

Quick-study-on-Rapture

A study of Snapshots of a Disciple

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Hello brothers and sisters in Christ, and friends :)

Please remember as you read this, that I know this is not a primary or even a second-level issue. This is more like a 3rd-level issue - meaning this is not essential to know to be genuinely saved. I consider it helpful to understanding God's progression of events and I think it's helpful to understanding the world and times we live in. So, with that said, I think there is no reason for hard-feelings or harsh conversations on this subject. I'm not writing to post my views, but to post what I believe is a Biblical worldview on this subject and this short study is to answer a question that I got from a brother in Christ and have heard many times in the last several years asked to me. My family is attending a church that studied through the Book of Revelation last year and so this is fresh on my mind and it answered many questions that help me to understand events and things that we are witnessing, with something of a timeline of what is scheduled to happen when, where and why. If you have more questions on this - I welcome them, and will be glad to look at the Scriptures on this subject. You are welcome to email me directly or FB message me or comment below. -

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Btw, if you are not a believer in Christ, some of this Bible study will not make any sense to you, but you might find it to be curious info :)

So with that said, in this brief study, I want to look at 3 things -

1> What is the rapture?

2-A> What is the Biblical progression?

2-B> How does that fit with Revelation?

So, with that outline, let's dig in.

1> **What is the 'rapture' from Scriptures?**

First off, you need to be aware that you will not find the word 'rapture' in the Bible. That is an English transliteration of a Greek word. So, let's look at 1st Thessalonians 4 to see what God talks about on the subject of 'rapture'.

"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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1st Thessalonians 4:13-18)

So, the Lord will come at a time we don't know (see next passages). Jesus will appear in the sky, there's a trumpet sound, His archangel will give a shout (possibly a call to come up), those who died in Christ will ascend first, then those who are alive after them, and we'll be with Him forever :)

The phrase “caught up” is one word in the Greek, and though I can't pronounce it, it means literally being snatched up. This word has been transliterated into English and called ‘the rapture’ or catching up of the body of Christ.

And that leads us to answering question

2> **What is the Biblical progression of the rapture in the end times events?**

Let's look briefly at a few passages to get some details about the progression, then we can look at a couple of passages that help show a progression.

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” (1st Thessalonians 5:1-11)

So, after describing the rapture and how those who know and follow Christ will be with Him, God - through Paul - then goes into the subject of ‘when’. As you see here, there are no dates :P But, of course Jesus also said the same thing (though their question was slightly different from the one in 1st Thessalonians 4-5): **“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”** (Mark 13:32) And another key note here - Paul knew enough of the timing/progression to have taught it so clearly to the Thessalonians, so much so that he then very gently rebukes them for falling for other confusions. Meaning? This is a subject we can have some clarity on - if we take God's Word literally, not figuratively. That does not mean we will know everything on this, but at very least, we should be able to know and identify false prophecies about the coming and/or other things that Scripture is clear on. **“But concerning the times and the seasons,**

brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night..." (1st Thess. 5:1)

Here in 1st Thessalonians 5, we do see some key details. First, it's going to come as a surprise to many, but that it doesn't have to surprise Christ's church. And then, God uses Paul to challenge all of us to be "**sober-minded**" - alert, focused on eternal things, not on chasing our self-centered pleasures.

The word 'day' there (vs 4) could be referring to the day of the rapture, but I think in context, it's more talking about the "Day of the Lord" - meaning when Jesus comes back and slaughters His enemies at the end of the 7-year Tribulation. Either way, God's theme here is that those who are sober-minded, diligent, faithful followers of Christ will not have to go through the Tribulation - notice vs 9 - "**For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...**" (1st Thessalonians 5:9) This perspective I believe is here and in chapter 4, including the literal Greek word meaning - 'snatching out from', as though rescued right before something shocking and fearful. Also, the ending in both chapter 4 and 5 here has the repetitious theme of "**comfort one another**" (1st Thess. 4:18) -- And -- "**comfort each other**" (1st Thess. 5:11) - as in, comfort each other with these words. What words? That Jesus will withdraw His people before something.

Okay, that gives a little context on this. So, now the question of when? That's a question we don't know. But, a better question is more like - what's the Biblical progression of these things? Now, this is where these two parts of the second question kind of merge together.

