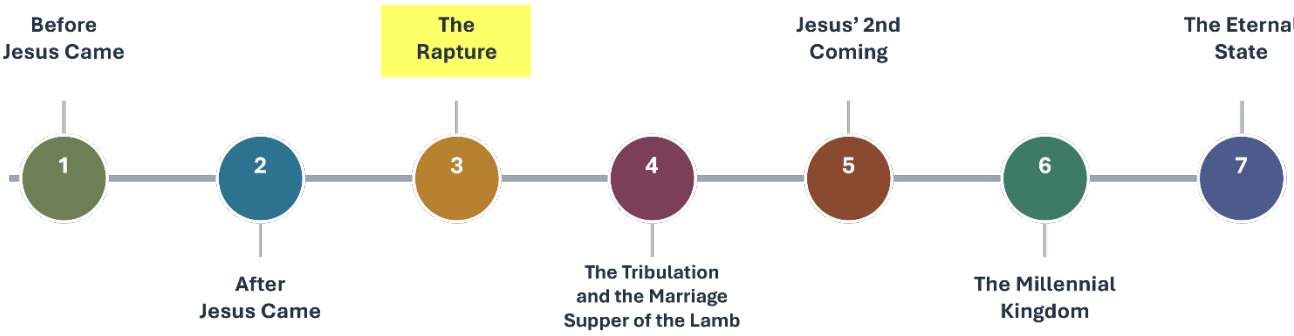
Topical Study: Heaven (message #7)



We have finally made it to our last teaching on the rapture in this series (although next week we will begin with what happens to those who come to Jesus during the tribulation before moving on to the millennial kingdom). Today we are going to do something a little different. We have been examining the glorious scene which we will be brought into on the day of the rapture by looking through Rev. 4–5. And in this section (beginning in study #3 of this series), we've looked at a few pieces which make it fairly certain only a pretribulation rapture makes sense. But now we will look at a few of the other pieces which are relevant to this discussion, in addition to what we have already covered (don't worry if you can't remember all of it. Just take in what you can and know there is great reason to believe Jesus is coming to take us home). Before we go there, let's do a quick refresher of some of the pieces already covered in studies 3–6 that speak to a pretribulation rapture.

- After mentioning the church 19 times in the first three chapters of Revelation, the church is not mentioned again after the introduction of the scene in heaven which began in Rev. 4. Then when Jesus returns at His second coming in Ch. 19, we are thereafter identified as 1) "*the bride*" (19:7), 2) "*priests of God*" (20:6), 3) "*His people*" (21:3), 4) "*My son*" (21:7), 5) and His "*servants*" who "*see His face*" (22:3–4). I think that's pretty telling that we will be with Him before the tribulation begins.
- Then 1 Thes. 4:16–17 makes it clear when Jesus comes for the church, He will not come all the way down to the earth but will rather call us to meet Him *in the air*. Opposed to at His second coming when He will stand on the Mt. of Olives, which will then split in two (Zech. 14:4). To be fair, this speaks of the rapture but not specifically of the timing. But those who hold a no-rapture view have a lot of scripture to allegorize, spiritualize, and simply explain away.
- Next, Dan. 9:24–27 speaks of a seven-year period where Israel will be reinstated as God's timepiece and tool for evangelism. Which happens to be the exact length of the tribulation. This is because the church age is over and we are no longer here (we will cover this in more depth today).
- Then we discovered the 24 elders found in Rev. 4–5 represent all believers in heaven, *from every tribe and tongue and people and nation* (5:9), before any of the judgments of God begin upon the earth (the seven seal judgments being the first, starting immediately in 6:1).
- And 1 Thes. 5:9 told us God has not appointed us for wrath (something we will also dig into deeper today).

Even if we had nothing else to add to these pieces we've already covered lightly in this series (found directly in the Bible), I don't know how one could justify, or why they would want to dismiss these, or somehow explain these away. But before we continue, just as when we started this section on the rapture, I want to reiterate that if you have a different opinion on this topic, it does not immediately mean we need to be hostile towards one another. And I am certainly not questioning someone's salvation over this issue. Salvation comes by faith in Jesus, not in a pretribulation rapture. But I sure do believe the rapture is biblical and a source of the great hope God has given us (1 Thes. 4:18, Titus 2:13). Therefore, it is my desire to strengthen your hope in that coming day, during this study.

