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# **CAUGHT UP!**

what the bible says about the rapture of the church

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Back to Basics

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## Introduction

The doctrine of the pretribulation rapture of the church has fallen upon hard times in the last few years. After the massive success of the *Left Behind* series a sort of backlash has occurred, and many within evangelicalism are leading the attack. Some in the Reformed camp are expressing deep concern over “The Troubling Worldview of the ‘Rapture Ready’ Christian.” At the other end of the theological spectrum, Brian McLaren of Emergent Village has gone so far as to suggest that the idea of the rapture is a dangerous one. Meanwhile, Brian’s cohort, Rob Bell, in describing a message he heard by a well-known radio preacher who expressed his hope in the return of Christ, said that he needed a God of the here and now, not one who is coming sometime in the future. Over the past few years the *Bible Answer Man*, Hank Hanegraaff, has spent much of his time on and off the air promoting an eschatology that has Matthew 24 and most of the book of Revelation fulfilled in AD 70 with no rapture anywhere in his scenario.

Hanegraaff emphatically states that there was no concept of a pretribulation rapture before the 19th century. Many Reformed theologians insist that post or amillennialism are the historic views of the church and neither position has room for a

rapture of the church. As for the Emergent's view, the idea of the rapture interferes with their opportunity to help create a postmodern utopia, thus "*Left Behind* Christianity" has to go.

These are just a small sampling of the negative attitudes that have developed in recent years over the doctrine of the rapture of the church, particularly the pretribulation rapture.

Now, I will admit that in some instances (too many in my opinion), those who hold the pretribulation view of the rapture of the church have gone over the top in interpreting Scripture in light of current events and making predictions that have proven to be false. To some extent, the negativism is an overreaction to these excesses. But to use the common analogy of throwing the baby out with the bath water, it seems to me that many are doing this very thing today.

So where does that leave us? Well, it leaves us where we must inevitably end up, and that's back at the Scriptures themselves. The question is not what did the Reformers teach or what is the historic position of the church but what does the Bible teach on the subject? If it can be substantiated that the Bible teaches the rapture of the church, and a

pretribulation rapture at that, then we would of course want to embrace it and receive God's intended blessing through it.

It is my belief that a proper understanding of the nature of the tribulation, with an unbiased look at a number of biblical texts, will lead to one conclusion: the Bible promises that Christ's people will indeed escape the judgment of the great tribulation and be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

## **Not Appointed to Wrath**

The basic statistics of World War II qualify it as the greatest war in history in terms of human resources expended. Sixty-one countries and 1.7 billion people were involved. Sixty million lost their lives. But the bloodshed of World War II pales in comparison to the utter devastation this world will experience in the not too distant future. Based on the present population of the world and the numbers given to us in the book of Revelation, over five billion people will die during the great tribulation period. The tribulation will be a time of unprecedented death and destruction. As Jesus Himself said, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since

the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved” (Matthew 24:21–22). For any thinking person, the prospect of having to endure such a time is terrifying, to say the least. The good news is that we as God’s children will not go through the tribulation, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Those are the words of the apostle Paul. The event that we call the rapture is the means by which God will deliver us from the wrath that is coming.

## What Is the Rapture?

The rapture is a unique event in history where every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is miraculously and instantly taken to heaven without experiencing death. The rapture is similar to what happened to Enoch before the flood. The Scriptures tell us that, “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). At the rapture, God is going to take His people to heaven like He took Enoch.

## **The Second Coming—Part One**

The rapture is, in a sense, part one of the second coming of Jesus Christ. At the second coming, Jesus will return to the earth with His people to set up His kingdom. At the rapture, He will not come to the earth, but into the atmosphere of the earth and will call His people up to be with Him.

We should not be surprised at this idea of two parts to the second coming, for, if you think about it, there were actually two parts to the first coming. Jesus came first to Bethlehem, as foretold by Micah the prophet, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

Thirty-three years later, He came as King to Jerusalem as foretold by Daniel and Zechariah. He came to Bethlehem with the pronouncement of the angels, the shepherds, and all of the things that transpired on that memorable day. Then there was a period of silence of about thirty years, and suddenly Jesus appeared on the scene again. Finally, He rode into Jerusalem on that day in fulfillment of the prophecies. (See Daniel 9:24–25 and Zechariah

9:9.) This was the second part of the first coming. Since there were two aspects to the first coming, we should not be surprised to discover that there will be two aspects to the second coming: the first part being the rapture, the second part being the literal coming of Jesus to the earth to set up the kingdom.

