

# A Sneak Peak at the Rapture

## Introduction:

1. A couple had their first baby. The father had been assigned the dreaded task of changing his first dirty diaper. This father dreaded the task like the bubonic plague but he finally gritted his teeth, took the dirty diaper off the baby only to discover that it was only a little bit dirty. He breathed a huge sigh of relief and was kind of chuckling to himself when his wife walked into the room. She immediately sized up the situation and said, "If I were you, I wouldn't get too excited because that diaper is just a sneak peak of coming attractions."
2. We are seeing unrest in the Middle East
  - a. Unrest in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Iran
  - b. We are seeing unrest in our own country
  - c. Oil prices are steadily rising
3. People are wondering if the Lord return is soon
4. It is impossible, to pinpoint every detail of Bible prophecy
  - a. At best we only get a general view of the landscape
  - b. We make a mistake to think everything can be pinpointed
5. We don't know when these future events will take place
6. Years ago, one preacher said that Jesus would return to earth before 1980, and if he didn't he would quit the ministry. I don't know if he did, but he was wrong to set a date.
7. While we don't know every detail, we do know that Christ is coming back someday
8. Several years ago a preacher preaching on the radio brought a series of prophetic messages. He kept referring to the prophetic messages. One day a lady, recognizing him on the street, ran up to him and said, "Oh, Brother So and So, I really do enjoy those 'pathetic' messages you have been preaching on the radio. Prophetic messages turn into pathetic messages when the preacher sets a date for the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ or when he tries to identify the Antichrist etc.

## I. THE PROMISE OF THE RAPTURE

- There are 20x as many references in the OT to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ as there are to His 1<sup>st</sup> coming
- In all of Paul's epistles he refers to baptism only 13x while he speaks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming more than 50x
- One verse out of 30 in the NT speaks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
- There are 259 chapters in the NT and over 300 references to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

### A. Christ's Words – Jn 14:1-3

1 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. Among some of the last words that our Savior spoke before He left this world – He promised to come again
2. Great words of encouragement for sad disciples

### B. Angels' Words – Acts 1:9-11

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

- a) *Angels promised that Jesus would return just as He left*
- b) *He left visibly – He will return visibly*
- c) *He left in a body – He will return bodily*
- d) *He left from the Mount of Olives – He will return to the Mount of Olives*

### **C. Paul's Words – 1Thess 4:16**

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1. The Lord's return will be a personal return – "himself"
2. He will not send a representative in his place

### **D. John Quoted Jesus – Rev 16:15**

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

### **E. Luke Quoted Jesus – Lu 12:40**

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

### **F. Matthew Quoted Jesus – Matt 24:27**

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

## **II. THE PERSON OF THE RAPTURE**

- There are different ideas concerning the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

### **A. Some Say that the Second Coming is Death**

1. At a funeral, a preacher may imply that Jesus came back for the dead person
2. Really the opposite is true, The deceased goes to be with the Lord
3. The second coming is not the death of a believer
4. 2Co 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.
5. Php 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

## **B. Some Say that the Second Coming is Jesus Coming into the Heart to Save a Person**

1. When Jesus saves a sinner that is not the second coming
2. When Jesus saved me there was no shout, no voice of an archangel, no trump of God and no resurrection of the dead believers
3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is different from the Holy Spirit coming to live in an individual

## **C. Jesus is Returning Personally – Acts 1:11; 1Th 4:16**

Ac 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? **this same Jesus**, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

1Th 4:16 For **the Lord himself** shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1. Is Personal
  - a) *Jesus is not sending a representative back for us*
  - b) *He is not sending an angel back for us*
2. Is Literal
  - a) *Not an allegorical second coming*
  - b) *Not a spiritualized second coming*
3. Is Physical
  - a) *Jesus is coming bodily*
  - b) *Not a spiritual coming*

## **III. THE PROGRAM OF THE RAPTURE**

### **A. The Rapture is Imminent**

1. It could happen at any time - Christ could come today
2. Robert Murray McCheyne asked a preacher friend if he thought the Lord could return that day. The preacher friend replied, "I think not!" McCheyne turned to Matt 24:44 and read without comment "44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as **ye think not** the Son of man cometh."

