

God's Planned Future

(3) The Rapture

Introduction

In this lesson we shall consider the New Testament teaching of the rapture, which is Jesus Christ's return to *snatch away* His bride, the church. This is not a new teaching but has its roots in the words of Christ, and Scripture employs the normal use of language to communicate this truth.

The rapture is Jesus Christ's irresistible transportation of His church to their heavenly home. It's an event filled with hope and assurance. It's encouraging, inspiring and joyful, filled with anticipation of being united with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sadly, the attitude of many today towards the rapture is 'Pie in the sky by and by.' Many are so consumed with themselves and their manmade beliefs of God, that they simply do not care to explore the wonderful truths of God's planned future. But for those who care to ask God, His calendar is loaded with prewritten details, with the next great event being the rapture of His church. This is what we shall explore in this lesson.

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Old Testament figures

The idea of God physically transporting a person from earth to heaven may be humanly demanding, but for the God who created the universe by His spoken word, it is a small thing. We get an Old Testament glimpse of rapture reality through two men who prefigure God's will and power in this matter.

In Genesis 5:23-24 Enoch's rapture is recorded simply and with no fuss, as if it was the most natural thing that could have happened to him. *Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years.*²⁴ *Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*

The next personal rapture-styled departure we read about is Elijah, which took place with a little more fanfare. In 2 Kings chapter 11 we read of Elisha and Elijah walking down the road talking about, amongst other things, how God was going to end Elijah's life and how Elisha would continue his ministry work. *As they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven* (2 Kings 2:11).

A little history of rapture teaching

While God's Word is the final authority on all theology matters, including the rapture, it is worth noting that the church has held to this truth from the beginning. As with all biblical truth, there have been those who challenge and even deny the rapture over the centuries. But history records a sure thread of faithful teachers down through the ages.

Jesus first introduced the rapture to His disciples the night before His crucifixion (John 14:1-3). Following Jesus' ascension, the apostles continued Jesus' teaching of the rapture, recorded most obviously by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4.

Similarly, the early church fathers continued to teach the imminent return of Christ to rapture the church before the coming time of God's wrath upon the world.

Polycarp, 65-155AD

Irenaeus, 120-202AD

Tertullian, 145-220AD

Cyprian, 200-258

Dionysius Alexandrinus, 264AD

Victorinus, 303AD

Chrysostom, 347-407AD
Macarius Aegyptius, 390AD
Cyrillus Alexandrinus, 444AD
The Codex Amiatinus, 690-716AD
Joachim of Fiore, 1130-1202AD
Dolcino of Novara, 1316AD
Joseph Mede, 1627
Mather, 1639-1723
Peter Jurieu, 1687AD
John Gill, 1697-1771AD
James MacKnight, 1721-1800AD

Church history gives testament to the flow of biblical teaching of the rapture down through the ages. Some of the more modern teachers include Dave Hunt, John MacArthur, John Walvoord, Dwight J. Pentecost, Chuck Missler, David Jeremiah, to name just a few.

What is the rapture?

The rapture is the next great event on God's calendar, spoken of by Jesus in John 14:3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; and 2 Thessalonians 2:1b.

The rapture is when *the Lord* (Jesus) *himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord* (1Th 4:16-17).

- The glorified Lord Jesus Christ, alone, without being accompanied by angels, returns from heaven into earth's atmosphere, stationing Himself in the clouds.
- As Christ enters earth's atmosphere He is heralded by a cry of command through the voice of an archangel, and with the blast of the trumpet of God from heaven.
- All deceased Christians, whose dead bodies have been buried, burnt, drowned, or eaten by wild animals, are instantaneously resurrected. They are given new spiritual bodies, perfect, immortal, imperishable,

glorified bodies (1Co 15:35-53). These resurrected believers immediately appear with Christ in the clouds.

- Following immediately, all living Christians on earth are forcefully and rapidly transported (*snatched up*) to join the resurrected believers with Christ in the clouds.
- From the clouds, Jesus transports everyone back to heaven for assignment of their rewards while the 7 years of tribulation play out on the earth.