### Rapture Is from the Latin

Some people completely reject the idea of the rapture. They say that the word *rapture* is not even found in the Bible. Well, that all depends on what Bible you are using. If you are using the Latin Vulgate, you can find the word *rapiemur*, which is the Latin word from which we get our English word rapture. *Rapiemur* is the Latin translation of the Greek word *harpazo*, which is translated into English in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 as “caught up.” It is from this Latin word that we have coined the term rapture. It is a convenient term. So, even though we do not have the actual word rapture in our English translation, it does not mean the teaching is not in the Bible.

We do not have the word *Trinity* in the Bible, yet the Scriptures certainly reveal the concept of the Trinity. Likewise, the Bible teaches that believers are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in



the air, and the word rapture is a convenient word to describe that event.

## The Classic Rapture Texts

The two most descriptive texts on the rapture are found in the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians and his first epistle to the Thessalonians. Let's look first at his letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15. In verses 51–55, Paul said:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Paul tells us about a mystery—something that previously had not been revealed. The mystery is this: We shall not all sleep, which is another way of

saying we shall not all die, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Now in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 13–17, Paul says:

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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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. 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. 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.

There it is: “Then we who are alive and remain shall be *caught up* [or raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, emphasis mine). Now I’m aware that some would disagree, believing these verses to be speaking

of the resurrection; but Paul is clearly referring to living believers being instantly changed and receiving their glorified bodies, not just to the bodies of those who have died being raised.

That the Bible teaches there is going to be a rapture is, in my opinion, perfectly clear for those who will take the apostle's words at face value. It seems to me there can be no question about it based on these two passages alone.

### **When Will the Rapture Occur?**

Now, the question is: Does the rapture occur before the tribulation, in the middle of the tribulation, or at the end of the tribulation? Those who believe the rapture will take place after the tribulation are known as post-tribulationists. Those who believe the rapture will take place in the middle of the tribulation are known as midtribulationists; a similar position to mid-trib is pre-wrath. Finally, those who believe that the rapture will occur before the tribulation are known as pretribulationists.

I personally believe the New Testament overwhelmingly teaches that the rapture will occur before the tribulation. Of course, there are people who would disagree with me on that. Yet, I want

to show you that it is not something for which we are just hoping against hope or believing despite the facts. To me the pre-trib view is the only one that is truly coherent and the one that best aligns with the Scriptures.

## Jesus and the Pretribulation Rapture

In Luke 21:34–36, Jesus said this:

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Jesus is clearly talking about the tribulation here, and what does He say to His people? “Pray ... that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things ... and to stand before the Son of Man.” I would say that Jesus is speaking here of the rapture, for He says we are to pray not only to escape these things that are coming upon all who dwell on the earth, but also to stand before the Son of Man. That

sounds to me very much like what Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians 4 as meeting the Lord in the air.

Then in Revelation 3:10, Jesus, speaking to the church of Philadelphia, says,

“Because you have kept [the word of My patience], I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

The hour of trial coming upon the whole world is certainly a reference to the great tribulation.

Some have said what this verse is promising is protection, not exclusion, for God’s people during the great tribulation. But the word translated *from* is the Greek preposition *ek*, which means *out of*. A literal translation would be “I will keep you *out of* the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world.” That seems clear enough to me. Now some would argue that Jesus was talking to a church that existed two thousand years ago and the promise was for them then, not for us now or for some future group of believers. The problem with a limited application is that those believers did not live during the hour of trial that would come upon the whole world. So, although there might have been some application for them then, the primary

application must be for the church living at the time of the hour of trial. We must keep in mind that these seven churches, besides being actual churches that existed at the time, are representative of the entire church throughout all of the church's history here on earth.

