

*Charts: The Events of the Rapture, The Resurrections*

## PREFACE

In our last session we made the case for the pretribulational Rapture, why we believe it to be a part of the Eschaton. As I said before, the word “rapture” is derived from the Latin *rapio*, meaning “to seize, snatch, carry away.” In this session and the next we will detail the events of the Rapture—their order and significance. Before we begin, however, an important reminder is in order.

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.**

Our important reminder is in v52: “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” As we proceed to detail the events of the Rapture, remember that *it all—every last detail—occurs in the blink of an eye*. While it may take us an hour to discuss the Rapture’s individual events, in real-time all of those events take place within the time it takes to blink your eye.

Our principal text for the events of the Rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, which is included on Chart 4: The Events of the Rapture. [You should keep this chart handy during this session as well as the next.](#)

I have also included Chart Five, which places all the different resurrections described in God’s word. This will be used during our *next* session. **Both charts will be used in our next session.**

## FOR THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN...

**Sidebar:** What precious truth, what compassionate condescension is announced in that brief phrase, “the Lord Himself.” Heaven often employs its angels for getting things done on earth or delivering messages (which is what the word [Hebrew: *malakh*, Greek: *angelos*] means: “messenger.” This time, however, it is the second member of the Godhead Himself—no lieutenants, no underlings, no emissaries. Our Savior personally comes to collect His own.

Although this is not Christ’s official second coming—which occurs between the Tribulation and the Millennium, when He returns in breathtaking power, wrath, and judgment—even so in the near-touchdown of the Rapture He still comes in great authority, as a commanding general. All the underlying Greek substantiates this:

**the Lord** = *ho kyrios* = the master, the one supreme in authority, controller  
**with a shout, with a cry of command** = *en keleusmati* = from *keleuo*; a command, a summons, an order

**voice** of the archangel = *phone* (fo-nay') = voice, tone, noise; a disclosure of some sort

the **trumpet** of God = *salpingi* = a quavering or reverberation

In the Pentateuch we have a perfect illustration of what sort of effect the “trumpet of God” might have on mere mortals. Yahweh instructed Moses to consecrate the people and bring them to the foot of the mountain so they can hear Him speaking to Moses.

### **Read Exodus 19:16-19.**

Later,

All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die." (Exodus 20:18-19)

In the very first split second of Christ's return He announces that He is no longer showing Himself as the gentle, humble, Servant of before. He is Lord, and now, with the same voice He used to bring into existence Creation itself, He issues commands that must be obeyed. And His first command is that the graves of the redeemed be emptied.

Let us not force this supernatural event into the earthly rules of physics. God plays by His own rules, and is under no obligation to fit His ways into our understanding. Some have used this verse to be critical of the position that the rapture will be something that is relatively “secret”—that is, in contrast to when Christ comes back to earth itself for the Millennium, and the whole world will witness Him. During the Rapture Christ remains at some lofty place between heaven and earth, and deals only with the redeemed. The critics posit that with these three audible signals—the Lord's shout, the voice of the archangel, the trumpet call—the entire world will know what is going on. But who among us can say what this will sound like?

Will these sounds be in sequence, one after the other, or all at once? Do you know what the voice of an archangel sounds like? Do you know what the trumpet of God sounds like? How will three heavenly sounds, whether distinct from one another or in unison, sound to earthly, human ears? The sound of a lightning strike ten-miles distant can be an extended, rolling rumble, often pleasant to the ears.

That same lightning strike outside one's window is a sharp crack of doom, and decidedly *unpleasant*.

Perhaps the cry of command from the Lord will be a warm, inviting melody, with harmony contributed by the head angel, the duet accompanied by God's trumpet. Or it may be the jolting crack of a lightning strike outside one's bedroom window. David Guzik points out another possible aspect of this.

*David Guzik:* It may be [that] all three descriptions (shout, voice, and trumpet) refer to the same sound, or there may be three distinct sounds. The rapture will not be silent or secret, *though the vast majority of people may not understand the sound or its meaning.* (emphasis added)

With that possibility, the unregenerate may hear something, but will probably not know what it is. Paul, on the road to Damascus, saw and heard something different from his companions (Acts 9:3-7). God the Father and Jesus have a conversation in John 12:28-29. The bystanders had different opinions about what they heard:

[Jesus said, ]“Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” (John 12:28-29 ESV)

Finally, even if these three sounds, either individually or collectively, are so thunderous that those being raised (either from the grave or from the earth) must cover their ears, do we imagine that the one who created all things cannot tune the frequency to just a subset of the population? Do they not each have the Holy Spirit in residence who might act as a receiver tuned to the frequency of Christ's voice—a frequency inaudible or at least incomprehensible to the unregenerate? Does not the one with the Spirit comprehend God's written word where others do not?

#### ...AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST.

Whether the summoning sounds are in unison or a sequence, their immediate purpose is to call the dead up from out of the ground—or from wherever they are, be it coffin, urn, sea bottom, or nothingness. God is not stymied by the nature of our remains; whatever and wherever we are, we will be raised to new life in Him.