In this event, Jesus does not actually touch the earth but takes His bride up from the earth. There is NO judgement in this first stage event, it is simply Jesus' transportation of His bride away from the earth for heavenly reward. The rapture will not be silent, it will not be a secret, nor will it be a partial event. In fact, it will be loud, visible, unmissable, inescapable, and undeniable, as every believer on earth, at that time, shall be *snatched up* to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. And there is no reference to Satan in this glorious event.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ *For since we believe that Jesus died*

and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

The rapture, which includes the resurrection of dead believers, is based upon, and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. As surely as Jesus rose from the grave, so Christ will resurrect dead/sleeping Christians in the rapture. This is why we speak of “certain hope” when we talk of the rapture. Christian hope in being resurrected with glorified bodies is not a theory, it is not wishful thinking, and it is not mystical mumbo jumbo. Because we believe Jesus rose from the dead, we also believe in the resurrection of sleeping/dead believers in the rapture.

Some people claim that because the word “*rapture*” does not appear in our English Bibles, the whole belief must be false. However, the word “*rapture*” had made its way into the language of the church by the year 412AD. Jerome translated the Greek word *HARPHAZO* (*caught up*, 1Th 4:17) to the Latin word “*raptur-ey*” in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible in the late 4th century.

The Greek word *harpazō* (*caught up*) occurs 14 times in the New Testament in various contexts, and all with similar

applications. In effect, the word "*rapture*" has been in biblical language since the first century, and more specifically in the language of the church for about 1600 years. Therefore, *harpazō* (caught up) is the best word for Scripture to describe God's Son taking up the church from earth to heaven as the first stage of Christ's second coming. Stage 2 is when Christ comes in judgement as seen in Revelation 19:11-21. So, the English word "*rapture*" is biblically accurate and conveys the biblical truth perfectly.

Although Paul does not use the word *harpazō* in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, he does explain the same eschatological event as in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed* (1Co 15:51-52). Here, Paul explains to the Corinthians an event which had previously been a mystery. But is no longer a mystery because the transformation and transportation of the Church was openly taught and explained.

This was the point of Jesus' teaching to His disciples the night before His crucifixion in John 14:3. His next visitation

will be for the purpose of taking believers from earth to heaven. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* Notice that the purpose of Jesus' next visitation to earth would be to relocate believers from earth to His heavenly home which He has been preparing. Jesus next visitation would NOT be for the purpose of Jesus taking up permanent resistance here on earth to establish His earthly kingdom. That would come later.

When Jesus shows up next to *snatch up* His church, no believer in the church shall be left behind on earth. As Paul says, *we shall all be changed* (1Co 15:51). Christ does not return to *snatch up* a select few who meet some special criteria. No, it will be as Paul said, *we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up* (1Th 4:17), no exceptions. If any were to be left behind on earth, they would have to suffer the coming years of tribulation and wrath, which Christ is protecting His bride from when He snatches her up.

The speed of the rapture

1Co 15:51-52 ...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.

Facts:

- **A wink** is a controlled movement of the eye and lasts for about half a second.
- **A blink** is a reflex action of the eye and lasts about 1/3 of a second.
- **A twinkle** is a reflected particle of light seen in the eye which travels at the speed of light and causes the eye to twitch – it takes about 1 billionth of a second to do this. This is as close to instantaneous as possible in human language.

Paul is simply saying that the rapture will NOT be a process that takes time. Rather, it shall happen instantaneously and with no warning being given.

Rapture and second advent distinctions

The Bible is clear, the rapture is stage one in Christ's second coming, with the second advent of Christ happening at the end of the tribulation, being stage two.

They are two separate events on two separate occasions. There are many differences between the rapture and Christ's second advent (the Day of the Lord). They are two distinct events and should not be confused or combined into one event. While both are stages in Christ's return to claim His church and His world, they are separated by time and purpose. These differences also promote the fact that the rapture must happen first, before the coming 7 years of tribulation, and before the coming 1000 year (millennial) earthly kingdom of Christ. Therefore, Christians say that the rapture is a pre-tribulational and pre-millennial event. This lesson would be called a pre-millennial view of eschatology. God's order of events shows that His sequence is rapture, tribulation, second advent, millennial kingdom etc.

Therefore, it is helpful to observe from Scripture the distinctions between these two events. Below are some of the differences between the rapture and Christ's second advent of Revelation 19:11-21.

Rapture: Christ comes in the air, stops in the clouds, and returns to heaven with His New Testament bride, the church (1Th 4:17).

2nd advent: Christ comes, His feet touch the earth on the Mount of Olives to remain and reign (Mat 25:31-32).