## Paul and the Pretribulation Rapture

Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8 is perhaps the clearest teaching of all on the subject of the timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation. I say perhaps because the following interpretation of the passage is undoubtedly controversial, yet I think it is at least possible, and maybe even the best way to understand the text. Let's look carefully at what Paul said:

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 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 [or the day of the Lord] had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [the Day of the Lord] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is

revealed, the son of perdition, 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. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he [the antichrist] may be revealed in his own time. 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. 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.

Notice first that Paul is going to speak to them about two things: “The coming of our Lord”—which I take to refer to the second coming—and, “our gathering together to Him”—which I believe to be a reference to the rapture. That is what the rapture is, as described previously in 1 Thessalonians 4:17: “caught up ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,” or as Paul says here, “our gathering together to Him.” He goes on to say, [Do not] “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.” I think the phrase “the day of the Lord” is actually the better translation here, although

some of our Bibles read, “the day of Christ.” If you go back to the Old Testament, you will find the phrase “the day of the Lord” repeated quite often, and generally, it is used as a reference to what we call the great tribulation period. Let me give you a couple of examples:

Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty! ... Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it (Isaiah 13:6, 9).

Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand (Joel 2:1).

In essence Paul is saying, *Do not let anyone deceive you into thinking that you are in the tribulation period.* The church of Thessalonica was experiencing intense persecution and therefore could have easily concluded that they were in the time of tribulation that Paul had told them would come. Paul says no, this is not the tribulation, for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first. The key question here is: what is the falling away referring to?



## Falling Away

Most commentators and even many Bible translators interpret “falling away” as a great departure from the faith in the last days, some translations even use the word *rebellion*. The Greek word translated falling away is *apostasia*, which has been transliterated into English as “apostasy.” The word apostasy of course refers to people leaving a faith. Luther was considered an apostate by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. But the word *apostasia* does not have to be translated “falling away,” nor does it necessarily have to refer to leaving the faith. Let me quote to you from a well-known authority on Greek, Kenneth Wuest: “The words *falling away* are an interpretation of the Greek word, not a translation” [emphasis mine].

In light of that statement, it is interesting to me that the early English translations of the Bible did not translate *apostasia* as “falling away.” They translated it as *departure*. At the Evangelical Library in London, there are copies of the Tyndale, the Coverdale, and the Geneva Bibles. These are some of the earliest English translations of the Bible. In each of these translations, the English word used to translate *apostasia* here was “departure,” not the words “falling away.” That seems to indicate that the

word *apostasia* does not necessarily have to mean a departure from the faith. The verb form of the Greek word *apostasia* is *aphistemi*, which can have the idea of a spatial departure. We find this in Luke's reference to Anna who did not depart (*aphistemi*) from the temple (Luke 2:37).

Beside all of that, people have been departing from the faith since the church began. I would venture to say that there is a greater Christian witness in the world today than there has ever been in history up until this time. If we were to look at the church of Jesus Christ in the ninth or tenth century AD, we would be hard-pressed to connect it with the first-century church that we read about in the book of Acts. The church was entirely different, as there was almost a complete ignorance of the true biblical faith of the apostles and the early Christians. They had wholly departed from the gospel of grace, and few if any were thinking they were saved by simple faith in Jesus alone.

The last days, which refer to the period between the first and second coming of Christ, were to be marked by seasons of departures from the faith, but the idea that there is one great apostasy before the reign of the Antichrist is questionable. If the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that occurred at Pentecost

is to be the experience of those who are “afar off [the distant future], even as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39), then I believe that rather than a great apostasy as we get closer to Christ’s return, we can expect great awakenings, with many people coming to Christ right up to the very point when the Lord takes His church out of the world.

Therefore, if we read this verse as Tyndale and Coverdale translated it—“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the departure comes first”—it opens up a whole new possibility for the meaning of Paul’s statement. What is the departure? It could very possibly be that he is talking about the rapture. The pertinent question is the departure of what? The departure, I believe, of the church. Notice the outcome of the departure: “the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). What is he describing? I believe he is describing the church being taken out of the world and the Antichrist rising to power.