Some in the church in Thessalonica were afraid that if they died before Christ's return, they would have “missed the train” as it were. If the Thessalonians had been familiar with Jewish Scripture, they would have been encouraged by something Job said—a very, very long time before the first century.

## Read Job 19:25-27.

It is usually profitable to look around the corner of what we read in God's word—to come in by the side door, as it were. In speaking of the resurrection of believers I have made the point that there is little value in being saved by Christ if one is *not* raised from the grave. What good would *that* be? But because *He* was raised from the dead, those who are “in Christ,” will be as well. Paul goes out of his way to lift the Thessalonians out of their ignorance about this.

## Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16.

Paul makes it clear: Those who have died prior to Christ's return will not just be raised from the grave; their situation will be addressed *first*. They will be the priority.

Still looking around the corner, we should wonder, What good would it be to just be raised from the dead? Knowing what will be occurring after the Rapture, who would want to go from the grave to that? But v14 in the passage just read says, “... even so *God will bring with Him* those who have fallen asleep in Jesus” (emphasis added).

The promise from God is that if we are in His Son—if our body enters the grave belonging to Christ—it will one day be raised *from* the grave to live with Him and the Father for all eternity. That is our hope; that is *real* salvation, as Jesus put it so eloquently in John 14:6. We can read this familiar passage now in a new light because of the Thessalonian passage.

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; *no one comes to the Father but through Me.*”

Doesn't that last clause take on extra meaning in light of the passage in Thessalonians. We typically think of John 14:6 to mean that the only way to God the Father—i.e., the only way to obtain eternal life with God rather than the alternative—is through *faith* in Christ, which is perfectly true. But it also means that in the day of resurrection, when Christ returns, the way upward to the Father for saints both living and “asleep” will be through—and *with*—Christ. He will come to personally conduct us into the presence of our heavenly Father.

For this reason one of the most comforting and encouraging words in the Bible are the ones at the end of v17: “...and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

**In our next session we will continue with the events of the Rapture.**

# THE EVENTS OF THE RAPTURE

"...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..." (1 Corinthians 15:52)



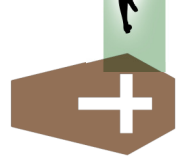
The Lord meets and embraces those who are His



Church Age

The Tribulation

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*



The dead in Christ (first)

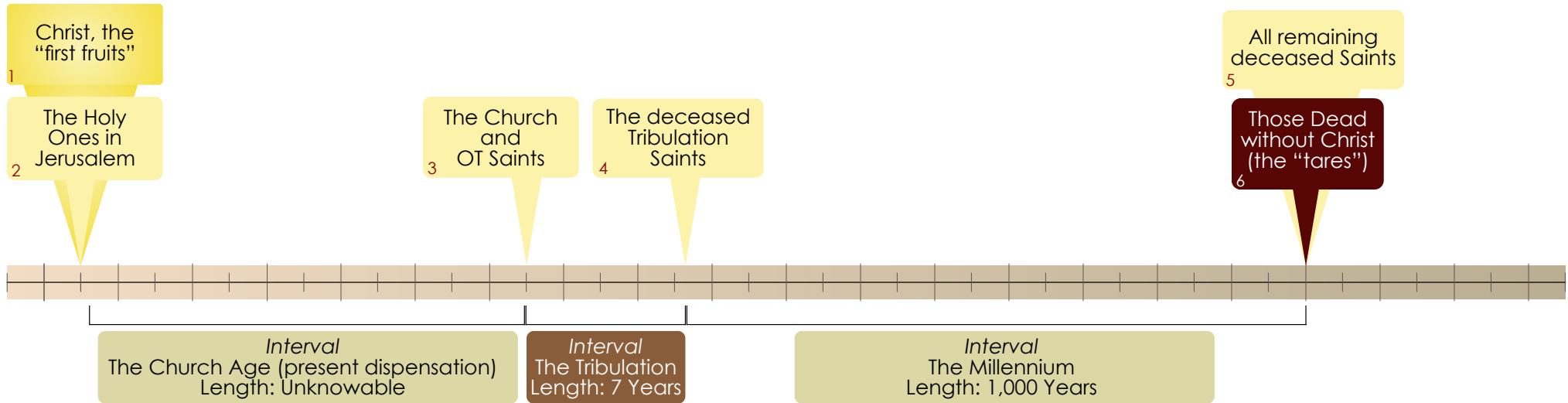


Those who are alive (second)

*Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*



# THE RESURRECTIONS



## Footnotes

1  
1 Corinthians 15:20-23  
Revelation 1:4-6

2  
Matthew 27:51-53  
Isaiah 26:19

3  
1 Corinthians 15:49-54  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-17  
Revelation 20:6

4  
Revelation 6:9-11  
Revelation 7:13-17  
Revelation 20:4

5  
Revelation 20:5  
Daniel 12:2

6  
Daniel 12:2  
Matthew 3:11-12  
Matthew 13:24-30  
John 5:29  
Acts 24:15  
1 Corinthians 15:24-26  
Revelation 20:11-15