When did the teaching of the rapture begin?

Many who have a view other than the pretribulation rapture state that a gentleman named John Nelson Darby invented the idea. But since he wasn't born until 1800, and the Bible speaks of it clearly, I think we can certainly say no to that idea. The church as a larger entity on earth has plenty of issues which began most prominently with the second generation after Jesus' ascension.

- The church (with great influence of Roman Catholicism—because Rome was ruling and influencing) was expanding more quickly, but not always in a healthy way. And the grip of the Roman Catholic Church really didn't begin to dissipate until the Protestant Reformation (Martin Luther in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, and John Calvin in France) which can be generally dated back to 1415 (although it was John Wycliffe in 1382 who made the Bible available to the common person after the Catholic Church, at the Council of Toulouse in France in 1229, forbade anyone who was not a priest from owning a translation of the Bible or any part of it).

- So, to say that Darby 1) invented something clearly taught roughly 1,800 years before his birth, along with 2) the obvious evidence the Catholic Church had, through book burnings, fines, imprisonment, and executions, 3) kept the common people from having the Bible in their own hands and in understandable languages, should be considered in this claim.

- Darby, like many others, just happened to get the entirety of the Bible from the reformers' work, and began to peel back what religious leaders didn't want the common people to have—**liberty in a personal relationship with Jesus!** But he in no way invented something taught by Jesus, the apostle Paul, the apostle John, and others. He simply got to see all God provided (which many before him did not have the privilege of), making it possible to share with others what God has revealed to all of us 1,800-plus years before. So you can just dismiss that nonsensical argument.

Many have also said the Bible never uses the word rapture, which is true, because the Bible wasn't translated from English, but into it. This is why we have to explain which kind of "*love*" we're talking about in the English, and work through words like *Sheol* and *Hades* (refer to study #1 for more info here). But in Greek and Latin (written by Jerome in the 4th century), **it does** (1 Thes. 4:17, Rev. 12:5, 2 Cor. 12:4).

- *Harpazo* (in the Greek) and *rapturo* or *rapio* (in the Latin) mean "to seize" or "snatch away" quickly. The very meaning of the English word rapture. So, yes, the Bible does specifically use words which translate as rapture, but in the language of the translations we used to get our English versions. To say it does not is absolutely false. So you can dismiss this argument also.

And we have plenty of Bible verses which speak about the rapture, because it's not a new concept. And if you use the gift of deductive reasoning, we can consistently see the logical reality of the rapture. For example, 1 Thes. 4:13–17 tells us the church will be caught up. But since Rev. 19 tells us we will be coming with Jesus at His second coming, are we like yo-yos that will pop upward to immediately return back?

- We also have Bible verses which demonstrate being taken without death. For example, Enoch in Gen. 5:24 and Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11. This is called proof of concept in our modern terms.

- And we have other Bible verses which picture it (because, as we have discussed many times, the Bible gives pictures, illustrations, and foreshadowing of the main events to come). 1) One which we already covered is the absence of the church from Rev. 6–19. 2) Another such powerful foreshadowing is found in Noah, his relationship with God, and how God then sheltered him from God's coming wrath upon the world. 1) Noah believed God (Gen. 6:22), 2) grace saved him (Gen. 6:8), 3) and the Lord shut them in the ark to shelter them from His wrath which He was pouring out on the world (Gen. 7:16).

- And in case you think that is a reach, let's read the words of Jesus in Luke 17:26–30. *"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: **27** They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. **28*** (in case that wasn't enough, God provides a second foreshadowing event) *Likewise*

as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; [29] *but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.* [30] ***Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed*** (emphasis added)*."* What is Jesus saying here? Just as God sheltered His people from His wrath before the flood and before the destruction of Sodom, God will shelter His people from the wrath to come in the tribulation. When Jesus said this, He had obviously already come in the flesh. So, using deductive reasoning, this must be speaking about Him coming again, this time in the clouds for His people. We know this is the case because 1) the next event after the rapture is the millennial kingdom. 2) And these verses obviously do not fit the time of the millennial kingdom, 3) because as we have seen in Rev. 5, the wrath of God begins with the opening of the first seal in the tribulation.

