

# About the Rapture

Discussing a topic like the rapture can lead to misunderstandings and differences of opinion. Some people state that there will be a pre-tribulation rapture, while others say it will be post-tribulation. We can discuss it endlessly, but we are not meant to know certain things, and there is a purpose for it. No one knows the exact time of the Lord's return and the exact time of his own death. Why? Because we need to be always ready. What we need to do is go to the Word of God.

Some things need to be taken by faith. We mustn't try to be always in control of everything. Man, by nature, likes to control things and know everything, but it cannot be, and it doesn't always happen in this way. If you inquire about what faith means, you will see that it doesn't have to do with knowing, seeing, and controlling. It is God who must be in control and be over us. If today we can know, see, and have things under control (under God's control), it is because we believe, not the other way around.

Just imagine how it would be if we knew everything, even the time of our own death and also the time of His coming. What do you think we

would do then? Most, if not all people will do whatever suits them and whatever they like with the thought that when the day comes, they will repent. Do you think that they will really repent on that day? I don't think so. Most of the hearts of those persons will be so hardened that they probably won't do it.

God knows our hearts and wants to save us from that condition. He has established everything perfectly and in our favor so that we can believe in a genuine way. And while we are here on earth, we need this kind of faith. The faith that trusts God, believes what He says, and is not impatient when something doesn't happen in the way or the time we expected it to be. I am not saying that Christians believe blindly in God. They are able to see and experience certain promises and have experiences in their hearts, but there are some things for which we need just to believe and *wait*.

Yes, faith sometimes has to do with patience. We usually want everything now. We say, "Where is the success that You promised me, Lord?" when maybe that success will come in a different way, or "Where is the wife You promised me?" when this could happen in His time, which is the right time, or "Where is the rapture that You promised will happen, Lord? Why is it not happening yet?"

In general, we are always impatient, but faith sometimes means trusting and having patience. I am not referring to faith for salvation. The Bible says it can happen anytime, and "now" is the day of salvation

(2 Corinthians 6:2). Why does it say that? Because tomorrow can be late. We don't know what will happen tomorrow. Our life is like a vapor (James 4:14). For some things, we are impatient, and we want them to happen right now, and for others, such as salvation, we wait, and that won't be a problem for us. This is the nature of our hearts.

One of the passages in the Bible that speaks about the rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

Even though it doesn't include the word rapture there, we see a clear description of what will happen. "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."

The word for "caught up" in the Greek Bible is *ἀρπαγησόμεθα* (arpagisometha) that derives from the word *αἰρέομαι* and basically means "grab," "grasp," "seize," "take up," "pull," or "take with force." We can see the clear meaning of this word and say that even if we don't find the exact word *rapture* in the Bible, this word describes exactly what a "rapture" is.

I can't tell you if this occurrence will be before what the Bible calls "the great tribulation" or after it or in which way exactly it will happen, but from what we see in the Scriptures, something will happen.

Let's look at another story having to do with the topic. We know that God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of their sin. They were destroyed by fire. Same as some scriptures indicate that the world will end one day. There were not many righteous people in Sodom, only Abraham's nephew Lot, who was spared because of his righteousness and was *taken away* by the angels sent to destroy that city. (Genesis 19:15-17)

There is a time when God's patience is over. I mean that even though He is a patient God, as we read in 2 Peter 3:9, He still has limits regarding His patience with sin. The only reason for Him to have patience and bear it is because of the lost souls who still need to be saved. If there is still some possibility for the gospel to be spread and for people to have the opportunity to hear the gospel, He will still have patience with sin. He is a just God and cannot bear any sin, but for the love of those who still need to be saved, He doesn't bring the end right now and is patient.

When that possibility is over, and the people are so hardened that they won't hear the gospel and darkness overwhelms everything—meaning there won't be a chance for the good news anymore—the end will come. Then, God will no longer be able to bear the sin.

Why do you think that Jesus bore all our sins on the cross and allowed Himself to suffer and be slain? Because He knew that His death and resurrection were for the salvation of the souls of the lost. This is

His main purpose. The salvation. He is not waiting only because sin hasn't yet escalated to its maximum but also because there are still people who need to be saved.

