

TWO

THE RAPTURE

The “Rapture” is a word that refers to the catching away of all believers from Earth to meet Jesus Christ in the air when He returns. The Greek word, *harpazo*, that is translated “*caught up*” (1 Thessalonians 4.17), means to “snatch or catch away” with “forceful seizure” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, p. 174). The Rapture of believers from Earth is not a point of disagreement among Christians; it is the timing of the Rapture that is not agreed upon.

The Blessed Event

The Rapture will occur on the day that the Tribulation starts. Paul described this event in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, Greece:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4.15-17)

The announcement of the catching up from Earth of all believers, dead and alive, takes place in a matter of several moments. The archangel shouts the command, “*Come up here!*” (Revelation 4.1), and then the trumpet of God is blown. We do not know how long the trumpet blast is, but it could be from several seconds to a minute or more because more than one trumpet is blown. Paul said believers will be changed “*at the last trumpet*” (1 Corinthians 15.52).

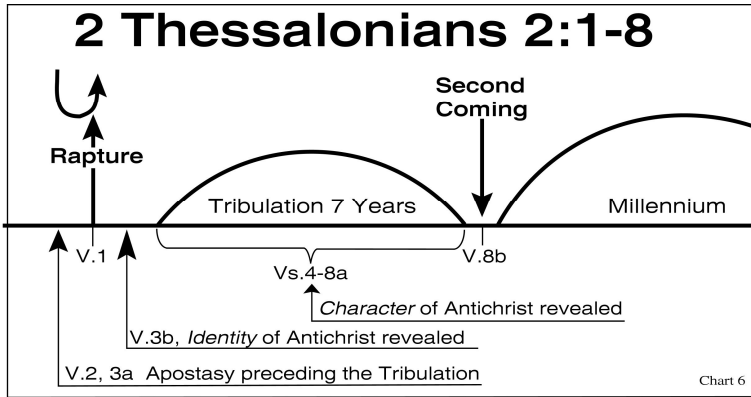
The dead in Christ are raised first, and then the bodies of all living believers are transformed from mortal bodies to immortal ones. Once they are transformed they are “*caught up*” to meet the Lord in the air.

Paul gave more information in his first letter to the church in Corinth:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15.51-52)

The entire Rapture event will take several moments to as long as a few minutes. It will not take place in the “*twinkling of an eye,*” as most teach.

Hal Lindsey believes the entire Rapture event (the command to “*Come up here!*,” the blowing of the trumpets, the resurrection of dead believers and the “*catching up*” of all living believers) takes place in the “*twinkling of the eye*”:



Someone said that the twinkling of an eye is about one-thousandth of a second. The Greek word *is atomos* from which we get the word atom. It means something that cannot be divided. In other words, the Rapture will occur so quickly and suddenly that the time frame in which it occurs cannot be humanly divided.

Just think of it...in the flash of a second every living believer on earth will be gone! Suddenly, without warning, only unbelievers will be populating Planet Earth. (*Vanished Into Thin Air*, pp. 56-57)

He summed up the Rapture event, which has several aspects to it:

The Rapture will occur suddenly, without specific warning, and will be instantaneous. (Ibid. p. 64)

Timothy LaHaye also believes that the entire Rapture event takes only a fraction of a second:

Through the years some have tried to discredit the pre-Trib Rapture theory by calling it the *secret rapture*. Of course, nowhere in Scripture is the term *secret* applied to this event. However, anyone who does not participate in the Rapture will not actually see it, for it will occur in the *twinkling of an eye*. The word twinkling has been defined as a *gleam in your eye*, which is faster than the eye can see. The occurrence would much better be labeled the *sudden rapture*. (*No Fear of the Storm*, pp. 33-34, emphasis T.L.)

According to many eschatologists, the entire Rapture event will take about one-thousandth of a second. It is hard to imagine how the shout from the archangel, the blowing of the trumpet blasts, and the resurrection and rapture of believers can take place in just one-thousandth of a second. One may argue that God can do it, which He could, but that is not what the Bible says.

Some say that only Christians hear the shout and the trumpet blasts. That is a guess, but it does not explain how an event, that must take a minute or more, can take place in one-thousandth of a second. When the archangel shouts, “*Come up here!*” (Revelation 4.1), he does not say it in less than one-thousandth of a second. The duration of the trumpet blasts are also not less than one-thousandth of a second.

Most prophecy teachers do not explain the various parts of the Rapture. Instead, they teach that the entire event takes place in a fraction of a second. They do not

break down the four primary parts, and they never go into detail on how long it will take. Here are the four major parts of the Rapture event:

1. The descent of Christ with a shout of the archangel and the command, “*Come up here!*” (1 Thessalonians 4.16; Revelation 4.1)
2. The blowing of the trumpets (1 Corinthians 15.52; 1 Thessalonians 4.16)
3. The resurrection and catching up of dead believers (1 Thess. 4.17)
4. The changing of the bodies of living believers from mortal to immortal, and their being *caught up* to be with Christ in the air (1 Cor. 15.51-54).

Partial Rapture doctrine

Some pastors teach the Partial-Rapture doctrine and when they were asked if backslidden Christians who miss the Rapture might take the mark of the Beast, they said they were not certain and hoped none would.

We do not believe the Partial-Rapture doctrine is biblical. All Christians will be “*caught up*” when Christ returns, as Paul said (1 Corinthians 15.51). Even if a Christian is in the middle of committing a sin he will be “*caught up*.”

The Resurrections

There are two general resurrections. The second resurrection, of the unsaved, takes place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20.5). The unsaved are resurrected, judged, found guilty and cast into the Lake of Fire where they will spend all eternity (Revelation 20.11-15).

The first resurrection is divided into four parts. The resurrection of Jesus and a select number of Old Testament saints (Matthew 27.52-53) was the first part. They were the first fruits (1 Corinthians 15.23). The second part is the resurrection of all believers of the Church Age (1 Thessalonians 4.15-17). They will be the harvest. The third part is the resurrection of the two witnesses (Revelation 11.11-12). The final part of the first resurrection is that of believers who are martyred during the Tribulation, and the Old Testament saints (Revelation 20.4). The two witnesses, the Tribulation martyrs and the Old Testament saints will be the gleanings.

Conclusion

1 Thessalonians 4.16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15.51-53 teach that the entire Rapture event will take from several seconds to a minute or more. The announcement of the catching up of believers takes place in a few seconds as the archangel shouts the command, “*Come up here!*” (Revelation 4.1).

Next the trumpet of God is blown more than once. The duration of the blowing of the trumpet could take several seconds to several minutes, depending on how many trumpet blasts there are. (If the Rapture takes place on Rosh Hashanah, and forty trumpets are blown, it will take more than several minutes to blow them all. They will be blown by angels, not men.) We do not know the duration of the trumpet blasts, because more than one trumpet blast is blown. Paul said believers will “*be changed in a moment, at the last trumpet*,” (1 Corinthians 15.52).

Dead believers will be resurrected and “*caught up*” after the trumpets blasts. The living believers will be changed from mortals to immortals in the “*twinkling of an eye*,” and then be “*caught up*.” The transformation of living Christians from mortals to immortals takes place in the “*twinkling of an eye*,” not the entire Rapture event.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter Two

1. What other major event starts on the day that the Rapture takes place?

2. Will the entire Rapture event take place in the “*twinkling of an eye*,” or will it take a few minutes or more?

3. What are the four things that happen during the Rapture event?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

4. How many general resurrections are there, and what happens to those in the second resurrection ?

5. What are the four parts of the first general resurrection?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

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