Rapture: Jesus comes FOR His saints (Jn 14:3; 1Th 4:17).

2nd advent: Jesus comes WITH His saints (Rev 19:14).

Rapture: Jesus comes with a blessing for His saints (1Th 4:17).

2nd advent: Jesus comes with judgment for those who have rejected Him (Mat 25:31-46).

Rapture: Jesus gathers His own to Himself (1Th 4:16-17).

2nd advent: Angels gather the tribulation elect (Mat 24:31).

Rapture: Resurrection of NT believers (1Th 4:15-16).

2nd advent: No resurrection.

Rapture: Believers are taken (1Th 4:15-17).

2nd advent: Unbelievers are taken (Mat 25:41).

Rapture: Unbelievers remain on the earth (implied).

2nd advent: Believers remain on the earth (Mat 25:34).

Rapture: There is no mention of Christ's kingdom on earth.

2nd advent: Christ's kingdom on earth is established (Mat 25:31, 34).

Rapture: Believers receive glorified bodies (1Co 15:51-57).

2nd advent: No one who survives the tribulation receives glorified bodies.

Rapture: Can happen at any moment – imminent.

2nd advent: Happens seven years later, following specific identifiable tribulation events.

Rapture: Focuses purely on the church.

2nd advent: Focuses on Israel and the world.

Rapture: Leaves Israel's covenants unfulfilled.

2nd advent: Israel's covenants are fulfilled.

Rapture: Impacts believers in Jesus Christ only.

2nd advent: Impacts all of humanity and all evil powers.

It is also worth noting, that in both Matthew 24 and Revelation 19:11-21, they focus on the second and final stage of the coming of Christ. There is no *snatching up* (rapture) mentioned in this second stage. This is because the rapture took place 7 years earlier.

The context of 1 Thessalonians 4

John MacArthur explains the context of Paul's explanation of the rapture to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

When Paul penned this epistle, the Thessalonians had been in Christ only for a few months. The apostle had taught them about end-time events, such as Christ's return to gather believers to Himself (e.g., 1:9-10; 2:19; 3:13). They also knew about the Day of the Lord (5:1-3), a time of coming judgment on the ungodly. But some issues about the details of their gathering to Christ troubled them.

First, they seem to have been afraid that they had missed the Rapture, since the persecution they were suffering (3:3-4) caused some to fear they were in the Day of the Lord, which they obviously had not expected to experience (2 Thess. 2:1-2). Furthering that misconception were some false teachers, about whom Paul warned in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, “[Do] not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” But the persecution they were experiencing was not that associated with the Tribulation or the Day of the Lord. It

was merely the persecution that all believers can expect (2 Tim. 3:12) and that Paul had warned the Thessalonians about (3:3-4).

The Thessalonians' fears that they were in the Day of the Lord and thus had missed the Rapture imply that the Rapture precedes the Tribulation. If the Thessalonians knew that the Rapture came at the end of the Tribulation, persecution would not have caused them to fear they had missed it. Instead, that persecution would have been a cause for joy, not concern. If the Day of the Lord had arrived, and the Rapture was after the Tribulation, then that blessed event would have been drawing near.

But of gravest concern to the Thessalonians were those of their number who had died. Would they receive their resurrection bodies at the Rapture, or would they have to wait until after the Tribulation? Would they miss the Rapture altogether? Would they therefore be second-class citizens in heaven? Were their deaths chastisement for their sins (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30)? They loved each other so deeply (cf. 4:9-10) that those thoughts greatly disturbed them. Their concern for those who had died shows that the Thessalonians believed the return of Christ was imminent

and could happen in their lifetime. Otherwise, there would have been no reason for their concern. The Thessalonians' fear that their fellow believers who had died might miss the Rapture also implies that they believed in a pretribulational Rapture. If the Rapture precedes the Tribulation, they might have wondered when believers who died would receive their resurrection bodies. But there would have been no such confusion if the Rapture follows the Tribulation; all believers would then receive their resurrection bodies at the same time.

Further, if they had been taught that they would go through the Tribulation, they would not have grieved for those who died, but rather would have been glad to see them spared from that horrible time.

Paul wrote this section of his epistle to alleviate the Thessalonians' grief and confusion. He was concerned that they not ... be uninformed ... about those who are asleep and thus grieve as do the rest who have no hope. Since their grief was based on ignorance, Paul comforted them by giving them knowledge.

