

The Two Raptures

In order to properly interpret the Bible we must learn how to distinguish between things that are different. It's easy to take two passages which are talking about two entirely different things and come to the conclusion that they're addressing the same event. 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 in this document deals with the rapture. The Bible teaches that there are actually two different raptures, which take place at two very different times. It's easy to read the verses that are talking about the second Rapture and assume the text is talking about the first one.

In 1 Thessalonians the apostle Paul speaks about the first Rapture – the one that takes place before the Day of the Lord (the tribulation). This is what he has to say about it:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: “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: 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.”

Before the Day of the Lord begins, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this world, raise the righteous dead, and transform all living believers into incorruptible immortals. Then all believers (both 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 the first rapture.

The second rapture takes place at the *end* of the Day of the

Lord. 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 13:39-43: "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 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; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 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 (unlike the first one) Jesus doesn't 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 millennium.

As you can see, we're dealing with two very different events here. *Before* the Day of the Lord, Jesus Himself will gather the righteous (and *only* the righteous) and take them with Him to Heaven. *After* the Day of the Lord, Jesus will send His angels to gather the wicked and cast them into Hell, and then the righteous

will enter His kingdom. These are *two different gatherings*, done by *two different agents*, which take place at *two different times*, with *two different outcomes*.

It is very easy to confuse these raptures! A lot of error comes from reading the passages where Jesus was speaking about the second gathering, and they mistakenly thinking 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 (which is something the Bible does indeed teach!) and mistakenly think that's the *only* one. But the truth is 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's removing the church from Earth so that she won't have to endure the wrath that God will pour out upon the world during the tribulation. However, in the second rapture Jesus is cleansing this world of the wicked before His Millennial Kingdom begins. The first rapture is a gathering people for protection and rescue; the second rapture is a gathering people for judgment and wrath.

When you're reading through the gospels and you see Jesus talking about a gathering of people, play close attention to the context. The chance is very good that the rapture which Jesus is talking about is the second one – the one that takes place *after* the tribulation. Don't confuse the two or you'll have all sorts of problems.