

Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church

Definition.

1. While the Rapture is defined as the act of being transported, it is also defined as the state of being rapt or carried out of oneself. However, these definitions do not apply here. Rapture is used here in a technical theological sense for the resurrection of the royal family of God.¹
2. Since the Church or royal family of God is the first spiritual building to be completed, it is resurrected after our Lord. It is the second phase of the first resurrection following the resurrection of Christ.
3. Christ is resurrected, ascended, and seated at the right hand of the Father as part of the strategic victory of the angelic conflict.
4. This is known as our Lord's battlefield royalty. This is His only royalty with no family. Therefore, God interrupted the Jewish Age with the Church Age to call out and provide a royal family of God.
5. Once the royal family of God is completed, the Church is resurrected as the body of Christ to become the bride of Christ.
6. The Church Age is that period of human history when the royal family of God is being formed on earth, Ephesians 1:22–23, 2:16, 4:4–5; Colossians 1:18, 24, 2:19. When the royal family of God is completed, then the Rapture occurs, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18; 1 Corinthians 15:51–58.
7. During the conclusion of the Jewish Age, the bride is prepared in heaven by receiving a resurrection body exactly like that of the Lord. Then comes the Big Genuflect and acknowledgment of Christ. Then comes the Judgment Seat of Christ when all Church Age believers are evaluated and rewarded.

B. The Promise of the Rapture:

John 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God, believe also in Me.

v. 2 There are many dwelling places in My Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you.

v. 3 And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with Me, so that where I am you may be too. (NET)²

¹ “Rapture: The final assumption of Christians into heaven according to Christian theology.” (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, eleventh edition [Springfield, Mass., Merriam-Webster, 2014], 1031.

² Observe footnotes on these three verses in *The NET Bible*: **sn 7 & tn 8 in v. 1; tn 9, sn 10, & tc & tn 11 on pp. 2073-74; and tns 1 & 2 in v. 2; and tns 3, 4, & 5 in v. 3.** (For abbreviations see: *NET Bible* Translators' Note Types on page B.)



C. The Imminency of the Rapture.

1. Imminency means impending or threatening to occur. It does not mean immediately.
2. Rapture is used technically for the fact that no prophecy must be fulfilled before the Rapture occurs. The Rapture will occur when the last member of the body of Christ is saved.
3. The Church Age is the only dispensation in which there are historical trends and no prophecy. The Church Age began with an event prophesied--the baptism of the Spirit. Our Lord prophesied this in the Upper Room Discourse and just before He ascended. The Church Age terminates with the Rapture, which was also prophesied. There is no prophecy between these two events. This is the dispensation of the mystery doctrine.
4. No prophecy between the baptism of the Spirit and the Rapture means that the Rapture is imminent. It could occur at any time; no one knows the day or the hour.
5. The resurrection of the Church, like our dying, is completely out of our control. Just as we have no control over the time and manner of our death, so we have no control over the time and manner of the Rapture.
6. The resurrection of the Church is totally beyond our control because resurrection is the Lord's victory.

1 Corinthians 15:57 Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)

7. While the Rapture is imminent, the Second Advent is not. Before the Second Advent occurs, there are many prophecies which must occur, e.g., the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Judgment Seat of Christ. (Revelation 6–19)
8. The Rapture could have occurred at the time of James or Paul because no prophecy had to be fulfilled before the resurrection occurs.
9. Distortion of the imminency of the Rapture results in instability and foolish explanation or speculation about the time of the Rapture; hence, James gives us an admonition in:

James 5:7 Therefore, brethren, have patience until the coming of the Lord [Rapture]. The farmer waits with anticipation for the valuable production of the soil, constantly being patient until it has received the early and the latter rains.

James 5:8 Have patience; all of you become stabilized in your hearts because the coming of the Lord [Rapture] has approached with the result that it is drawing nearer and nearer. (EXT)



- a. To have patience means to apply what you know. Patience is a system of thinking Bible doctrine, a system of concentration, the application of doctrine to experience. In effect, that application says, “As long as I’m alive, I have control over my life. I can, by positive volition, execute the protocol plan of God or, by negative volition, be a cosmic believer and be my own worst enemy.”
 - b. The farmer invests by sowing seed. He must break up the soil and sow the seed, then he must wait. There’s nothing he can do while waiting; the seed will either come up or not. Either he will have production, or he will not. In the time of this writing, that depended upon the soil and the rains. The farmer did not have control over those elements.
 - c. Verse 8 goes on to tell us how to have patience. You cannot have patience without a stabilized mentality.
 - d. “Drawing nearer” means to be approaching. Every day in the Church Age, the Rapture draws closer. Every day that the Rapture approaches, you still have control over your life as long as you live. You have control in the sense that you can be a winner or a loser.
10. Because there was no unfulfilled prophecy before the Rapture could occur, the early church anticipated the Rapture under the concept of imminency:

1 Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

v. 5 that in everything you were [the culminative aorist passive indicative of the verb, *πλουτίζω* (*ploutízō*)] : enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

v. 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you,

v. 7 so that you are not lacking in any [spiritual] gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ [Rapture],

v. 8 Who will also confirm you to the end [of the Church Age], blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)

- a. The Corinthian church was made up of losers, yet Paul thanked God concerning them because they were the beneficiaries of phenomenal grace, were in union with Christ, and most of all, were “enriched in Him.”

- b. Each had: a portfolio of invisible assets, his very own palace—the operational divine dynasphere, the indwelling of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the 100% available divine omnipotence of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
 - c. Enrichment in the Christian life is not measured in terms of work and Christian service, but in terms of doctrine and knowledge. Yet most of the Corinthian believers rejected that doctrine.
 - d. To be “strengthened to the end” refers, not to the end of their lives, but to the end of the Church Age. Since they died before then, what does this mean? Every believer has equal privilege and equal opportunity to execute the protocol plan of God.
 - e. But it cannot be executed in human power, dynamics, energy, works, or personality; it is executed in that knowledge of doctrine and in the omnipotence of God the Father, in the omnipotence of Jesus Christ, and in the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit.
 - f. The omnipotence of Jesus Christ personally preserves history and perpetuates it, and so guarantees that the Church Age will run its course.
 - g. In a resurrection body, you will be “blameless” forever.
11. While the Rapture is imminent, no one really knows when it will occur. In the meantime, the royal family of God lives in this dispensation of historical trends, Revelation 2–3.
12. Three times in Revelation 22 is the phrase, “I am coming soon”:
- Revelation 22:7** “Behold, I am coming quickly.”
 - Revelation 22:12** “Behold, I am coming quickly ...”
 - Revelation 22:20** “Yes, I am coming quickly.” (NASB)
13. Remember that, to the Lord, a day is a thousand years and a thousand years as a day.³ This statement was written by John in A.D. 95, and this is now A.D. 2023. Therefore, “soon” connotes imminency, not immediacy.
14. The Rapture of the Church is the next prophetic event to occur in history.
- Titus 2:13** ... as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing [**Rapture**] of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (NET)

³ Compare 2 Peter 3:8 with Moses in: Psalm 90:4: Do not let this one thing escape your notice, that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day. (see 2 Peter 3:8). For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night (see Psalm 90:4). (NASB)