Let's first take Revelation 4 and a few other passages, then we'll come back to more answer question 2-B after that. Now, I need to mention going into this, you need to know that I take a literal view of the book of Revelation, because I believe that is what we are warned to do at the front and back of this Book (Revelation 1:3; Revelation 22:14). I believe everything else - yes 'everything' falls in the Bible neatly into place in the chronology of a literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation when we take the Book of Revelation as both a literal chronology (with some breaks for explanation) and a literal text - even the symbols have literal meanings that are either explained in the Book of Revelation or elsewhere in the Scriptures, since God's Word fits together as a tightly-woven tapestry. With that perspective, I hope you'll stick around as I quote Scripture and show how God's Word fits together. *(I intend to give a brief outline on the progression of the Book of Revelation later at the end of this short study.)*

"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in Heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.' Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a Throne set in Heaven, and One sat on the Throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around

the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” (Revelation 4:1-5)

Okay, so what do we see here? John, the apostle, sees an open door (seems to be a large one), a trumpet, and is called by a loud voice - come up here. Now, you'll notice that we do not see the physical 'rapture' here. It appears to be between Revelation 4:1 and verse 2. Also, the phrase **“Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”** (Rev. 4:1) also notes that this - Rev. 4:1 is about to come after something else. What is described in Rev. 2 and 3? The Church age. So after the church age, we see a reference to the 'rapture' - or catching up of the church. As you continue reading through chapters 4 and 5, you see the saints worship Christ and then some sort of judgment or evaluation to see who is worthy to take the Scroll with the title deed of Creation. John cries until an elder tells him that Jesus, the Lamb of God is worthy and then we see Jesus start to take back the Earth, starting in Revelation 6. (I plan to cover the progression - in brief -at the end of this study). One thing is clear, after Revelation 4, we do not see the church 'ecclesia' referenced on Earth again - only in Heaven.

Okay, so there we see a glimpse of an order or progression in Chapter 4. Let's now look at Daniel 9, then at 2nd Thessalonians 2.

“And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off [crucified], but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood [massive invading army], and till the end of the war, desolations are determined. Then he [antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many [in Israel] for one week [week of years - 7 yrs]; but in the middle of the week [3 1/2 yrs] He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.” (Daniel 9:26-27) This passage fills in many helpful things. First, it defines the Tribulation as a time of 7 years (a week of years). Secondly, it also shows that there is a break in the progression of this 70 weeks of years for the Jewish people = 490. And, it references that the antichrist - world leader, will make/sign a seven year covenant with Israel, then break it half-way through. Revelation will fill in more detail, including how at the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will come back with His saints and Jesus Himself will destroy His enemies.

Okay, so we get a few tips from there. But, the reason I went there next is so you can see what God prophesied about the coming antichrist, and see the prophetic background that Paul is about to reference in 2nd Thessalonians 2. So, let's look at 2nd Thessalonians, because this is where the progression starts to click in place.

“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 had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day 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 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.” (2nd Thessalonians 2:1-8)

Again, God through Paul is teaching the brethren in Thessalonica that they need to grasp some of this, so that they are not knocked around by the confusion and deception of the world. Paul then notes that the “Day of the Lord” cannot happen until after the antichrist leads a falling away (vs 3). Then in verse 6, God shows that the man of lawlessness (antichrist) cannot be revealed until after the Holy Spirit steps aside. The verse reads **“taken out of the way”** but a proper literal translation is that He (Holy Spirit) steps aside, for He will not completely be removed because He holds all things together, and even resists the antichrist from doing some things in the Tribulation. So, **“taken out of the way”** = steps aside.

So with this passage, the progression that we now have is this -

- 1> The Holy Spirit steps aside
- 2> The man of lawlessness is revealed
- 3> He signs/makes a covenant with Israel for 7 years - breaks it after 3 1/2 years
- 4> After the Tribulation, Jesus comes back and destroys His enemies.

Now, let's look more at how the Holy Spirit is currently restraining (not completely stopping, but restraining) the man and system of lawlessness. How does the Holy Spirit restrain satan's system of lawlessness? We see a clear answer in 2nd Corinthians 5: **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.”** (2nd Corinthians 5:17-20)

This passage really fills in some key details. First off - what is new about someone who's saved - now a believer/follower of Christ? The old sin nature is still there and so is a lot of their love for sin. So, what's new? Right - the Holy Spirit is now inside of that person, teaching them how to walk more in God's ways and grow in leaving

behind the ways of the world. So, now, we then see in verse 18, that the Holy Spirit is given to us so that God can then use us to call people to repentance - “**ministry of reconciliation**”. And we see that again in verse 20: “**Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.**” (2nd Cor. 5:20) So, as you can see, the Holy Spirit does talk to people - but He mostly uses other people to talk to them. Do you see that? We see this same principle in Ephesians 5. “**And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.**” (Ephesians 5:11) There again - that's the work of the Holy Spirit exposing what is evil, but He mostly uses people to say it. It's the amazing God-chosen combination of God using people to do His work (most of which we don't do well and need to REALLY grow and improve in...)

