



# THE MIDNIGHT CRY AND THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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# The Midnight Cry and the Rapture of the Church

**SERMON REFERENCE:** Revelation 4:1-5

**LWF SERMON NUMBER:** #2340

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is called our blessed hope. We live in the Church Age, but at the midnight cry, Jesus will return for His own.

Revelation 4:1-5 tells us more about the Rapture of the Church and our heavenly homecoming.

“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’” (Revelation 4:1).

The Rapture is a sacred mystery, which we will never figure out on our own. We can only obtain details of the Rapture by divine revelation.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 gives a promise that we can hold onto. According to these verses, Jesus Himself will descend from Heaven, a shout will come from His mouth, and we will rise in the air to meet Him.

Adrian Rogers says, “Those who have been Heaven-born will be Heaven-bound.”

As Christ followers, we believe in the Rapture, because we believe in the Gospel; we know God is not finished, and the Rapture is linked to redemption.

Revelation 4:4 mentions twenty-four elders who are representatives of God’s people: the twelve patriarchs of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New Testament. Scripture describes their white robes and golden crowns, testifying to the purity and royalty of those who belong to Christ.

No one knows when the Rapture will take place, only that it will happen immediately when the trumpet sounds. Regardless, every Christian is right to expect Christ’s return in his lifetime. We are not waiting for some fulfillment of prophecy: the Second Coming is always near.

The reason our Lord will Rapture His church is to receive His Bride for Himself and rescue Her before the Great Tribulation. It is also a time of reunion, in which we will be joined with one another and with the twenty-four elders. Though we may not know many details about the Rapture, we know it will be a glorious day indeed.

## LIFE APPLICATION

What can we do as we wait for the Second Coming of Jesus and the Rapture of the Church?

- Learn of it; we cannot afford to be ignorant.
- Live for it; we should be found faithful when He comes.
- Look for it; we’re not waiting on some prophecy to be fulfilled.



# The Midnight Cry and the Rapture of the Church

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Revelation 4 enters the third grand division in the book of the Revelation: the things which shall be hereafter.
  - i) Revelation 1:1
    - (1) John was told to write three things:
      - (a) Write what you've seen.
        - (i) This was a vision of Christ.
      - (b) Write about the things which are.
        - (i) This is the church age.
          1. This is the time between the first coming of Jesus and His second coming.
        - (ii) The church age will end with the rapture of the church.
      - (c) Write about the things which shall be hereafter.
        - (i) Prophetic things.
- b) The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is called "the blessed hope."
  - i) Sorrow looks back.
  - ii) Worry looks all around.
  - iii) Hope looks up.
- c) When Jesus Christ comes again, those who are saved and still living will be miraculously transformed, will be given a glorified body, and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
  - i) The bodies of those who have already died in the Lord will be raised from their graves to meet their spirits in the air and be joined with the Lord.
- d) Revelation 4:1
  - i) Beginning with this verse, the book of the Revelation enters into that area that deals with the future.
    - (1) The rapture of the church and everything that will transpire after the rapture.

## 2) WHAT: THE SACRED MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE (Revelation 4:1)

- a) The Bible calls the rapture of the church a mystery.
  - i) A mystery in the Bible is a truth that no one can figure out of his or her own accord, but a truth revealed by divine revelation.
- b) In Revelation 4:1, John is caught up and transported from Earth into Heaven.
  - i) This is the rapture of the church.
- c) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
  - i) The church in Thessalonica was waiting on Jesus' return.
  - ii) Some of their members had died, and they were concerned that their brethren would miss the coming of the Lord.
    - (1) For those who have died in the Lord: the body is in the grave, and the spirit is with the



Lord.

(2) At the rapture, the body will be raised to be reunited with the spirit that comes down with Jesus.

iii) Paul expected Jesus to come back in his lifetime.

d) The word used to describe the rapture is the term “caught up.”

i) We get the word “rapture” from the Latin word that means “to seize or to catch away, to be caught up.”

(1) The Greek word means the same thing.

e) 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

i) The word “mystery” means something that has been hidden but is now revealed.

ii) “We shall not all sleep;” meaning not all believers will die before the rapture.

iii) When Jesus comes again, those who are Heaven-born and Heaven-bound (those who have the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ), will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

f) The rapture is a supernatural event.

i) If we believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection, why would it be difficult to believe in the rapture?

g) Reasons to believe in the rapture:

i) We believe the Gospel.

(1) The Gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

(2) The rapture is linked to redemption.

(a) God is not finished.

