

END TIMES

(A study given by Pastor Wayne Pratt in Houston from 11/30/06 – 12/3/06)

IV. THE RAPTURE

- A. A mystery - Paul referred to the Rapture as a “*mystery*” (1 Cor. 15:51-54), meaning it was a new truth not known or understood previously.
- B. Saints are caught up alive to meet Christ in the air
1. The event where Christ (NOT angels) comes for the Church, instantly catching up living believers to meet Him in the air, and translates them into immortal bodies without experiencing physical death. Two partial examples of this mystery are seen in the Old Testament in the cases of Enoch and Elijah. They were both taken directly to heaven without experiencing death, but have not experienced the transformation in their bodies that will take place in the Rapture.
 2. The word “rapture” comes from a Latin translation of the Greek word *harpazo*, which is translated “caught up” in 1 Thess. 4:16. It literally means “to seize” or “to snatch away”
 3. “*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 forever.*” (1 Thess. 4:15-17).
- C. Sudden, secret, and **selective** – many will be taken by surprise, and many will be left behind:
1. “*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*” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
 2. “***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***” (Mat. 24:36-42).
 3. Only those watching and ready will be taken (Luke 17:34-36; Mat. 24:44-51; Heb. 9:28); God removed Noah and Lot before judgment came. There is a very high standard for those included in this group:
 - a. **Those who belonged totally to Christ – they are His Bride!** (1 Cor. 15:23)
 - b. **Christ was their life** (Col. 3:4)
 - c. Those who were **sanctified** through and through, their whole spirit, soul and body kept blameless until the coming of Christ (1 Thess. 3:12-13; 5:23)
 - d. Those who were holy, having no spot, blemish or wrinkle – the **Bride of Christ** (Eph. 5:25-27)
 - e. Those who will be presented **perfect in Christ** (Col. 1:28); NOTE: Why would Paul warn believers if everyone was automatically going in the Rapture?
 4. Mat. 7:13-14, 21-23: “***But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it... Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did***

*we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’
Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’ ”*

- D. The physical bodies of those who are caught up will be changed (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 3:18)
1. The kinds of transformations that will be experienced
 - a. The perishable body will become imperishable (1 Cor. 15:53)
 - b. The mortal body will become immortal (1 Cor. 15:53)
 - c. The dishonorable body will become glorious (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:43)
 - d. The weak body will become a powerful body (1 Cor. 15:43)
 - e. The natural body will become a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44)
 2. The resurrected body will be like that of Jesus
 - a. He had a body of “flesh and bones”; it could be seen and He could eat food (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:27)
 - b. He could vanish and change His physical appearance (John 20:19; Luke 24:31)
- E. The saints who are raptured will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards (2 Cor. 5:9-10; Heb. 9:27-28)
1. If we judge ourselves now, there will be no judgment later (1 Cor. 11:28-32)
 2. Judgment must begin now (1 Pet. 4:17-18)
 3. Endure chastenings (Heb. 12:5-11)
- F. Various honors and rewards will be given by Christ. Many expressions are used in God’s Word to describe them (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:11-12)
1. Crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:7-8)
 2. Crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:2-4)
 3. Crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 1:14)
 4. Crown of life (Rev. 2:10)
 5. An incorruptible crown that will last forever (1 Cor. 9:24-25)
- G. Jesus taught that the Rapture will be an escape from the Great Tribulation: *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and **that day** [the Day of the Lord, the Great Tribulation] **will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man”*** (Luke 21:34-36).