End quote.

(John MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1Th 4:13-18)

The rapture happens before the tribulation

The pre-tribulation rapture assures believers of their exclusion from suffer God's wrath upon this world. The Old Testament repeatedly shows us that God is just and that the righteous do not suffer God's wrath as the wicked do. In Genesis 18, when Abraham learned of Lot living in Sodom and the judgment that the Lord was about to execute on Sodom and Gomorrah, he responded. Abraham asked, *will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?* (Gen 18:23). He then begins negotiating with the Lord over sparing the city Lot lived in if there were enough believing righteous people there. Then Abraham says to the Lord, *far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?*" (Genesis 18:25).

This principle is what the apostle John told the church in Philadelphia of, when Jesus said ...*I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth* (Rev 3:10). John knew that it was NOT Christ's intention for His bride to live through the time of God's wrath and indignation with the rest of the world

(Dan 11:36). This is a good example of near/far prophetic fulfilment. The immediate group of people being spoken to in the church of Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13) would be protected from the future tribulation period (Near). It is also prophetic in that it protects the future global church (Far) from living through the coming tribulation period because the tribulation did not occur in the first century. It is still to happen.

We see the same principle active in Genesis 6, in the life of Noah. *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*⁶ *And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.*⁷ *So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."*⁸ *But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD* (Genesis 6:5-8)

As we know, Noah obeyed the Lord and built the ark for his family and the animals. God sent sufficient rain along with the underground springs of water that erupted, to cover the entire earth totally. Genesis 7:22 tells us that *everything on*

*the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. God's judgment exterminated the wicked **only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark** (Genesis 7:23).*

Again, we see God's just faithfulness to His people. Peter also taught this very truth, *the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment* (2 Peter 2:9). The church of Jesus Christ shall not go through the coming time of God's judgment upon this world. Jesus' rapture rescues His people from the coming wrath of God.

Added to this, Christ is presently preparing the heavenly dwelling for believers (Jn 14:2-3), while waiting for the predetermined number of Gentiles to be saved (Rom 11:25). Only then will He return for His New Testament bride before the tribulation begins. Consequently, Paul instructed the Thessalonians *to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come* (1Th 1:10).

This is why, as you read through the Revelation, the church is NOT seen in chapters 6 to 18 as God's wrath is unleashed upon the world. This is also why the New Testament gives NO warnings to the Church about how to survive during the

coming wrath of God (Rev 3:10). The church will not be present on the earth, they will have already been removed by Christ and taken to heaven in the rapture.

This is further seen in that the church is pictured in heaven throughout Revelation chapters 4-5. This is pictured in the throne room of heaven. *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads* (Rev 4:4). The elders are representative of the raptured church in heaven.

The white space that exists between Revelation chapter 3, where the church is on earth, and 4 where the church is in heaven, accommodates the transportation of the church from earth to heaven. This is in preparation of the terrible tribulation that is about to come upon all the earth.

The “Last Trumpet” of 1Co 15:52 is NOT the Trumpet of Rev 11:15, but it is the trumpet of 1Th 4:16.

1Co 15:52	1Th 4:16	Rev 11:15
Trumpet sounds - no mention of God's wrath	Trumpet sounds - no mention of God's wrath	Trumpet sounds towards the end of God's wrath - just prior to judgement of individuals
	The trumpet call of God - Sounded by the Lord Himself	Trumpet call of an Angel - Sounded by an angel
	The voice of an archangel (singular) - then the trumpet sounds	The trumpet sounds - then there are loud " voices " (plural) calling out
The trumpet sounds, the dead are raised & we living saints are changed	The trumpet ushers in change, transportation & reason for encouragement	The trumpet ushers in judging of the dead & reward for the saints
Trumpet is part of the resurrection & changing procedure	Trumpet is part of the resurrection & transportation procedure	The trumpet immediately precedes God's temple being opened, lightning, thunder, earthquake, and hail

Three biblical days

Some teachers claim there is either no rapture, or that the rapture is somehow squeezed into the *day of the Lord* when Christ returns in Revelation 19. They mistakenly attempt to bundle all future prophecies into one single event, amalgamating separate events into one. With this being a biblical impossibility, it is helpful to understand the meaning of 3 biblical phrases: *the day of Jesus Christ*, *the day of the Lord*, and *the day of God*.

