

The Great Snatch (the Rapture)



"2 ...I am going to prepare a place for you... 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am." John 14:2-3 NLT.

I. The **PROMISE** of the Rapture.

The promise of Christ's return at the rapture is found primarily in two Bible passages: **John 14:1-3** and **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**. The rapture of the Church is the believer's blessed hope (Titus 2:13). The rapture is a mystery that was revealed to the New Testament Church (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

John 14:1-3

Jesus promised that he would be returning to heaven to prepare a dwelling place for his followers (v.2). This dwelling place is described in **Revelation 21:9-27** and is called **the New Jerusalem**. Jesus promised that he would come back for his followers so that they may be with him (v.3).

The phrase "...I will come and get you..." is very strong in the Greek original text. It means: "to take to one's side, to receive to one's self" in the sense of "to snatch to one's side." One popular prophecy author refers to the rapture as "the great snatch!" Jesus Christ explicitly promised the rapture when He said, "I will come back and take you to be with me..." Jesus is true to His word.

II. Two **PHASES** of Christ's Return—the Rapture & the Revelation.

Some people think that the **rapture** and the **return/revelation** of Christ are the same. However, they are distinct. They are two different phases.

	The Rapture	The Return/ Revelation
1. The Place	Christ comes in the air : <i>"in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."</i> 1 Thess. 4:17	Christ comes to the earth : <i>"the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem...."</i> Zech. 14:4
2. The Purpose	Christ coming for His Church to take her to heaven : 1 Thess. 4:17; 2 Thess. 2:1	Christ coming with His Church to bring her to the earth : Rev. 19:14 and 7&8; Zech. 14:5; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14
3. The Priority	Christ's union with His Bride, the Church: Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 4:16&17	Christ's rescue of Israel from Armageddon: Zech. 14:1-5, 9; Rev. 19:11-21
4. The Plan	Sudden and unseen by the world. There will be no signs—it is imminent (any moment). 1 Cor. 15:51&52; 1 Thess. 5:2	Expected and visible to the world. Also, it will be preceded by numerous signs: Matt. 24:4-30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10

Dr. Tim LaHaye writes concerning the rapture and the revelation of Christ: "They are obviously two separate events! And while some Christians may disagree as to the length of time between the two events, all must concur that they are distinct experiences... I see no contradiction in viewing the Second Coming as a single event in two phases. These two episodes, the Rapture and the Second Coming, are so different that it is impossible to combine them." *No Fear of the Storm* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Press Books, 1992), pp. 31,32.

III. Will You Go Through the Great Tribulation?

There are different viewpoints concerning the time of the rapture. The debate deals with the question—*will Christians go through the seven-year tribulation or be raptured before it? Are Christians to be looking for the any-moment return of Christ or the antichrist and the Great tribulation?* The major positions are:

1. **The Pre-Tribulation Rapture:** All believers raptured *before* the Tribulation.
2. **The Partial Rapture:** Only faithful believers who are *spiritually worthy* will be raptured *before* the Tribulation.
3. **The Mid-Tribulation Rapture:** All believers raptured in the *middle* of the Tribulation.
4. **The Pre-Wrath Rapture:** All believers raptured *five and a half years* into the Tribulation, just *before* God's wrath is poured upon the wicked world.
5. **The Post-Tribulation Rapture:** All believers surviving the Tribulation are raptured at the end of the 7 years, the same time Jesus returns to the earth.

Central Lesson

Anticipating the return of Christ and the rapture of the Church has a motivating and purifying effect upon the follower of Christ.

IV. The Rapture Is A Motivation

1. It motivates the believer to wholeheartedly serve and **LIVE** for God.
2. It motivates the believer to **WITNESS** to the lost and to reach as many as possible.
3. It motivates the believer to **RESIST** temptation, **DENY** sin, and to seek purity in his or her life to be ready to meet Christ (1 John 3:2-3; Titus 2:11-13; 2 Pet. 3:10-11; Rom. 13:11-14).

Are you living with an anticipation of Christ's return? Are you ready to meet Christ at His return? Have you received Christ as your Savior? Are you surrendered to His will for your life?

Conclusion

The rapture of the Church is the believer's blessed hope (Titus 2:13). **Anticipating the return of Christ and the rapture of the Church has a motivating and purifying effect upon the follower of Christ.**

Suggested Action Steps: ► If you have not yet received Christ as your Savior, do it today. ► If you have not been living for Christ, rededicate your life to Him. ► Read the book of 1 Thessalonians several times and think about what it means to live as a Christian in the End Times. ► Invite someone to the next Bible study in this series on the End Times. ► Attend the next small group discussion.