Looking further to verse 7, I contend that verses 3 and 7 are saying the exact same thing, just in a different way: “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. And then the

lawless one will be revealed” (2 Thessalonians 2:7–8). Something happens in verse 7 that results in the same thing that happened after the event in verse 3. After the departure in verse 3, the Antichrist rises to power. After He, the restraining force, is removed in verse 7, the Antichrist rises to power. I believe the same thing is being said.

Now, here is the interesting thing: In verse 7, most commentators agree that the “He who now restrains ... until He is taken out of the way” is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, of course, inhabits the church, the body of Christ. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I think what is possibly being said is this: When the church, the temple of the Holy Spirit, is moved out of the way, then and only then will the Antichrist come to power.

You see, a departure occurs in verse 3, and the man of sin comes to power. The restraining force is moved out of the way in verse 7, and the lawless one is revealed. It seems to me that the departure very well could be the removal of the presence of the Holy Spirit manifested in the church. If so, we would have the clearest statement of all regarding the timing of the Rapture in relation to the tribulation.

## Five Reasons the Rapture Is Pretribulation

### One: The Church Is Not in the “Seventy Week” Prophecy of Daniel

The final period we call the tribulation is the seven-year period that is connected to a previous series of seven-year periods. That final seven-year period we call the tribulation is actually the seventieth “week” of the prophecy given to Daniel in Daniel 9:24–27. There were sixty-nine weeks that preceded the seventieth week. Here is an important thing to realize: The church did not exist during the sixty-nine weeks. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the church would have any part in the seventieth week. The seventy weeks in their entirety pertained primarily to the nation of Israel.

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks ... even in troublesome times (Daniel 9:24–25).

According to Sir Robert Anderson, Artaxerxes gave the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem on March 14, 445 BC. Beginning from the date that Nehemiah was given the command, 483 years later to the day, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey and was hailed as the King. That event brought the sixty-nine seven-year periods to an end. The prophetic clock, in a sense, was turned off, and the church was birthed. The seventieth week, or that final seven-year period, is yet in the future. But remember, it had application solely to Israel. It had nothing to do with the church whatsoever. Therefore, for the church to be referred to during the seventieth week, when it was not in the sixty-nine weeks, does not seem to be consistent.

## **Two: The Tribulation Has No Relation to the Church**

The Bible tells us that there is a twofold purpose to the great tribulation. The first purpose is to break the pride of Israel, to finally humble them, and bring them to faith. The Bible says, "When the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished" (Daniel 12:7). The second purpose of the tribulation is to judge the wicked, which is clearly stated in Isaiah 13:9 and 11:

Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it ... I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity.

Since these are the purposes of the tribulation, there is absolutely no reason for us as the church to go through the tribulation period.

### **Three: It is Not Consistent with the Character of God**

Recall Abraham's conversation with the Lord, as He was on His way to judge the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham was concerned about his nephew Lot who lived there. He approached the Lord and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ... Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:23, 25). Abraham understood it would not be consistent with the character of God to judge the righteous with the wicked.

If the church is going to experience the tribulation and suffer the wrath of God, then we have a problem because God will then be doing something that is completely inconsistent with His character throughout all of history. Even when God judged

Israel in ancient times, we find that God had mercy on the righteous even in the time of judgment. Jeremiah prophesied about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, and what happened when Nebuchadnezzar came? The wicked in the nation were judged and the righteous were given grace. Jeremiah was taken and actually watched over by Nebuchadnezzar's men. So, we see a pattern in history where God does not judge the righteous with the wicked. Therefore, there is no reason to think that His character has changed and that He would do something now that He has never done in the past.

The tribulation is the judgment of God upon a sinful world. Some people point to the persecution of Christians as proof that we will indeed suffer through the tribulation. They say, *If believers in times past were fed to the lions and burned at the stake, we should not expect to escape similar suffering during the tribulation.* But what they are failing to see is that persecution always has Satan as its source, but not so with the great tribulation. God Himself is the cause of the great tribulation. And since God is the source, and we know that He will not judge the righteous with the wicked, we must conclude that the church will not go through the tribulation.



