

The Two Raptures

ONE OF THE KEYS to properly interpreting the Bible is learning how to keep separate things separate. All too often people take two passages that are talking about two different things and come to the conclusion that they are actually addressing the same thing. This leads to a lot of error.

There are a number of examples that I could give, but the one I want to focus on right now deals with the Rapture. A lot of people don't realize that there are actually two different Raptures. It is very common for people to read verses that are talking about the second Rapture and think that the Bible is actually talking about the first one.

In I Thessalonians the apostle Paul speaks about the first Rapture – the one that takes place before the Tribulation. This is what he has to say about it:

I Thessalonians 4:16: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

At some point before the Tribulation the Lord will return to Earth, raise the righteous dead, and transform living believers into immortals. Then all believers (those who are alive and those who were just resurrected) will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. After that Jesus will take us back to Heaven and leave the unbelievers behind on the Earth.

This is what people usually think of when they think about the Rapture. However, this isn't the only Rapture in the Bible. There is a *second* one, and it takes place at the *end* of the Tribulation. Jesus spoke of it on several occasions. For example, the parable of the wheat and the tares speaks of it:

Matthew 13:30: “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

Jesus explained the parable as follows:

Matthew 13:39: “The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

In this Rapture (which happens at the *end* of the Tribulation) Jesus does not do any gathering.

Instead, He sends out His angels, who gather *the wicked* and cast them into Hell. After this, the righteous are gathered and enter the kingdom.

As you can see, we are dealing with two very different events here. *Before* the Tribulation, Jesus Himself will gather the righteous (and only the righteous) and take them with Him to Heaven. *After* the Tribulation, Jesus will send angels to gather the wicked and cast them into Hell, and then the righteous will enter His kingdom. They are *two different gatherings*, done by *two different agents*, which take place at *two different times*, with *two different outcomes*.

The big problem is that people confuse them. They read passages where Jesus was speaking about the second gathering (and He spoke of it a number of times), and they mistakenly think that He was talking about the first gathering. This is where the error of the Post-Tribulation Rapture comes from. People read about a Rapture that takes place after the Tribulation and they mistakenly think that it is the only one. They don't realize that there are two different events.

Why are there two different events? Because Jesus is doing two very different things. In the first Rapture, Jesus is gathering His Bride so He can take her to Heaven. He is removing the Church from Earth so that she will not have to endure the Tribulation. However, in the second Rapture, Jesus is cleansing the Earth of the wicked before His Millennial Kingdom begins. The first one is a gathering for protection and rescue; the second is a gathering for judgment and wrath.

When you are reading through the Gospels and you see Jesus talking about a gathering of people, pay close attention to the context. The chance is very good that the Rapture that Jesus is talking about is the second one – the one that takes place *after* the Tribulation. Do not confuse the two, or you will have all sorts of problems.