(b) You cannot have the incarnation without the coronation.

ii) We believe it because the Word of God teaches it.

(1) 1 Thessalonians 4:15

3) WHO: THE SELECT MULTITUDE OF THE RAPTURE (Revelation 4:4)

a) Not everyone will be caught up with the Lord.

b) Revelation 4:4

i) This speaks of the dead in Christ and those who have been transformed.

ii) Elders are representatives of God’s people, the saints.

(1) Revelation 5:5

(2) Revelation 5:11

iii) Why 24 elders?

(1) The number 24 represents the rule of God on Earth.

(2) These elders have been taken from Earth into Heaven.

(3) These elders represent all who are born again.

iv) These elders are clothed in white.

(1) White raiment represents the righteousness that we have in Christ.

c) Only those who are born again, or saints, will be caught up with the Lord.

i) Revelation 19:8

ii) Revelation 4:4

(1) They received their crowns at the judgment seat of Christ.



- d) Luke 17:34-37
  - i) Just as a thief comes to steal away, Jesus Christ is coming.
  - ii) Where Jesus is, we are going to be gathered together.
    - (1) Those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus will be left behind.
  
- 4) WHEN: THE SECRET MOMENT OF THE RAPTURE (Revelation 4:1-2)
  - a) John was caught up to Heaven suddenly, immediately. He was not expecting it.
    - i) The rapture will happen in the same way.
  - b) Beginning in Revelation 4, the word “church” is not found throughout the rest of the book.
    - i) In chapter 4, the rapture occurs, and the church is caught up to meet the Lord.
  - c) Only God the Father knows the exact time of the rapture.
    - i) Matthew 24:36
  - d) We are not waiting for a prophecy to be fulfilled before the rapture can take place.
    - i) The coming of Jesus is always near.
    - ii) Matthew 24:36
    - iii) Matthew 24:38
    - iv) Matthew 24:42
    - v) Matthew 24:44
    - vi) 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
      - (1) The word “moment” is the word we get our word “atom” from, meaning the smallest indivisible period of time known to them.
    - vii) The signs of the times that we see occurring are signs for what will take place after the rapture.
      - (1) The rapture is not Jesus coming in great power and glory; it is Him coming for His church before He comes in power and glory.
      - (2) The rapture is imminent.
  
- 5) WHY: THE MOTIVE OF THE RAPTURE (Revelation 4:2-5)
  - a) Revelation 4:2-4
    - i) We will sit upon these thrones judging the world, administering His justice.
    - ii) If we suffer with Jesus, we will reign with Jesus.
  - b) The motive of the rapture is three-fold.
    - i) Reception
      - (1) John 14:2-3
      - (2) Our Lord will come and receive His bride to Himself.
        - (a) We will see His majesty.
        - (b) We will glorify His ministry.
          - (i) Revelation 4:3
          - (ii) The jasper mentioned is most likely a clear and translucent diamond (Revelation 21:11), and the sardine stone is blood red in color.
          - (iii) These two emblems speak of His purity and blood sacrifice for the church.
    - ii) Rescue



- (1) Revelation 4:3, 5
  - (a) A rainbow encircles the throne.
  - (b) The rainbow is green in color, symbolizing life.
  - (c) There are lightnings and thunders indicating a storm is coming; the rainbow means the storm is past.
  - (d) The rainbow stands for the covenant God made with His people.
  - (e) The circle of the rainbow speaks of eternity.
- (2) The church is taken out before the Great Tribulation.
  - (a) 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10
- iii) Reunion
  - (1) Revelation 4:4
    - (a) The elders represent all of those who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
  - (2) 1 Thessalonians 4:17

## 6) CONCLUSION

- a) What does this mean for us?
  - i) We should learn of His coming.
    - (1) We cannot afford to be ignorant concerning the second coming of Christ.
  - ii) We should live for His coming.
  - iii) We should look for His coming.
  - iv) We should long for His coming.
- b) The last prayer in the Bible is for Jesus to come.
  - i) Revelation 22:20
- c) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- d) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
  - i) Romans 3:23
  - ii) Romans 10:9-10
  - iii) Romans 10:13
  - iv) Acts 16:31



# The Midnight Cry and the Rapture of the Church

**SERMON REFERENCE:** Revelation 4:1-5

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The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is called what? “The blessed hope.” Be finding Revelation chapter 4. We’re entering into the third grand division. John was told to write three things. “Write what you’ve seen,” and he wrote what he saw, and that was a vision of Christ. And then He said, “Write about things which are,” and that is the Church Age. But the Church Age is going to end with something that we call, “The Rapture of the church.” At the midnight cry, at the midnight cry Jesus is going to come for His own. Those who’ve been twice-born; those who are Heaven-born at that time will be Heaven-bound.