#### **Four: Jesus Will Come as a Thief**

This one, to me, seals the argument. There are many passages in the New Testament that speak of Jesus coming as a thief: Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; and Revelation 16:15. These passages do not make any sense if the rapture comes after the tribulation. The whole point that Jesus was making is the thief comes without advanced notice. Have you ever been burglarized? Did the thief call you and say, “Thursday night at 2:00 a.m., I am coming to your home to take your TV and your computer”? No, of course not! Without any warning, suddenly the thief was there.

Now, think about this: Do you think for a moment that people are going to live through the tribulation period and not realize what is coming? Consider what is going to happen during that time. For one, there are going to be two witnesses in Jerusalem—Elijah and perhaps Moses. They are going to be prophesying in Jerusalem and will be seen all over the world via satellite. They are going to frustrate the Antichrist and irritate people because they are preaching the gospel. They will be talking about Jesus Christ and about the fact that He is coming back. They are going to be slain by

the Antichrist and their dead bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem, being viewed by people all over the world.

After three days they are going to rise from the dead and be called up into heaven while the entire world watches. We are also told that during the tribulation period there is going to be an angel flying through the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel, warning people not to receive the mark of the beast (see Revelation 14:6–10). With all of this, not to mention the cataclysmic judgments, it's hard to imagine anyone being too surprised when Jesus shows up. So you see, when Jesus said, "Behold, I come as a thief," it really only makes sense if He is talking about coming in the air to receive His people to Himself, not His second coming to the earth to set up His kingdom. The point is He is going to come with that element of surprise.

### **Five: The Imminency of Christ Coming**

When we speak of the imminency of Christ's return, we mean that Christ's coming could occur at any time without warning. All throughout the New Testament, we find the authors expressing their belief that the Lord could return at any moment. Jesus Himself stated as much in His teaching in

Matthew 24 and 25. There He says things like, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (24:42). Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (24:44). Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (25:13).

Paul, in writing to the Philippians, said, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (3:20). To Titus Paul wrote that we are to be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2:13). These and other passages give the distinct impression that Christ could come at any time. Those who reject the pretribulational view must also then reject the possibility of Christ coming at any time, because if He is coming at the middle or the end of the tribulation, then His coming cannot be imminent.

## **The Practical Implications of the Rapture**

In conclusion, what then are the practical implications of the rapture? What does this mean to us personally today? How does it work itself out in our lives? Three things come to mind.

First, the rapture brings comfort. Paul recognized this when he said, “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. Therefore *comfort* one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:17–18, emphasis mine). As we look at the world, we see it moving rapidly toward judgment. As we think of the magnitude of the judgment, contemplate the multitude of people who will perish, and think of the horrors that are ahead, we are comforted to know that we do not have to go through this time of death and destruction! As we go out to evangelize and speak to people about our faith in Jesus and warn them about the wrath to come, we can also comfort them with the promise of deliverance for those who believe.

Second, this teaching promotes holiness. The apostle John said:

Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:2–3).

If you are living with the conviction that the Lord could return at any time, this conviction will definitely affect the way you live. You will want to always live in a way that would please the Lord, should He suddenly appear. Now of course, you don't have to believe in the rapture to be motivated to live a holy life; many saints from previous generations had no understanding at all of the doctrine of the rapture of the church and yet lived godly, Christ-honoring, holy lives. But as John said, those who are waiting for the revealing of Christ will purify themselves just as He is pure. Look at it as an extra incentive!

Some are perhaps dabbling in sin and thinking, "Right before it (the rapture) happens, I will get right with God." The reality is you won't have a chance; it will have been here and gone before you even realize it. As Paul said, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," suddenly we are in heaven. We will not have time to think about anything. We will not have time to repent. One second, earth is our reality, the next second we will be standing in the presence of Jesus Christ. Living with that understanding certainly ought to promote purity in our lives.

Third, and finally, the belief in a pretribulation rapture will create in us a sense of urgency. Paul said it like this:

Therefore ... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

That is it! "Always abounding," doing all we can for the Lord.

The rapture! A glorious promise. What a great and wonderful truth: that God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation. Let's live in the light of these facts. Let's conduct ourselves based upon the reality, that at any moment of any day we could suddenly be caught up into the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ!