

The Rapture

resurrection and catching up

The concept of the resurrection of the dead was expressed clearly by the great prophet Isaiah:

[Y]our dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead (Isaiah 26:19).

The apostle Paul expounded on the topic of the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:12-23). He also described the type of body—a spiritual body—in which the dead will arise (15:35-49). He indicated that our present bodies of flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God; therefore, they must be changed into a form that can:

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep [die], but we [believers] will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead [believers] will be raised imperishable, and we [alive believers] will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:50-55).

In the following account is an explanation that there will be some still alive when this miraculous transformation takes place. And, altogether, those who have been changed will be “caught up” into the clouds to meet the Lord:

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep [died] in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we [believers] who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep [died]. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command [or shout], 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 with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

The word “**rapture**” comes from the Latin *rapere*, meaning “to catch up.” Saved believers, both dead and alive at that time, will be “caught up” (raptured) to meet the Lord in the clouds, to be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

protection from wrath

Isaiah continued to describe what would happen after the resurrection of God's people. Specifically, those who will be resurrected and raptured will be protected from the **wrath** of God, which ultimately will be unleashed upon the earth:

Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer (Isaiah 26:20,21).

This "wrath" will take place during the future period of time known as the "**Day of the Lord.**" Paul, addressing saved believers, provided more details:

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep [alive or dead], we may live together with him (1 Thessalonians 5:9,10).

In the Book of Revelation, there is no indication or mention of God's "wrath" until *after* the opening of the Sixth Seal:

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17).

In accordance with the "pre-wrath" view of the Rapture, the resurrection of believers, and subsequent catching-up event, will take place at (or immediately after) the point in time when the people of the world will see "the face of him who sits on the throne" (Revelation 6:16). This will be Jesus, the Lamb of God, coming in the clouds, ready to dispense the **wrath** of God upon the earth. God's wrath will commence, after the opening of the Seventh Seal (8:1), with the onset of the seven Trumpet Judgments (8:6-9:21).

Jesus' discourse and John's **six seals**

While sitting on the Mount of Olives, Jesus' disciples asked Him what would be the sign of His (future) coming and of the end of the age (Matthew 24:3). Jesus' description (24:4-31) delineated much of the period of time that

commonly is believed to be the final seven years of this age (often referred to as “the **70th Week**”), prior to Jesus’ return back to earth to rule and reign.

There are distinct parallels between Jesus’ Olivet Discourse and John’s description of the opening of six of the seven “seals” of the heavenly scroll by Jesus, the Lamb (Revelation 5:1-7, 6:1-17). One striking similarity between Jesus’ and John’s accounts is the persecution, and even death, that believers will experience during that time:

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ... For then there will be great distress [great tribulation], unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened (Matthew 24:9,21,22).

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed (Revelation 6:9-11).

Probably the most remarkable parallel between Jesus’ and John’s depictions is the clear correlation between the astounding “cosmic disturbances” described by Jesus (in Matthew) and those described by John (in Revelation):

Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken (Matthew 24:29).

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. ... The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind (Revelation 6:12c,13).

With such conspicuous parallels, one might think that Jesus’ appearance in earth’s atmosphere, at the Rapture event, should be chronicled in both Jesus’ and John’s accounts—as, indeed, it is:

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” (Revelation 6:15,16).

The unsaved people of the world will be regretting (mourning) that the time will have come for the penalty of their sins to be paid, via the day of the Lord's wrath. At the same time, though, the saved believers will be caught up by the Son of Man (Jesus) into the clouds during the "pre-wrath Rapture" event, appearing in heaven immediately thereafter:

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:30,31).

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ... Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9,10,13,14).

timing of the Rapture

after the "abomination that causes desolation"

From Jesus' Olivet Discourse, we can ascertain that the "pre-wrath Rapture" will take place at some point after the middle of the [70th Week](#). Jesus referred to the "abomination that causes desolation," spoken of through the prophet Daniel" (Matthew 24:15). In his description of the prophecy given to him by the angel Gabriel, Daniel indicated (in Daniel 9:27) that the desolation brought about by abominations in the temple (referred to, by Jesus, as "the holy place") will occur in the "middle" of the "seven" (that is, of the final seven years of this age, or the 70th Week). What the actual "abomination" will be is a topic of varied opinion and debate.

Jesus indicated that, at this time (when the "abomination that causes desolation" is in place), those who are in Judea should flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:16). This parallels John's description of the fleeing Jewish remnant to the desert—probably to the mountain-desert region in which Petra is located—where they will be cared for, by God, for 1,260 days (Revelation 12:6), or the final half (3½ years) of the 70th Week.

after the restrainer is held back

Paul indicated that something or someone was restraining or holding back the “secret power of lawlessness,” the latter which will empower the man of lawlessness (Antichrist) when he ultimately is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8). Jesus indicated that, following the abomination that causes desolation (at the midpoint of the 70th Week), “there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” (Matthew 24:21). The Old Testament prophet Daniel indicated that just prior to this same period of distress, the archangel Michael would “arise” (Daniel 12:1).