- 1) **The day of Jesus Christ** includes the rapture, when Jesus Christ completes His work within the redeemed and snatches them up (1Co 1:7-8). *I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ* (Php 1:6. cf. 2:16). This is *the upward call of God in Christ Jesus* (Php 3:14). 1 John 3:2 adds, *...we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (cf. 2Co 1:14). This shall be the final stage in the believer's bodily redemption and sanctification (cf. Rom 6:22; 8:23; Eph 4:30; 1Th 5:23).
- 2) **The day of the Lord** is God's time of judgement, of great fear and terror. During the Old Testament (26

times) this phrase was used to describe God's historic judgement in the Old Testament period upon a people group, such as on Egypt, Babylon, and Israel (Eze 30:2-19. cf. Isa 13:1-13; Joel 2:1-2).

But it is also used of God's future judgement coming upon the sinful world, including Israel, which He actions through His Son Jesus Christ (Zep 1:14-18; Ac 2:20; 1Th 5:2; 2Th 2:2-3; 2Pe 3:10). *The day of the Lord* will reach its climax when Christ fulfills Revelation 19:11-21. The day of the Lord is inclusive of "*the great day of God the Almighty*," referred to also as the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14-16; 19:19-21), which is no battle at all because Christ simply destroys all His enemies.

- 3) **The day of God** is the same as the *day of eternity*.
The *day of God* is the period following the *day of the Lord*, when Christ destroys all of God's enemies. This *day of God* will stretch forward into eternity future.
As 2 Peter 3:12-13 shows, *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!*¹³ *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new*

earth in which righteousness dwells. And 2 Peter 3:18b,
*...To him be the glory both now and to the day of
eternity. Amen.*

(cf. Psa 110:1; Ac 2:33-35; 1Co 15:28; Php 2:10-11; 3:21;
Heb 10:13).

Blessings of the rapture

Paul taught the grieving Thessalonian Christians about the rapture to raise their hope and affirm their security in Christ. 1 Thessalonians 4:18 reads, *therefore encourage one another with these words.* The rapture stimulates spiritual encouragement by addressing fear and human speculation. Conspiracy propagated across the internet can do nothing more than instil fear and promote self-importance, but prophecy builds faith and certainty in God. It would be a terrible thing if believers could only look forward to Christ returning in judgment. But this is NOT the case. (1Th 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-18; 5:9-10; 2Th 2:1).

The New Testament is rich with such encouragements for believers. When looking to the future, God's Word is not clouded or lacking in information. The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors with precision, absoluteness, and certainty that would not require human intervention to unravel. As in the gospel, God's planned future speaks for itself.

Paul testified that *our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the*

power that enables him even to subject all things to himself (Philippians 3:20-21). The writer of Hebrews celebrated that *Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him* (Hebrews 9:28).

Paul rejoiced with the Corinthians, saying, *you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Corinthians 1:7-8).

Similarly, Peter exulted *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In this you rejoice...* (1 Peter 1:3-6a).

Paul certainly rejoiced with Titus as they were both united in *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13).

For many of us, including myself, we repented, turning our lives over to the control of the Lord Jesus Christ, in part, to escape the just judgment of God. God's wrath instilled such a terrifying and healthy fear of God's wrath that we knew it should be avoided. Which is precisely what the apostle Paul told the Roman church. The truth of the rapture encapsulates the power of the gospel with the assurance of eternal safety from divine judgment. *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God* (Romans 5:9).

In Daniel 11:36, Daniel prophesied of the coming antichrist who will establish himself as world king early in the 7 year tribulation. *The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place* (Daniel 11:36 NIV). Christ's raptured church shall be enjoying the glories of heaven while evil runs rampant on earth, but only until God has spent His wrath on the wicked. God had determined the precise timing of His wrath, and He has EXCLUDED the church from that wrath.

Belief in biblical eschatology motivates holy living as we anticipate the soon return of Christ (2Pe 3:11-13).

Beginning with the rapture, our expectations of God are purified and defined by his Word.

The rapture will affect every human being, even those who deny the truth of the rapture. People who are close to you, your loved ones, family, work or school friends, business associates, neighbours, club associates, Facebook friends, Twitter friends etc. - none will escape the direct impact of the rapture.

