WHAT DOES THE RAPTURE MEAN?

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Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:16

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Introduction: Although the world is talking some about the rapture now, due to recent books and movies, it is one of the mysteries of the Bible. As such, it can be understood clearly only by those who are saved. What IS the Rapture?

The dictionary defines rapture as "a carrying away or being carried away in body or spirit." So, although the word does not occur in scripture, the word does accurately describe the scene of our scripture text today:

1 Thessalonians 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:

I. THE RAPTURE MEANS THE RETURN OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

1 Thessalonians 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:

A. His return is promised

• 1. By the scriptures - Old and New Testament
• 2. By the Savior
• 3. By the witnesses at His ascension

B. His return will be personal

• 1. "... the Lord HIMSELF ..."
• 2. "This SAME Jesus ..." Acts 1:11
C. His return is planned

- 1. The Lord knows the year, month, day, hour, and SECOND.
- 2. I would have thought that it would have happened long before now, but I DO know that He is coming!

D. His return is purposeful

- 1. The body of Christ will be taken up
- 2. The bride of Christ will be straightened out in heaven
- 3. The blistering (chastisement) of Israel will begin. The great event on earth following the Rapture will be a dispensation of Judgment. It's called the Tribulation and Daniel's 70th Week, but it is primarily a dispensation of Judgment, and the main object of its judgment is ISRAEL; hence, it is the time of JACOB'S trouble.

II. THE RAPTURE MEANS THE REUNION OF THE SAINTS

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 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.

Saints will be reunited who have been separated by

A. Disagreement
B. Distance
C. Dispensations
D. Death

III. THE RAPTURE MEANS THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 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. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
Romans 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

A. Our bodies will be taken

1. Dead bodies of saints are seeds to rise again. 2. Living bodies of saints are to be snatched up without dying! Praise God!

B. Our bodies will be transformed

- 1. They are wicked now, but one day they will be **PURE**.
- 2. They are weak now, but one day they will be **POWERFUL**.
- 3. They are wrong now, but one day they will be **PERFECT**.

These bodies will one day be healthy, happy, and holy, for they will be patterned after the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself:

1 John 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.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

IV. THE RAPTURE MEANS REWARDS FOR THE SAINTS

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Romans 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

A. The rewards will be determined

B. The rewards will determine some things

- 1. The extent of the government of the believer - in the new millennium
  - 2 Timothy 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:
- 2. The extent of the glory of the believer - in the glorified body
1 Corinthians 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

C. The rewards can be done away with

- 1. They can be discarded altogether
  - Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
  - 1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

- 2. They can be diminished
  - 2 John 1:8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.