3. The rapture could occur at any moment – 1Cor 15:51-52  
51 Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
  - a) *Moment = atom*
  - b) *The smallest amount of time, that cannot be divided any more*

### **B. The Rapture Is Comforting – vs 13**

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

#### 1. Participants in the Rapture

- a) *Those who are alive on the earth when Jesus returns*
  - (1) Paul used “we” indicating that he thought the rapture might occur during his life
  - (2) He anticipated and expected the Lord’s return
- b) *Those who have died in the Lord*
  - (1) Here are believers who have died before the rapture
  - (2) The bodies of dead believers will be raised before the bodies of those who are alive are changed

#### 2. Plan of the Rapture – vs 16-18

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

- a) *The Lord himself shall return for believers*
- b) *Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout*
  - (1) Rapture will not be a quiet, uneventful happening
  - (2) “Shout” - a military word - involves shouting orders like a captain commanding soldiers to fall in
  - (3) Like His shout at the grave of Lazarus
- c) *The voice of an archangel*
  - (1) We don't know who this archangel is
  - (2) The only archangel in the Bible is “Michael” – Ju 9
  - (3) Jewish tradition said that there were 7 archangels
- d) *The trump of God will sound*
  - (1) Trumpets are used often in Scripture
  - (2) To make an announcement – 1Sam 13:3
  - (3) To sound an alarm in time of war – Num 10:9
  - (4) **1Co 15:52** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
- e) *The dead in Christ shall rise first*
  - (1) Dead believers in their graves will rise
  - (2) Battlefields will give up dead believers
  - (3) Believers buried at sea will rise
- f) *Living believers will then be caught up*
  - (1) Harpazo describes a strong, forceful act
  - (2) It describes a wolf snatching sheep – Jn 10:12
  - (3) No one is able to snatch believers out of Jesus' hand – Jn 10:28-29
  - (4) Living believers will be snatched off the earth and caught up to be with the Lord

#### **IV. THE PREPARATION FOR THE RAPTURE**

##### **A. Lost Person - Trust Christ Today**

Lu 17:34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

1. In light of the imminent 2<sup>nd</sup> coming trust Him before it is too late
2. If Christ came right now, then every believer would be taken off the earth immediately “in the twinkling of an eye”
3. Children not come to the age of accountability will be taken
4. When Christ returns some will be sleeping
5. Others will be in the fields working or in the mill grinding

### ***B. Believer – Purify Your Life – 1Jn 3:2-3***

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

1. You want to be ready to face Him when He returns
2. The coming of the Lord should cause us to purify our living - 2Cor 7:1

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

### **Conclusion:**

The May 1984 National Geographic showed through color photos and drawings the swift and terrible destruction that wiped out the Roman Cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in A.D. 79. The explosion of Mount Vesuvius was so sudden, the residents were killed while in their routine: men and women were at the market, the rich in their luxurious baths, slaves at toil. They died amid volcanic ash and superheated gasses. Even family pets suffered the same quick and final fate. It takes little imagination to picture the panic of that terrible day. The saddest part is that these people did not have to die. Scientists confirm what ancient Roman writers record-- weeks of rumblings and

shakings preceded the actual explosion. Even an ominous plume of smoke was clearly visible from the mountain days before the eruption. If only they had been able to read and respond to Vesuvius's warning! There are similar "rumblings" in our world: warfare, earthquakes, the nuclear threat, economic woes, breakdown of the family and moral standards. While not exactly new, these things do point to a coming day of Judgment (Matt. 24). People need not be caught unprepared. God warns and provides an escape to those who will heed the rumblings.