As we've discussed in the last teaching in this series, God's people are delivered **before** His wrath is poured out on the earth. 1) As we read in 1 Thes. 5:9 *God did not appoint us to wrath*. 2) That's not a one-off, for Rom. 5:9 also tells us, *"…having now been justified by His blood,* ***we shall be saved from wrath through Him****."* And 3) in Rev. 3:10 (Jesus speaking to the last generation of the church) says, *"I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth* (which by the way also speaks to the fact that salvation will be occurring during the tribulation… And is the subject we will come to after the rapture)*."*

- And all of this is possible because of what Jesus endured in our place. Rom. 5:9 says to us, *"Much more then, having now been justified* (just as if I had never sinned) *by His* (Jesus') *blood,* ***we shall be saved from wrath through Him****."* So if our sin has been wiped away like it never happened, why would we endure God's wrath? Not only is it illogical (requiring a suspension of deductive reasoning), it's unbiblical.
- Folks, Jesus paid it all. And all means all. Rom. 8:1 tells us, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."* Do you believe everything we have just covered? It's right from the word of God. But some believe they still need to experience at least a portion of God's wrath (which is different than the wrath of man), even though Jesus bore all of God's righteous wrath upon Himself.
- The Bible clearly teaches 1) God will pour out His wrath right from the beginning of the tribulation, 2) and our God has not appointed us for that, 3) because Jesus became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). And you becoming the righteousness of God is past tense the minute you put your faith in Jesus! Therefore it must be a pretribulation rapture.

Reasons I believe it cannot be mid- or post-trib.

First, Jesus says to us, regarding His return, in Matt. 24:36–37, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.* [37] *But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."* Yet God has given us some very specific numbers of days, months and seasons (these being tied to prophecy). So, what coming of Jesus are we talking about here? Remembering this is written some 90 years after Jesus' first coming (so it can't be that one)? Here are the key verses which I believe make this point crystal clear. So, let's do some more deductive reasoning.

1. In Rev. 11–13 we are given some specific time stamps. And we must remember the math is not done by the 365 days in a year we have now. Both the books of Daniel and Revelation (specific to our subject in many places) were written when a year was calculated at **360 days**. With that in mind, consider the following. Rev. 11:2 tells us the *Gentiles…will tread the holy city* (Jerusalem) *underfoot for forty-two months*. And the next verse tells us God will give power to His two witnesses (Moses and Elijah), and *they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days…* (11:3). And both of these equal exactly 3½ years. Those seem like pretty specific and trackable numbers. And verses 7–14 tell us this is the first 3½ years of the seven-year tribulation.

2. Then you come to Rev. 12:6 regarding God hiding Israel away in what we believe is Petra (modern-day Jordan), during the second half of the tribulation. And we are told, *"…she* (Israel) *has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days* (also 3½ years)*."* And just to make sure we know He is talking about a specific number of days, He gives us a third way now to make this calculation. For in 12:14 He uses *time and times and half a time* also. This is not a common way of calculating for us. But it clearly equaled 3½ years to the audience of that day. Not enough? Go to 13:5 and it lists the time that antichrist will have to blaspheme God in the 2nd half of the tribulation as *forty-two months* (3½ years) also.
3. And He tells us this begins at the midpoint of the tribulation, as God pours out the last of three *woes* on earth (11:14 & 12:12). Meaning the first two woes of God's wrath happened in the first half of the tribulation—something we are not appointed to.
4. Another way to know this now refers to the second half of the tribulation is through deductive reasoning. Simply ask yourself if God would protect Israel for the first half of the tribulation and then take them out of His protection before the danger was over (meaning there was another 3½ years to go)?
5. And just in case this is not enough to conclude these are specific dates and not allegorical or symbolic, Daniel also speaks of these same periods of time at the end while adding days for what we believe are the final judgments and the refurbishing of the earth for the millennium (Dan. 7:25, 12:7, 12:11–12).

Now let me tie this all together with the main point being made here. If *no one knows…the day or hour*, but we know the starting point of the tribulation (found in Dan. 9:27—being a covenant that shall last for seven years), and we know the exact number of days from the time antichrist steps into the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, until the second coming of Jesus, wouldn't that mean that absolutely everyone would know the day with 100% certainty? And if that is the case, then couldn't this only be speaking of something **before** the second coming of Jesus, described for us in Rev. 19? Yes! And that is His coming in the clouds to call us up at the event called the rapture!!!

