

Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church

Definition.

1. While the Rapture is defined as the act of being transported, it is also defined as the state of being rapt or transported into heaven. Rapture is used here in a technical theological sense for the resurrection of the royal family of God.¹
2. Since the Church or royal family of God is the first spiritual building to be completed, it is resurrected after our Lord. It is the second phase of the first resurrection following the resurrection of Christ.
3. Christ is resurrected, ascended, and seated at the right hand of the Father as part of the strategic victory of the angelic conflict.
4. This is known as our Lord's battlefield royalty. This is His only royalty with no family. Therefore, God interrupted the Jewish Age with the Church Age to call out and provide a royal family of God.
5. Once the royal family of God is completed, the Church is resurrected as the body of Christ to become the bride of Christ.
6. The Church Age is that period of human history when the royal family of God is being formed on earth, Ephesians 1:22–23, 2:16, 4:4–5; Colossians 1:18, 24, 2:19. When the royal family of God is completed, then the Rapture occurs, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18; 1 Corinthians 15:51–58.
7. During the conclusion of the Jewish Age, the bride is prepared in heaven by receiving a resurrection body exactly like that of the Lord. Then comes the Big Genuflect and acknowledgment of Christ. Then comes the Judgment Seat of Christ when all Church Age believers are evaluated and rewarded.

B. The Promise of the Rapture:

John 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God, believe also in Me.

v. 2 There are many dwelling places in My Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you.

v. 3 And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with Me, so that where I am you may be too. (NET)²

¹ “Rapture: The final assumption of Christians into heaven according to Christian theology.” (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, eleventh edition [Springfield, Mass., Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014], 1031.

² Observe footnotes on these three verses in *The NET Bible*: **sn 7 & tn 8 in v. 1**; **tn 9, sn 10, & tc & tn 11 on pp. 2073-74**; and **tns 1 & 2 in v. 2**; and **tns 3, 4, & 5 in v. 3**. (For abbreviations see: *NET Bible* Translators' Note Types on page B.)



C. The Imminency of the Rapture.

1. Imminency means impending or threatening to occur. It does not mean immediately.
2. Rapture is used technically for the fact that no prophecy must be fulfilled before the Rapture occurs. The Rapture will occur when the last member of the body of Christ is saved.
3. The Church Age is the only dispensation in which there are historical trends and no prophecy. The Church Age began with an event prophesied--the baptism of the Spirit. Our Lord prophesied this in the Upper Room Discourse and just before He ascended. The Church Age terminates with the Rapture, which was also prophesied. There is no prophecy between these two events. This is the dispensation of the mystery doctrine.
4. No prophecy between the baptism of the Spirit and the Rapture means that the Rapture is imminent. It could occur at any time; no one knows the day or the hour.
5. The resurrection of the Church, like our dying, is completely out of our control. Just as we have no control over the time and manner of our death, so we have no control over the time and manner of the Rapture.
6. The resurrection of the Church is totally beyond our control because resurrection is the Lord's victory.

1 Corinthians 15:57 Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)

7. While the Rapture is imminent, the Second Advent is not. Before the Second Advent occurs, there are many prophecies which must occur, e.g., the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Judgment Seat of Christ. (Revelation 6–19)
8. The Rapture could have occurred at the time of James or Paul because no prophecy had to be fulfilled before the resurrection occurs.
9. Distortion of the imminency of the Rapture results in instability and foolish explanation or speculation about the time of the Rapture; hence, James gives us an admonition in:

James 5:7 Therefore, brethren, have patience until the coming of the Lord [**Rapture**]. The farmer waits with anticipation for the valuable production of the soil, constantly being patient until it has received the early and the latter rains.