Now with that passage, I think you can see how the Holy Spirit is also restraining the man of lawlessness - through those who have the Holy Spirit within them. So, when/how does He step aside? At the ‘rapture’ for that is when the majority of His servants are taken up to be with Christ. Now, we have a full progression.

- 1> The catching up of the church (‘rapture’) - The Holy Spirit steps aside
- 2> The man of lawlessness is revealed
- 3> He signs/makes a covenant with Israel for 7 years - breaks it after 3 1/2 years
- 4> After the Tribulation, Jesus comes back and destroys His enemies.

And with that perspective, I also believe 1st Thessalonians 4 and 5 and Revelation 4:1-2 further enhance this understanding.

Okay, lastly the end question:

2-B> **How does this perspective fit with the Book of Revelation?**

We looked at this somewhat above. Now I just want to wrap up with a brief literal outline of the Book of Revelation. :)

Revelation 1 - John sees Christ in all of His fullness and glory, and he's told to write letters to the 7 churches where he himself had ministered to, but could not go to but has been praying fervently for while exiled.

Revelation 2 and 3 - Seven letters to seven gatherings of believers in 7 historical cities. I believe from our studies on it that these 7 churches are 3 types

- 1> Historical cities/churches to whom the letters were written
- 2> Category-types of churches to whom the subjects also teach/apply
- 3> A chronology of the ‘church age’

Revelation 4 - John is called up, the church goes up, seeing God in His beauty - wonderful worship scene!

Revelation 5 - The question - who is worthy to take the scroll and wrap up the devil and his evil, and wicked men and their evil - Jesus is proven worthy and takes the scroll

Revelation 6 - The antichrist sets up his kingdom and starts the 7-year Tribulation - the last 7 years of the Daniel 9:27 prophecy - first 4 seals are the establishing of his kingdom and 'treaties' with nations and Israel and then the mass-murders of those who oppose him and/or don't take the mark (*limited to 1/4 of the population*). The fifth seal is the souls of those murdered by satan and the antichrist cry out to God. The sixth seal - God starts to get revenge - massive earthquake is his announcement of His unfolding judgment against the rebels.

Revelation 7 - Explanation of 144,000 Jewish virgin men sealed and preach - many do get saved throughout the Tribulation - not all

Revelation 8 - Seventh seal leads to 4 trumpet judgments

Revelation 9 - Fifth trumpet, Sixth Trumpet

Revelation 10 - Explanation of the 7th trumpet judgment, John re-commissioned to preach again (meaning soon-release after the Book of Revelation is finished)

Revelation 11 - Explanation of the 2 witnesses, Seventh trumpet judgment sounded

Revelation 12 - Review of Israel's history in brief symbols, Satan is cast out of Heaven to only terrorize those on the earth - this appears to be the middle of the tribulation, last 3 1/2 years -- Starts the 'Great Tribulation' also called 'the time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble'

Revelation 13 - A review of God's perspective on satan's last 7 year rebellion - the Tribulation in symbols, record of Satan setting up his image in the Tribulation temple

Revelation 14 - A review of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries, warning to the perverse system/city of Babylon, the final rapid-pace judgments are about to begin that culminate in the battle of Armageddon

Revelation 15 - Explanation of the 7 last plagues/bowl judgments

Revelation 16 - The seven plague/bowl judgments

Revelation 17 - The explanation of the evil deeds of the people on earth - the rebellions of Babylon

Revelation 18 - The call for believers in God to run from the city/system of the sinful pleasures of Babylon - before it's destruction

Revelation 19 - Praise for God's justice on the rebellion and evil done on the earth, Jesus comes back with the saints and destroys the rebels Himself

Revelation 20 - Satan captured and bound for 1000 years, a judgment of the righteous after the Tribulation, satan is released after the 1000 years (Millennium) for a short time, his rebellion is destroyed, then the Great White Throne Judgment for all who rebelled against God since the fall (except those who have been saved through Jesus' blood).

Revelation 21-22 - Clear descriptions of the glorious beauty of Heaven and some few details of God's ever-unfolding Kingdom throughout eternity - with no sin every again

Well, I thank you for joining me in reading/studying this. I look forward to future conversations on it. I believe what I just laid out above is a Biblical analysis of this question. You have the verses, and I hope I explained it well enough to make sense and for you to consider and study more on your own (or ask me about) - You are free to come to your own conclusions, but that's the clearest progression of Scripture that I know of. If it makes sense to you, as usual - you are welcome to share it as I hold no copyright over the Word of God or the teaching of it.

May God continue teach us a hunger for His Word, a growing obedience to Him, and boldness with grace in sharing His Word and teachings with all who will listen!

a growing servant/life-slave of Jesus, SH :)