



Principles on the Rapture: Definition; Imminent vs. Immediate; Mistranslated Passages: 5th Cycle & 2d Advent Mistaken for Rapture, Luke 21:20-24; Matt 24:1-15

Principles Regarding the Rapture of the Church

I. Definition and Description:

1. Rapture is an English word derived from the Latin *raptus* and each may be defined as “being carried away.”
2. The Greek word is **ἁρπάζω, *harpazō***, and in Christian theology refers to the resurrection of the church.
3. It is the second phase of the first resurrection. It follows the resurrection of the Lord and precedes those of the dispensations of Israel and the Millennium.
4. The church is the mystery dispensation that began on the feast day of Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and continues until the Rapture noted by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
5. The Rapture was prophesied by our Lord during His Upper Room Discourse recorded in:

John 14:1 - “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

v. 2 - “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

v. 3 - “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

6. Between Pentecost and the Rapture the church is being formed into the body of Christ on earth. Once the body is completed then the body of Christ is removed from the earth by the Rapture and becomes the bride of Christ in heaven.
7. A most intriguing question emerges from this doctrine: “What is the timing of the Rapture?” We often hear of those who claim to have come up with the missing clue that reveals the date of the Rapture.
8. However, those who set a date are always embarrassed when it passes quietly by and discover they were either wrong or “left behind.” They always, with reluctance, subscribe to the former.
9. The fact is that there are no prophecies in Scripture related to the Church Age other than those which mark its beginning and end. The Lord prophesied its beginning in John 14:26 with the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and its conclusion with the promise of the Rapture in John 14:1-3.
10. Thus the Church Age is the dispensation of no prophecy. Consequently we have *no* clue to the timing of its occurrence other than to note that it will occur when the body of Christ is completed.
11. As we have observed in previous studies, Lucifer seeks to delay the Rapture by means of false gospels to confuse the lost and false doctrines to neutralize the saved.
12. These efforts are referred to by Paul as “doctrines of demons” in 1 Timothy 4:1 and along with the sinful nature combine to produce sin, human good, and evil.



13. But the date of the Rapture is not revealed and as a result it remains imminent.

II. The Imminency of the Rapture:

1. The Rapture will occur when the last member of the body of Christ is saved.
2. Since we do not know that number we must assume that the Rapture could occur at any second but also might be delayed to a day far beyond our lifetime.
3. Thus we must conclude the Rapture to be imminent but not necessarily immediate. Definitions are helpful:

Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "imminent":

Of an event: Impending threateningly, hanging over one's head; ready to befall or overtake one.

Oxford, s.v. "immediate & immediately":

Taking effect without delay or lapse of time; Done at once; instant; with nothing intervening in time, space, order, or succession; next.

4. That which is considered *immediate* is expected to occur at once, instantly, without delay or lapse of time.
5. That which is considered *imminent* is considered an impending threat, ready to befall someone, but the exact timing of its occurrence is not known.
6. In order to consider the Rapture as an *immediate* event would require some sign, historical trend, or fulfilled prophecy signaling its arrival.
7. Biblical passages that offer historical downtrends as harbingers for *national* discipline, such as 2 Timothy 3:1-7, or passages that reveal events prophetic of the Second Advent, such as Matthew 24, are often misapplied to the Rapture.