 3; and 19: 4*)
 - The fact that they are mentioned twelve times (repetition) indicates their importance in Bible Prophecy
 - There are four main views about the identity of these elders, which I'm not going to get into here

- **The Key Clue to Their Identity is in Scripture**

- Clues throughout Revelation (their title, their position, their crowns, their clothing, their praise, their distinction and their location) lead me to personally believe that they represent the raptured Church
- Their song in *Revelation 5: 9-10* is uniquely definitive of who these elders are:

“You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 5: 9-10

- These elders can only be representative of the redeemed church
- Note that the number 24 is significant because it speaks of completeness in service and refers to the divisions of the priesthood for holy service (see *1 Chronicles 24: 1-19*) - this and the Elders in Revelation are the only places in scripture where the number 24 is used

- **R Rapture of the Church versus the Return of Christ**

- **Two Different Events**

- The argument here comes to light when you systematically place all the next coming of Jesus passages together and try to harmonize them
- You quickly find that you cannot because some things appear to be contradictory - that is until you realize that this could in fact be talking about two separate events
- When you do this, you end up with a comparative chart like the one below:

- **Jesus Coming Again - Two Events Which Are Quite Different**

The Rapture	The 2nd Coming
○ Translation of believers <i>1 Thess. 4: 14-17</i>	No translation involved <i>Revelation 20: 12</i>
○ Translated saints go to heaven <i>1 Thess. 4: 16-17</i>	Translated saints return to earth <i>Jude 1: 14</i>
○ Earth not judged <i>Titus 2: 13; 1 Thess. 4: 18</i>	Earth Judged <i>Joel 3; 12-16; Rev. 19: 15, 20: 11-15</i>
○ Imminent, any moment...sign-less <i>1 Thess. 5: 4-6; Rev. 3: 3</i>	Follows definite predicted signs <i>Daniel 9: 24-27; Matthew 24: 29-30</i>
○ Not in the Old Testament -----	All through the Old Testament <i>Isaiah 9: 6-7; Joel 3</i>
○ Believers only <i>1 Thess. 4: 16-17</i>	Affects all men on the earth <i>Romans 2: 6-9</i>
○ Before the day of wrath <i>John 3: 36; Rev. 3: 10</i>	Concludes the day of wrath <i>Jude 1: 14-15; Rev. 16: 19</i>
○ No reference to Satan -----	Satan bound <i>Revelation 20: 1-3</i>
○ He comes for His own <i>John 14: 1-3</i>	He comes with His own <i>Colossians 3: 4</i>
○ He comes in the air with a shout <i>1 Thess. 4: 15-16</i>	He comes to the earth, no shout <i>Zech. 14: 4; Rev. 19: 11-16</i>
○ He claims His bride <i>1 Thess. 4: 14-17</i>	He comes with His bride <i>Revelation 19: 14</i>

- | | |
|---|---|
| ○ Only His own see Him
<i>1 Thess. 4: 14-17; 1 John 3: 2</i> | Every eye shall see Him
<i>Revelation 1: 7</i> |
| ○ Great Tribulation begins
<i>Rev. 5: 5-7</i> | Millennium begins
<i>Rev. 19: 15-16; 20: 4-5</i> |
| ○ Church believers only
<i>1 Thess. 4: 14-17</i> | Redeemed Israel
<i>Romans 11: 25-27</i> |

- **I Imminence**

- **Caught Up At Any Moment**

- **The Rapture is presented in the New Testament as an event that, from man's viewpoint, which could occur at any moment**

- **Be Expectant!**

- **We are admonished as believers to be expectantly looking forward to it** (see *1 Corinthians 1: 7 and 16: 22, Philippians 3: 20 and 4: 5; 1 Thessalonians 1: 9-10; Titus 2: 13; Hebrews 9: 28; Jude 1: 21*)

- **Only the Pre-Tribulational position allows for an imminent, any moment, sign-less coming of Christ for His own, His church and His bride**

- **All the other Rapture Views can be predicted once the Tribulation Starts**

- **B Blessed hope**

- **The Comfort of the Harpazō (Rapture)**

- **The truth of the Harpazō (Rapture) is intended to be a comfort and blessing to the Lord's people**
 - **It is our "blessed hope" (*Titus 2:13*)**

'... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' **Titus 2: 13**

- **The blessed hope of the Rapture is that Christ will come for the faithful prior to a time of worldwide devastation and God's wrath**

- **Fulfilment of Prophecy**

- **This is one of the prophetic fulfilments of which the prophet Isaiah wrote in *Isaiah 26:20-21***

'Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.

For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.'

Isaiah 26: 20-21

Expectancy & Nearness

- **We Are To Be Looking Up & Eagerly Expectant**

- **We are Citizens of Heaven not Earth-Dwellers**

- **Our lives as believers are meant to be heaven focussed not earth bound**

'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.'

Philippians 3: 20-21

- **Our lives as believers should be filled with blessed hope (*Titus 2: 13*)**

- **It is our Upward Focus which Enables Us to Persevere...with Expectancy ... as this world gets ever more troubled and dark –**

- **The Moment is Drawing Near**

- **We are in the ‘Beginning of Sorrows’ (Matthew 24: 8)**
 - **Yeshua Has Told Us (So Be Comforted) – He Knows and Is With Us by The Holy Spirit**
 - **All The Boxes Are Ticked – His Coming for His Bride is Very Near**
 - Read Matthew 24: 3-12
 - It is a description of the days in which we now live
 - We all sense the growing darkness – its root is spiritual
- **Persevere (Matthew 24: 13)**
 - **Many Calls in Scripture to Endurance and Keeping Going**
 - **Saints Throughout the Ages** – have had to endure difficult and troubling days, and persecution
 - **And Us Today** – the Lord has told us...this world hates us
- **Don’t Despair**
 - **Your Love for the Lord – and His Love for You – will see you through**
 - **Paul writes about Love to the Corinthians (who endured hard times)**

*‘Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but **rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**’ **1 Corinthians 13: 4-7***

- **So When Will The Harpazō (Rapture) Occur?**

- **There are no specific dates or events that are required for the Rapture to occur**
- **To set a date for a projected return is in one sense theological recklessness**
 - No one knows the timing but the Father (Matthew 24: 36, 42 and 44, and 25: 13; Acts 1: 7)
- **However there are Some Biblical Clues**
 - **After Two Days (Hosea 6: 2)**

*‘After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.’ **Hosea 6: 2***

- Most commentators understand these ‘days’ as millennia
- If that is so – and Yeshua died at Pesach in AD 32 – then His coming to revive His people could be AD 2032 (most likely at Tabernacles)
- This could be His Coming for His Bride – (the Harpazō) – who is then taken to be with Him forever, and the Tribulation follows
- Or it could be His coming at the end of the Tribulation to revive Israel and to rule the earth in divine authority – in which case the Harpazō would be at least 7 years previous to that time
- **Yom Kippur and Yom Teruah**
 - **The Three Autumn Feasts are Prophetic of The Lord’s Second Coming**
 - **Tabernacles will be fulfilled in the Millennium when Yeshua rules and reign on the earth**

- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) will be fulfilled at the Lord's Coming to Earth when he Cleanses His People Israel
- Yom Teruah (Feast of Trumpets) – is unusual in that scripture does not relate it to any Jewish event, historical or prophetic – it is simply 'a Day Of Blowing' which precedes Yom Kippur by 10 days
 - ❖ It is conceivable that this is the date of the Harpazō (Rapture)
 - ❖ If so – then it has to precede Yom Kippur at the end of the Tribulation – which may suggest it precedes that 'Wrath' and is at least 7 years prior to Yeshua's return to rule and reign
- The Spirit Teaches Us
 - Whether the Harpazō (Rapture) is at Yom Teruah 2032 or 7 or more years previously (2025 or 2024) – we know what we must do...
 - Let the Holy Spirit Teach Us and Guide Us
 - Keep Looking Up
 - Endure and Persevere
 - Focus on the Lord and on our Blessed Hope
 - Preach the Word – In Season and Out of Season
 - Love is Key – Love the Lord and Look to Him
 - Be What You Are ... A Citizen of Heaven ... Not an Earth Dweller