The end will not come just because of the sin in itself. We know that God, in general, cannot bear sin. Still, at the present moment, He bears it for love. The end will come because the gospel will be prevented and because of the world's view toward sin, because of the way the society sees it. When sin is considered completely normal, as it has already started to be, and the gospel is only seen as negative, and there are obstacles preventing its spread, the time will be right to make the end happen.

Even in our personal lives, how we see sin and our attitudes toward it are important in God's eyes. The Bible speaks about the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place where it is not supposed to be, meaning that what is meant to be holy and honorable, like God standing on His throne, lifted up and exalted by the people, is replaced by something opposite that exalts what is wicked. "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place . . ." (Matthew 24:15).

I know there are people having different points of view on this passage, but we need to see the meaning it carries. To me, its meaning has to do with today's intention to exalt what is wrong instead of God.

We can say that this verse probably hasn't been entirely fulfilled yet, but we see the direction this world has taken.

If God has patience with us today, it is because of Jesus' sacrifice and the possibility it gives people to repent. Jesus represents the mercy and the patience of God. "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for the fire until the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).

Notice it says that the heavens and the earth are preserved by "the same Word," the same Word through which everything was created. Jesus is the Word of God, as John 1:1-3 states. As Christians, we also need to bear with others and be patient with them, not to tolerate their sinful life, but to be patient, waiting for them to turn to God. "And the Lord said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is *very grave*, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know'" (Genesis 18:20-21).

Here, we see the reason the Lord reacted this way toward the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah—because their sin was too grave. The unrighteousness was at its maximum. What comes to your mind when you think about this? Doesn't this remind you of the times we are living in now?

We are certain that God can break any chain and any hardened heart, but looking at the Scriptures in general, we are warned not to

harden our hearts. “. . . Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7).

If hearts are overly hardened, He cannot work there and save someone by force. We are all warned not to get to that point. When the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was so great, and they were hardened, there wasn't more to do.

We are not talking about someone who is just struggling with some issues and is worried about his condition and heart before God, but about someone who is not worried at all about his or her sin and, after hearing, keeps persevering stubbornly in his own direction. The Bible tells us in Romans 1:28, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting . . .” In this case, we see that there is a limit that has been surpassed. There is always a solution if we go before God and repent, but here we are talking about people who don't want to depend on God and don't want to seek a solution from Him and walk in His ways. The end and the tribulation will come when there isn't much possibility for Him to work anymore because of this hardness.

Maybe the last trials, which form part of the Great Tribulation, will be the last way God will try to awaken the people, show them their condition and need, and warn them. It is because He loves them so much that He cannot just leave them in their condition. Why can't He just touch them the way they are? Because it works this way: People need to

realize something first. They cannot just repent without coming to this realization and acknowledging their sin. And He is the one who can bring them to this condition so they can acknowledge their sin. No one can do it alone. Only He can help persons to realize their condition. The only thing they mustn't do is to resist.

God wants to help everyone reach this realization. He loves us, and He died for us. In this is shown His love. We need to go to Him as we are, but we need to change by His power afterward. We need to go "as we are" to Him, but if we truly have gone to Him, we will not be "as we were" but different. We are not the same after a true encounter with Him.

We need to realize our need and trust in His power that can regenerate us and perform a miracle in us. We see in the book of Revelation that after going through some trials and tribulations that will take place at the end times, some people will still harden themselves even more (Revelation 16:9).

The world in which we are living is hardened as well. The unrighteousness and tolerance of sin are ever-increasing. "Free thinking" is in fashion now, and things that not even a long time ago were considered taboo now are seen as something almost normal. This is one of the reasons for which the Lord will return, but what else? For what other reason can He make His return and finish everything? It will be when the hardness of people's hearts is so great that they will no longer

be able to receive the gospel. It will be a time when the gospel isn't any longer preached and doesn't find any more good ground. Let us meditate on something. If the world still exists today, if the birds are still singing, and we can laugh and live today, it is because the gospel has been proclaimed. This is the reason God is patient. It is because He still wants and waits for people to be saved.

When there is almost no more possibility for the gospel to be preached and for people to receive it, the end will come, just as the end came to Sodom and Gomorrah. People don't know what they are doing when they prohibit and obstruct the spread of the gospel. In a way, we can say that they are accelerating the end, even though we know that God knows the exact time and He is in control.

We also know that the gospel has been attacked and hindered throughout time, but what we will probably see in the end times will be the opposite of what God wants, and the opposition to the gospel will be overwhelming.