The archangel Michael always has been the special protective “prince” of Daniel’s people, Israel (Daniel 10:13,21). At the midpoint of the 70th Week, he is seen to “arise” or “stand up.” The term used is the Hebrew word *amad*, which actually means to “stand aside,” “stand still,” “desist,” or “be inactive.” Other examples of the usage of *amad* are found in Job 32:16, Nehemiah 8:5, and 2 Samuel 18:30 (see “[Amad](#)”).

Michael, in the middle of the 70th Week, will oust Satan and his angels from heaven (where they still continue to have access, accusing saints before God day and night), hurling them down to the earth (Revelation 12:7-9)—ending Satan’s access to heaven forever. Immediately after this, the following will happen, in sequential order:

- Michael, the **restrainer**, will “amad” (desist from any further assistance to Israel—Daniel 12:1a) by being “taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:7b), leading to a period of great distress on the earth, unequaled previous to that time (Matthew 24:21), for all nations including Israel.
- The revealing of the true nature of the “lawless one” (Antichrist) will occur; ultimately, this man will be destroyed by Jesus when He returns to earth (2 Thessalonians 2:8) 3½ years later.
- The work of Satan, through the “lawless one” who will come, will be “displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing” (2:9,10a).

Once Michael, Israel’s angelic protector, has been “taken out of the way” (by God), the **Great Tribulation** will begin.

after the Great Tribulation

At the time that the “abomination that causes desolation” is established, there will ensue a period of great distress, commonly referred to as the “**Great Tribulation**,” which will not have occurred from the beginning of the world until that time. This was stated both by the angel Gabriel (to the prophet Daniel) and by Jesus:

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then (Daniel 12:1b).

For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again (Matthew 24:21).

Seeing that the Jewish remnant has been provided shelter and will be protected by God for 1,260 days, Satan will set out to “make war against” other Jews, particularly orthodox Jews who “obey God’s commandments,” and Christians, who “hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17). This parallels the persecution and slaying of many (probably multitudes), following the opening of the Fifth Seal, due to “the word of God and the testimony they had maintained”; these will call out to God to avenge their blood (6:9,10).

In His Olivet Discourse, after having warned of the “great distress” to begin in the middle of the 70th Week (Matthew 24:21), Jesus continued by saying this:

If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened (Matthew 24:22).

The days of unprecedented distress (the Great Tribulation), which will begin after the opening of the Fifth Seal (Revelation 6:9,10), will be “shortened” by the opening of the Sixth Seal (6:12-14), the cosmic disturbances of which were described precisely by Jesus:

Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken (Matthew 24:29; cf Isaiah 13:10, 34:4).

As noted previously, Jesus followed this immediately with a description of the Rapture:

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:30,31).

The “elect” are both Gentiles and Jews who have known, now know, or will know Jesus as Lord, Savior, and Messiah (see “[The Elect](#)”).

The dead “elect” will be resurrected, the alive “elect” will be changed (along with those who have been resurrected) into glorified forms, and together they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds at the “pre-wrath Rapture” event (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). They will have been taken up out of the Great Tribulation:

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:13,14).

before the Day of the Lord

The prophet Joel was clear in indicating how God would demonstrate His power, in the form of great cosmic disturbances, just preceding the Day of the Lord:

I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Joel 2:30,31).

The initial portion of the “Day of the Lord” period will be the “day of vengeance,” written about by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 34:8, 61:2, 63:4). It is the same as the “great day of their wrath,” mentioned by John (Revelation 6:17). It is not a 24-hour day; rather, it is a period of time—probably a year—during which God’s wrath will be doled out upon mankind. Much of this vengeance will be in response to slain believers, having cried out to God during the Fifth Seal persecution, to judge mankind and to avenge their blood, which will have been shed upon the earth:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (Revelation 6:9,10).

See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer (Isaiah 26:21).

Via the “pre-wrath Rapture,” the “elect” will avoid the wrath of God, which will be imminent after the opening of the Sixth Seal. God’s intense wrath will be dispensed upon the remainder of humanity after the opening of the Seventh Seal (Revelation 8:1), which will be opened, chronologically, after the Sixth Seal events have transpired.

The Trumpet Judgments, encompassed within the events of the Seventh Seal, will be the beginning of God’s wrath, retribution, and vengeance. Taking place over about a year’s time (Isaiah 34:8, 61:2, 63:4; Revelation 6:17), these judgments will be the initial phase of the “**Day**” of the Lord period. Those who have been caught up in the “pre-wrath Rapture” will not have to endure the dreadful “day of vengeance,” during which God’s righteous wrath will be dispensed upon the earth. The remainder of that “**Day**” will be the Millennium, lasting a thousand years (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8; Revelation 20:2-7).