Regardless of what a person may think on the rapture, they cannot escape the responsibility of it, nor will they escape the event itself with the eternal consequences of it. When the Lord Jesus returns to snatch up His church, there will be no negotiations, no striking up a deal, no last minute bargains, no complaints, no warnings, no changing your mind, and no delays.

Whether you are prepared or not, whether you are a willing participant or not, nothing will change the certainty of this event. The Lord's plan will NOT be interrupted or altered. It will NOT be slowed down, sped up, or manipulated by any external force. The Lord's sovereignty will win the day! The

church will be rescued to heavenly reward and the Jesus Christ will be glorified.

Christ is returning to rapture His church, and He does not tell us when, but simply to be ready! Acts 1:7, Jesus *said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.*

(cf. Mat 24:6; 25:13; 1Th 5:1-2 regarding the unknown time of Christ's 2nd coming)

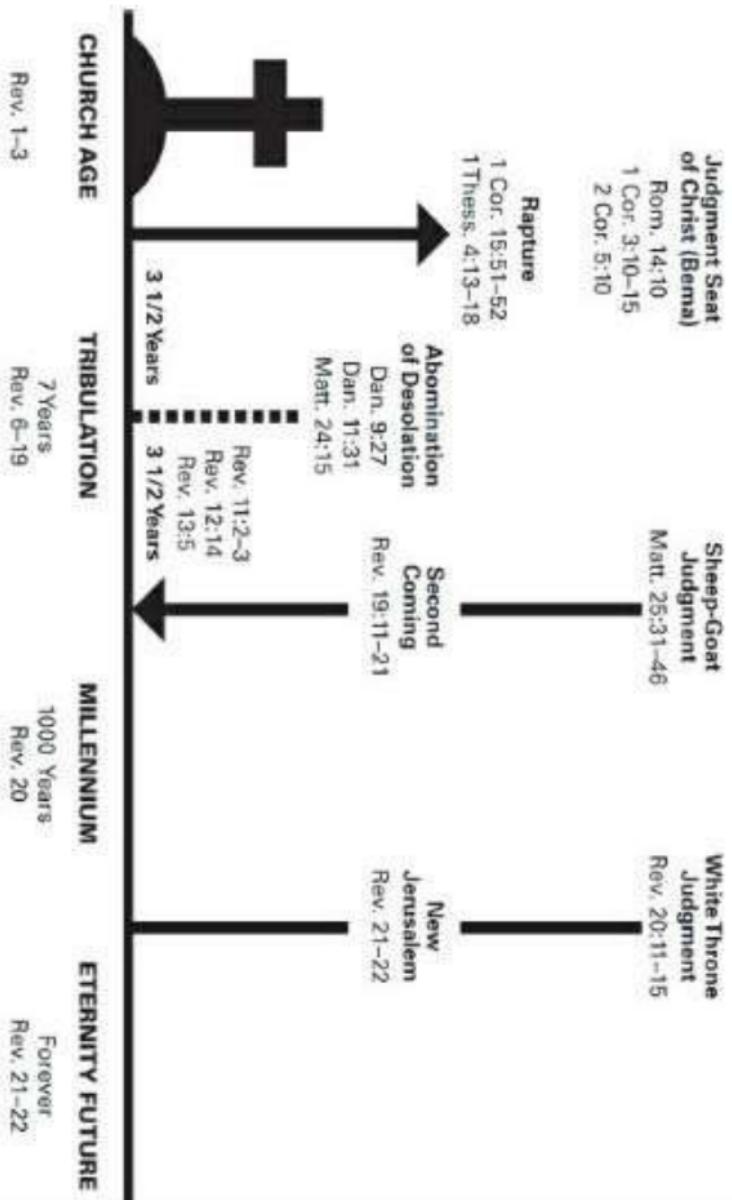
Parallels between 1Th 4:13-17 and John 14:1-3

1Th 4:13-18	John 14:1-3
:13 Sorrow	:1 Trouble
:14 Believe	:1 Believe
:14 Jesus - God	:1 God - Jesus
:15 Say to you	:2 Told you
:15 Coming of the Lord	:3 Come again
:17 Caught up	:3 Receive you
:17 To meet the Lord	:3 To myself
:17 Ever be with the Lord	:3 Be where I am

Both these passages are speaking of the same event, with the same participants. Both speak of Jesus' promised rapture.

A time-line chart

FUTURISTIC PREMILLENNIALISM



Taken from Richard Mayhue, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Christian Focus, 1999.