

What is “The Rapture?”

The most well-known scripture text where we get the word “Rapture” is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

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. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The key word is in verse _____. Circle the English words from the translation above that represent our key Greek word that Paul would have originally wrote in this letter to the Thessalonians.

The words in English are “ _____ ” or “ _____ ”

The Greek word that this translates is “*harpazo*” which in Latin is translated “*Raptus*” —
→ This is where we get our word “Rapture.”

Why should we believe in a Rapture?

There are several important themes in scripture that lead to the concept of the Rapture happening separate from the 2nd coming in Revelation 19. (Or, as a first part of a two-part coming, part before the Tribulation (to receive the church) and part at the end of the Tribulation (to judge the earth)).

Here are the reasons to believe in a rapture, and to believe that it happens before a seven-year period known as “The Tribulation.”

1. Old Testament Prophecies that haven’t been fulfilled.
 - A. Old Testament Prophecies about God’s future dealing with the nation of Israel
 - B. Prophecies about future dealing with the gentile nations
 - C. Possible OT references to the Rapture
 - D. Types and Symbols that seem to point to the Rapture in the Old Testament
2. New Testament Passages that describe the Church and its future.
 - A. The Church will be received to Christ in the Air
 - B. The Church will not be subjected to God’s divine Wrath on sin
 - C. The Coming of Christ for His church is Imminent (it could happen at any time)

1. **OT Prophecies that haven't been fulfilled.** Looking at the many prophecies that *have* been fulfilled, and *how* they have been fulfilled (literally), leads to the belief that the rest of the prophecies still need to happen.

A. Old Testament Prophecies about God's future dealing with the nation of Israel

The "Seventieth Week" of Daniel

Daniel 9:24-27

24. **Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city**, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25. Know therefore and understand, **that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks**: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26. **And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off**, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for **one week**: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Who does the prophecy about these "weeks" refer to (verse 24) _____

- What is the purpose of the weeks? 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____

How is the whole "Seventy weeks" divided up? _____

The final "week" of years (7 years) is what we usually refer to as "the Tribulation."

In Daniel 9, when does this week happen? _____

In Daniel and Revelation, the second half of this 7-year period is referred to several times. This occurs after "the middle of the week" in Daniel 7:27. It is called "Times, Time & Half a Time" in Daniel 7:25, Daniel 12:7, and Revelation 12:14, and "1260 Days" in Revelation 11:3 and Revelation 12:6 (this is 3 1/2 years figuring by a 360-day year (the way biblical prophecy figures)). Sometimes this is referred to specifically as "The Great Tribulation." It is also often called "The Day of the Lord."

Other OT references to this time of Tribulation for Israel:

Jeremiah 30

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²"Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: 'Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. ³For behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the LORD. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'" ⁴Now these *are* the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. ⁵"For thus says the LORD: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, Of fear, and not of peace. ⁶Ask now, and see, Whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man *with* his hands on his loins Like

a woman in labor, And all faces turned pale? ⁷ Alas! For that day *is* great, So that none *is* like it; And it *is* the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it...

¹⁰ 'Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, And no one shall make *him* afraid. ¹¹ For I *am* with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, And will not let you go altogether unpunished.'

Ezekiel 20

³³ "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. ³⁴ I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. ³⁵ And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. ³⁶ Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord GOD. ³⁷ "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸ I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I *am* the LORD."

Daniel 12

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. ⁶ And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be*?" ⁷ 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. ⁸ Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?" ⁹ And he said, "Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. 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. ¹³ "But you, go *your way* till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

B. Prophecies about future dealing with the unbelieving gentile nations:

Malachi 4

¹ "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch."

Amos 5

¹⁸ Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good *is* the day of the LORD to you? It *will be* darkness, and not light. ¹⁹ It *will be* as though a man fled from a lion, And a bear met him! Or *as though* he went into the house, Leaned his hand on the wall, And a serpent bit him! ²⁰ *Is* not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light? *Is it not* very dark, with no brightness in it?

Joel 2

³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ³² And it shall come to pass *That* whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls."