Now keep in mind these same scriptures and calculations found in them and add to it that 1) during the first half of the tribulation, in addition to the two very Jewish faithful witnesses Moses and Elijah, there will be 144,000 sealed servants of God preaching to all the world. 2) Then take Rev. 7:3–8 and 14:4 which tell us these 144,000 are also 100% Jewish, being all virgin men, who will be taken into heaven at the midpoint of the tribulation, 3) and replaced by three angels who will take over the work of evangelism for the last 3½ years (Rev. 14:6–12).

Again, you might say, "Very interesting, but what is the point?" The point is if you have 144,002 very Jewish witnesses spreading the gospel in the first half of the tribulation, and three angels in the second half taking over their work, where is the church and what are we doing then? There is no mention of us here on earth then, in any part of the Bible, yet we are told we will be ruling and reigning as servants of God during the millennial kingdom (2 Tim. 2:11–12, Dan. 7:18, 22, & 27, Rev. 5:9–10, 1 Cor. 6:2–3). The answer—**in heaven**.

- I think it's fairly simple deduction. Especially when you take everything we have covered as a whole. Which is what we should do. And I have not covered all we could on this subject because this was more than enough in one study.

I hope this has been helpful and informative for you today. I know it is not nearly as fun as getting to hear what John saw when he was invited into the scene of the church entering the presence of God in the rapture. 😊

- But since we are to be comforting one another with this hope (as 1 Thes. 5:11 tells us), and the rapture of the church is a place many find themselves questioning (or at least not committing to), I really hope this restored your hope. Or strengthened your defense of the hope that is in you (1 Pet. 3:15) pertaining to what I believe is a very hope-producing part of God's plan for you.
- I can find ways my understanding of what God's plans are for His people does that every day: 1) the day the country I live in votes in a way I think will damage it greatly, 2) on the days when people I love are hurting or dying, 3) on the days when things are just more stressful or frustrating than I want them to be (because we live in a fallen world in which really hard and terrible things can happen).
- Every single day I have and continue to focus on the reality that at any moment God could take all of us up to be with Him just simply overshadows everything else. And knowing His plan is to shelter His children from the wrath that must come provides real and lasting hope. Don't let anyone steal that from you. And share it with whoever you can. The whole world needs that hope right now. And we have it, because Jesus has us. Do you have Him?

CROSS REFERENCES

Rev 19:7 NKJV – "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Rev 20:6 NKJV – Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Rev 21:3 NKJV – And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Rev 21:7 NKJV – "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Rev 22:3–4 NKJV – (3) And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. (4) They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

1Th 4:13–17 NKJV – (13) 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. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. (15) 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. (16) 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. (17) 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.

Zec 14:4 NKJV – And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.

Dan 9:24–27 NKJV – (24) "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. (25) "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. (26) "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. (27) Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

Rev 5:9–10 NKJV – And they sang a new song, saying: "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, (10) And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Rev 6:1 NKJV – Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."

1Th 5:9 NKJV – For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

1Th 4:18 NKJV – Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Tit 2:13 NKJV – looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Rev 12:5 NKJV – She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

2Co 12:4 NKJV – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Gen 5:24 NKJV – And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

2Ki 2:11 NKJV – Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Gen 6:22 NKJV – Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

Gen 6:8 NKJV – But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Gen 7:16 NKJV – So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

2Co 5:21 NKJV – For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Rev 11:2 NKJV – "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

Rev 11:3 NKJV – "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Rev 12:14 NKJV – But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

Rev 13:5 NKJV – And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

Rev 11:14 NKJV – The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

Rev 12:12 NKJV – "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Dan 7:25 NKJV – He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.

Dan 12:7 NKJV – Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

Dan 12:11–12 NKJV – (11) "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. (12) "Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

Rev 7:3–8 NKJV – (3) saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." (4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: (5) of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; (6) of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; (7) of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; (8) of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.

Rev 14:4 NKJV – These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Rev 14:6–12 NKJV – (6) Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- (7) saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." (8) And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." (9) Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, (10) "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. (11) "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (12) Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

2Ti 2:11–12 NKJV – (11) This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. (12) If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

Dan 7:18 NKJV – 'But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'

Dan 7:22 NKJV – "until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

Dan 7:27 NKJV – Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'

1Co 6:2–3 NKJV – (2) Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (3) Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

1Th 5:11 NKJV – Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

1Pe 3:15 NKJV – But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;