James 5:8 Have patience; all of you become stabilized in your hearts because the coming of the Lord [**Rapture**] has approached with the result that it is drawing nearer and nearer. (EXT)



- a. To have patience means to apply what you know. Patience is a system of thinking Bible doctrine, a system of concentration, the application of doctrine to experience. In effect, that application says, “As long as I am alive, I have control over my life. I can, by positive volition, execute the protocol plan of God or, by negative volition, be a cosmic believer and be my own worst enemy.”
 - b. The farmer invests by sowing seed. He must break up the soil and sow the seed, then he must wait. There is nothing he can do while waiting; the seed will either come up or not. Either he will have production, or he will not. In the time of this writing, that depended upon the soil and the rains. The farmer did not have control over those elements.
 - c. Verse 8 goes on to tell us how to have patience. You cannot have patience without a stabilized mentality.
 - d. “Drawing nearer” means to be approaching. Every day in the Church Age, the Rapture draws closer. Every day that the Rapture approaches, you still have control over your life as long as you live. You have control in the sense that you can be a winner or a loser.
10. Because there was no unfulfilled prophecy before the Rapture could occur, the early church anticipated the Rapture under the concept of imminency:

1 Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

v. 5 that in everything you were [the culminative aorist passive indicative of the verb, *πλουτίζω* (*ploutízō*)]: enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

v. 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you,

v. 7 so that you are not lacking in any [spiritual] gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ [Rapture],

v. 8 Who will also confirm you to the end [of the Church Age], blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)

- a. The Corinthian church was made up of losers, yet Paul thanked God concerning them because they were the beneficiaries of phenomenal grace, were in union with Christ, and most of all, were “enriched in Him.”



- b. Each had: a portfolio of invisible assets, his very own palace—the operational divine dynasphere, the indwelling of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the 100% available divine omnipotence of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
 - c. Enrichment in the Christian life is not measured in terms of work and Christian service, but in terms of doctrine and knowledge. Yet most of the Corinthian believers rejected that doctrine.
 - d. To be “strengthened to the end” refers, not to the end of their lives, but to the end of the Church Age. Since they died before then, what does this mean? Every believer has equal privilege and equal opportunity to execute the protocol plan of God.
 - e. But it cannot be executed in human power, dynamics, energy, works, or personality; it is executed in that knowledge of doctrine and in the omnipotence of God the Father, in the omnipotence of Jesus Christ, and in the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit.
 - f. The omnipotence of Jesus Christ personally preserves history and perpetuates it, and so guarantees that the Church Age will run its course.
 - g. In a resurrection body, you will be “blameless” forever.
11. While the Rapture is imminent, no one really knows when it will occur. In the meantime, the royal family of God lives in this dispensation of historical trends, Revelation 2–3.
12. Three times in Revelation 22 is the phrase, “I am coming soon”:
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|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Revelation 22:7 | “Behold, I am coming quickly.” |
| Revelation 22:12 | “Behold, I am coming quickly ...” |
| Revelation 22:20 | “Yes, I am coming quickly.” (NASB) |
13. Remember that, to the Lord, a day is a thousand years and a thousand years as a day.³ This statement was written by John in A.D. 95, and this is now A.D. 2023. Therefore, “soon” connotes imminency, not immediacy.
14. The Rapture of the Church is the next prophetic event to occur in history.
- Titus 2:13** ... as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing [**Rapture**] of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (NET)

³ Compare 2 Peter 3:8 with Moses in: Psalm 90:4: Do not let this one thing escape your notice, that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day. (see 2 Peter 3:8). For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night (see Psalm 90:4). (NASB)



- a. How do you wait with keen anticipation? You wait through thinking; you wait with patience, which is the application of doctrine. You know the Rapture is coming. It may not occur in your lifetime, but you still know it is coming. In this way you apply doctrine, are occupied with the person of Jesus Christ, utilize +H, virtue-love, hope 2 and hope 3, so that you have a wonderful life and death.
 - b. *Sic transit gloria mundi*: “Thus passes away the glory of this world” because it is based on the achievement of man, on visible heroes. But we are called to become invisible heroes by advancing to spiritual maturity.
 - c. Jesus Christ is the glory, the resurrection, and the life.
15. The imminency of the Rapture is a doctrine for mature believers only. A mature believer is eager for the Rapture to occur. He is so occupied with Christ that he looks for the Rapture.
 16. Only the Trinity knows when the Rapture is going to occur.