Zephaniah 1

¹⁴ The great day of the LORD *is* near; *It is* near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. ¹⁵ That day *is* a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶ A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers. ¹⁷ "I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the LORD; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like

refuse." ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.

Zephaniah 3

⁸ "Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination *is* to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy.

C. Possible OT references to the Rapture**Isaiah 26:19-21**

...Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. ²⁰. Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. ²¹. For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

Zephaniah 2:3

Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

Psalms 27:5

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

D. Types and Symbols that seem to point to the Rapture in the Old Testament**1. Enoch & Noah (Genesis 5-8)**

Enoch was "translated" to heaven (a type of the church), then Noah was preserved through the flood (a type of Israel in the Tribulation).

2. Lot in Sodom (Genesis 19)

The angels could not execute God's wrath on the evil people in Sodom until the small group of righteous people (Lot and his daughters) were removed.

3. Daniel & the Three Friends (Daniel 3)

Daniel's three friends are preserved through the fiery furnace (a type of Israel in the tribulation), but Daniel is nowhere to be found in the passage (a type of the church).

2. New Testament Passages that describe the Church and its future.**A. The Church will be received to Christ in the air, and we will all be transformed to be like Christ.****John 14:1-3**

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ². In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

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. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "*Death is swallowed up in victory.*" ⁵⁵ "*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, 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.

B. The Church will not be subjected to God's divine wrath on sin**1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

¹ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ⁴ But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. ⁸ But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ¹¹ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

C. The Coming of Christ for His church is Imminent (it could happen at any time)

The New Testament clearly teaches in many places that every believer is to be eagerly waiting for the return of Christ. We are not necessarily to look for *signs*, but for *Him*. There is nothing in any Bible prophecy that must happen before Christ may come back.

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ

James 5:8-9

Be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 John 3:2

When He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Revelation 22:17, 20

And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come'...He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

Conclusions

1. The Bible states that a 7-year period is still to come, in which God will deal directly with Israel as a nation (to judge and purify them) and pour out divine wrath and judgment on unbelieving humanity.
2. The New Testament states clearly that there is no wrath from God for the church, and that believers will be gathered together with Jesus to be with Him when He comes.
4. The New Testament teaches that Christ could come at any time.
3. Since the future 7-year period has to do with Israel, and not the church, and is a time when God pours out divine wrath, which the church will never face, a reasonable conclusion is that passages such as John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 & 5:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 1 Corinthians 15:51, and Revelation 3:10 refer to the removal of the church before this time of tribulation, which can happen at any time, and which we refer to as the Rapture of the Church.

Where “*harpazo*” is used in the NT: (Bold words indicate translation of the word *harpazo*)

Definition: 1) to seize, carry off by force 2) to seize on, claim for one's self eagerly, 3) to snatch out or away

Matthew 11:12

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent **take it by force** (“*harpazo*”)."

Mt 13:19

"When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and **catcheth away** (“*harpazo*”) that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received Seed by the way side."

John 6:15

"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and **take Him by force** (“*harpazo*”), to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone."

John 10:12

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf **catcheth** (“*harpazo*”) them, and scattereth the sheep."

John 10:28 & 29

"And I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* **pluck** (“*harpazo*”) them out of My hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to **pluck** (“*harpazo*”) *them* out of My Father's hand."

Acts 8:39

"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the LORD **caught away** (“*harpazo*”) Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Acts 23:10

"And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to **take him by force** (“*harpazo*”) from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle."

2 Corinthians 12:2

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one **caught up** (“*harpazo*”) to the Third Heaven."

2 Corinthians 12:4

"How that he was **caught up** (“*harpazo*”) into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

1 Thessalonians 4:17

"Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up** (“*harpazo*”) together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD."

Jude 1:23

"And others save with fear, **pulling** (“*harpazo*”) *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

Revelation 12:5

"And she brought forth a Man Child, Who was to rule all nations with a Rod of Iron: and her Child was **caught up** (“*harpazo*”) unto God, and to His Throne."

