

The Case of the Missing Saints
(A Biblical Investigation into the Mystery of the Rapture)
Rockey Jackson - November 24, 1999
Section 11 of 13

The solution of our mystery

The Rapture is defined as the transportation of living believers from mortal existence on the earth to eternal existence with the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be equivalent to resurrection for those who experience it because their mortal bodies will be instantaneously changed into immortal bodies without passing through death. This is necessary in order to receive eternal inheritance because the mortal cannot inherit what is immortal. The Rapture and the resurrection of the just are effectively a single event. They occur at the same time and have the same purpose, to provide all those who are spiritually alive with immortal bodies and gather them to the Lord.

We have seen from our study of the pertinent scriptures that the Rapture is associated with the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in fact the very first event that ushers in the day of the Lord (the millennial reign of Christ). Our Lord will come as a thief in the night to steal us out of the world and take us to be in heaven with Him. When the Lord comes as a thief, He will only descend to the clouds and the angels will gather all believers, both from heaven and from earth, to Him. This is the Bridegroom coming for His Bride. We will go with Him to the marriage supper of the Lamb and we will forever remain with our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not know the specific time, the day or the hour, when the Rapture will occur. We are, however, supposed to know the general time, the season, when it will occur. There are several specific, observable major events that will precede the Rapture. They include unusual signs in the heavens, the Desolating Sacrilege, and most of the Great Tribulation. Because we don't know the specific time when the Rapture will occur, we are to stay awake and watch for the signs that declare the season of the Rapture so we won't be unprepared or surprised when the Lord comes for us.

The Rapture is the first of several events that make up the Second Coming of our Lord. The Bible in Rev. 16:15 tells us that the Lord will come as a thief during the sixth bowl judgment. This is the season when the armies are gathering for the Battle of Armageddon. Other initiating events of the day of the Lord include the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Battle of Armageddon, the binding of Satan (for one thousand years), and the Judgment of the Nations. The final removal of unrighteous men from the earth at the start of Christ's millennial reign occurs at the Judgment of the Nations when the Lord separates the sheep from the goats. We see therefore, that the current age of grace we are living in does not end prior to the kingdom age (millennial reign of Christ) that the Lord is coming to establish. There is an overlapping time of transition between these two periods that lasts from the Rapture until the completion of the Judgment of the Nations.

To sum up, we do not know the specific time, the day and the hour, that the Rapture will occur. However, the scriptures are consistent in teaching its general timing. The Rapture will occur very near the end of the Tribulation while the world's armies under the leadership of the Antichrist are gathering for the battle of Armageddon. Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, we will be changed. We will be gathered together with believers who have already died and we will become the Bride of Christ. In a grand resurrection of the (spiritually) living we will all receive immortal bodies, which are our wedding garments. The Lord our Bridegroom will take us to

attend the banquet He has prepared for His Bride, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Then we will come back with the Lord when He physically returns to defeat the Antichrist and judge the earth and we will reign with Him for a thousand years. This does not agree with any of the commonly held positions for the timing of the Rapture. It is not pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, nor post-tribulation in the traditional sense. Since we don't know what day or hour our Lord will come for us, we must be aware of the signs that indicate the season of the Rapture. We are exhorted to avoid spiritual complacency and to keep alert or the return of our Lord Jesus Christ could be an unpleasant surprise instead of a joyful reunion.

Well, it has been an interesting case. I'm glad that you've shared it with me my fellow sleuths. Together we investigated the Epistles, read the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then traced our way through the story of Revelation. Everything tracked in the outline of Revelation as we expected it to. Of the eleven items we were looking for, we definitely found eight of them. For the remaining three items we found possibilities though we couldn't definitively say that we knew we had found exactly what was referenced in the Gospels and Epistles. From the weight of the evidence it appears to be an open and shut case. So, the time has come to submit our evidence to the court of our brothers and sisters in Christ.