D. The Power of Resurrection.

1. The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the same power that resurrects each of us at the Rapture or resurrection of the Church.
2. Both the great power experiment of the Hypostatic Union and the great power experiment of the Church Age terminate in resurrection. Our Lord’s resurrection at the end of the great power experiment of the Hypostatic Union was the first resurrection in history.
3. The Rapture of the Church is the first mass resurrection, when all Church Age believers receive their resurrection bodies.
4. Between the first two resurrections in history is the unique Church Age, the time when maximum divine power is available to every believer.

1 Corinthians 6:14 Now God indeed raised the Lord, and He will raise us by His power. (NET)

- a. The omnipotence of God the Father restored our Lord’s human spirit in heaven to His body in the grave and thereby became an agent in the resurrection of the humanity of His body in the grave and thereby became an agent in the resurrection of the humanity of Jesus Christ:

Acts 2:24 “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” (NASB)



Romans 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (NASB)

1 Corinthians 6:14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

Colossians 2:21 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

v. 13 “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”

1 Peter 1:20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

v. 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (NASB)

- b. The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit restored our Lord’s human soul in Hades to His body in the grave and thereby became an agent in the resurrection of the humanity of Jesus Christ:

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (NASB)

- c. Because the great power experiment of the Hypostatic Union has been extended into the Church Age, the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is now available to every Church Age believer.
5. After His physical death, our Lord’s human spirit went to the third heaven into the presence of God the Father. His human soul went to Hades. His body went into the grave. Three days and nights later, the omnipotence of God the Father restored His human spirit to His body, the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit restored His soul to His body, and He received His resurrection body.
6. The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is not only the same power that will raise us from the dead, but in addition, it is the power made available to us today.



7. The omnipotence of God the Father is available to you through your very own portfolio of invisible assets. The omnipotence of Jesus Christ is available to you, for He daily preserves and perpetuates human history. The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit is available to you inside the divine dynasphere.
8. Because the great power experiment of the Hypostatic Union has been extended into the Church Age, the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is now available to you. But that requires post-salvation epistemological rehabilitation.

E. Scriptural Documentation.

1 John 3:2 (Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed, we will be like Him, because we will see him just as He is.

v. 3 And everyone who has this hope focused on Him purifies himself [in the divine dynasphere] just as Jesus is pure [ultimate sanctification in a resurrection body].” (NET)

Titus 2:13 ... as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope [the hope of blessings of eternal reward: hope 3] in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior [hypostatic union], Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but He will raise us up through His power. (NASB)

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

- (1) The worst thing that can happen to you is to be ignorant of Bible doctrine.
- (2) The Thessalonian believers were very confused. They had learned about the imminency of the Rapture. Yet people were dying before the Rapture occurred, causing them to conclude that those who died would not be included in the Rapture. Their ignorance led to distortion.
- (3) Being asleep is an analogy to the body sleeping in the grave, waiting for the resurrection. The unbeliever has no hope, for after death there is nothing for him but the Lake of Fire.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 If we believe that Jesus died and rose again [and we do], even so God [omnipotence] will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.



1 Thessalonians 4: 15 For this doctrine we communicate to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord [**Rapture**], will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

v. 16 For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” (NASB)

- (1) In the angelic order of battle, two archangels or army commanders of angels are mentioned in the Bible: Michael and Gabriel.
- (2) Since Michael is called the “prince of Israel” in Daniel 10:21 and seems to be associated with Israel in Daniel 12:1 and Jude 9, this must be a reference to the voice of the other archangel, the voice command of Gabriel.
- (3) Gabriel seems to be associated with the Church. He makes the announcement of the great power experiment of the Hypostatic Union in Luke 1:19, 26.
- (4) There were two sources of command for military activity in the ancient world: the voice command and the trumpet command. The trumpet command assembles the dead in Christ at the Rapture.
- (5) The omnipotence of God the Father raises the dead in Christ by replacing their former bodies of corruption with resurrection bodies of incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:53–54).

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them [**dead believers**] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.”

- (6) The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit provides a resurrection body for the living believers at the Rapture, replacing their bodies of mortality with resurrection bodies of immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53–54).

1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore, encourage one another with these words [**doctrines**]. (NASB)

- (7) These doctrines are a source of comfort when you have lost a loved one. These doctrines are a source of blessing as you face the adversities of life and realize that there’s something far beyond this life, and that God has given you an eternal state in a permanent body that will never experience pain or deterioration in any possible way.



Revelation 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on [grasp, become the master of] to what you have [Bible doctrine] so that no one can take away your crown. (NET)

- a. The present active imperative of the verb **κρατέω** (*kratéō*) tells you what you should be doing if the Rapture occurs. The word means: to seize, to grasp, to get possession of, and to become the master of something. You should be learning Bible doctrine consistently in preparation for the Rapture.
- b. Seizing, grasping, or becoming master of what you have is a reference to perception, cognition, and application of Bible doctrine on a consistent basis. This is how you prepare for the Rapture, as well as how you keep other people from distracting you from attaining your escrow blessings for eternity. Losers participate in the resurrection of the Church but lose their escrow blessings for eternity.

F. The Rapture and the Big Genuflect: Philippians 2:9–11.

Philippians 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

v.10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

v. 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NASB)

The entire royal family of God will identify Jesus Christ as the head of the family to the glory of the Father. The Church in resurrection body makes a formal acknowledgment of the Father's function in the resurrection, ascension, and session of Christ. The Big Genuflect occurs after the Rapture and before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

G. Characteristics of the Rapture.

1. Cognizance and application of the doctrine of the Rapture provides stability for the royal family in phase two of the plan of God, 1 Corinthians 15:58.
2. The Rapture takes the sting out of death. 1 Corinthians 15:54–57, “O death where is your victory, O death, where is your sting?”
3. The Rapture removes hysteria and the hopelessness of bereavement, 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14.
4. The Rapture is a source of comfort in time of bereavement, 1 Thessalonians 4:15–18; Philippians 1:6.

H. The Rapture is a part of ultimate sanctification, Ephesians 5:26–27.



The royal family of God is purified at the Rapture. Human good and evil are burned and the old sin nature is removed.

I. The Rapture is the basis for confidence.

1. The metabolization of doctrine and resultant growth to maturity results in occupation with Christ, whereby the believer waits with keen anticipation for the Rapture.
2. The Rapture is categorized under three kinds of hope:

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope [ζάω ἐλπίς (*záō elpís*): **living confidence**] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Titus 2:13 ... looking for that blessed hope [μακάριος (*makários*): **copacetic confidence**] and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus ...

1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope [**confidence**] fixed on Him [Jesus] purifies [ἀγνίζω (*hagnízō*): **purifying**] himself, just as He is pure. (NASB)

J. Chronology of the Rapture: Look these up!

1. The Rapture takes place, 1 Corinthians 15:51–58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.
2. The Big Genuflect occurs, Philippians 2:9–11.
3. The Judgment Seat of Christ [reconciliation], 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 5:10.
4. Bride returns with Christ at the Second Advent, 1 Thessalonians 3:13.
5. The manifestation of the Bride, Romans 8:19; Colossians 3:4.
6. Operation Footstool, Psalm 110:1; Zechariah 13:2; Colossians 2:15.
7. The Coronation of Christ, Revelation 19:6.
8. The Wedding Supper of the Lamb, Revelation 19:7–9.
9. The purpose of the Rapture is to get the royal family of God prepared for the Second Advent and the Wedding Supper.

K. The Rapture and Reward, Philippians 2:16.

Paul wants to have esprit de corps on the day of Christ as he sees his congregation rewarded. This esprit or “boasting” comes from the rewards that the royal family of God receive.

Philippians 2:16 ... by holding on to the word of life so that on the day of Christ [**the Rapture**] I will have a reason to boast that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain. (NET)

(End JAS5-15. See JAS5-16 for continuation of study at p. 151.)