Now our eyes are on the Middle East, and our prayers need to be there because there is a seething cauldron there of trouble, and all of it portends the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you need to be ready, but you don’t need to be fearful. Sorrow looks back. Worry looks all around. But hope looks up. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the blessed hope.

When Jesus Christ comes again, those who are saved and still living will be miraculously transformed, will be given a glorified body, impervious to gravity, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And those who have already died in the Lord, those whose bodies sleep in the earth, whose spirits have already gone to Heaven; will be raised from their sleeping place, from their graves, to meet their spirits in the air and to be joined with us and with the Lord in the air. The Bible calls that the, “Blessed Hope.” It is the Rapture of the church, it is the heavenly homecoming.

Now ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you, we are on a collision course with destiny, and you cannot afford to be ignorant. So I want you to take your Bibles now and look in Revelation chapter 4. As I’ve said, we enter in now to that third grand division in the book of the Revelation, and everything from chapter 4 going forward deals with, “Things which shall be hereafter.” Remember John was told to write, “Things which you’ve seen,” “things which are, and things which shall be hereafter.” So it’s very clear as we look in verse 1, we’re entering into the third division.

“After this I looked and, behold, a door was opened in Heaven and the first voice which I heard was, as it were, of a trumpet talking with me which said,” now listen, “Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.” So from this point on, we enter into that area that deals with the future, with the Rapture of the church and everything that will transpire after the Rapture of the church. Now we’re going to use some words that begin with, “W,” in order to help us to understand the Rapture of the church. The midnight cry and the Rapture of the church.

First of all, the W: what, what. What we’re talking about is the sacred mystery of the Rapture. Now the Bible calls the Rapture of the church a mystery. Now a mystery is not a mystery story like you might see in some novel, but a mystery in the Bible is a truth that no one would ever figure out of his or her own accord, but a truth that has been revealed by divine revelation and God has unlocked the secret in the Word of God, and the Bible calls that a mysterion or a mystery.

Now look in Revelation 4 verse 1, and we’re going to see something of the Rapture. John hears



a voice like a trumpet which says, “Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be, be hereafter.” And John is caught up through that door in the Heavens, and he finds himself now transported from earth into Heaven. That, my friend, is the Rapture of the church. Put in your margin the corresponding New Testament verse, First Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning in verse 13. Paul says, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep.” Now the church at Thessalonica was ignorant of what happened to the dead who died before Jesus came, and they were mourning. They were saying, “Well, we’re waiting for Jesus.”

And by the way, in that day they were waiting for Jesus two thousand years ago and rightly they should have been, but some of their brothers and sisters had died and they were wondering, are they going to miss the coming of the Lord? And Paul said, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not even as others which have no hope.”

Sooner or later most of us will go to the graveside to say good-bye to a loved one who knows the Lord Jesus Christ, but we don’t need to be tearing our hair. Thank God, thank God we have hope, Amen? “Don’t sorrow as those which have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,” and we do, “even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

Now wait a minute. They’re asleep in Jesus, and God’s gonna bring them with Him? Why, of course. The body is in the grave sleeping, the spirit is with the Lord. And so when Jesus comes again, the body comes up, the spirit comes down. And so he says, “Even so them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,” and that tells us that Paul thought that it was highly likely, probable, certainly feasible, that Jesus would come in his lifetime, because he uses the personal pronoun we in the plural sense. “We which are alive and remain,” he thought perhaps in his own lifetime Jesus would come, “shall not prevent or precede them which are asleep.”

Now here’s the promise of the Rapture. Listen to it, “For the Lord Himself,” not some event in history, not some cataclysm, but, “the Lord Himself, this same Jesus, shall descend from Heaven with a shout and 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. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”

If you have a loved one who’s in the grave, just give them comfort and say, “When Jesus comes, we’re going to have a heavenly homecoming.” One of these days Jesus is going to rise from His throne in the lofty Heavens, He’s going to hear the Father say to Him, “Son, go get your bride,” and Jesus is going to come stepping on the clouds. When He descends from Heaven, a shout will come from His lips, the trumpet will sound, and His voice will echo through the subterranean tombs of this earth, and those who know the Lord Jesus Christ will have their ears tuned to Him, and we will be glorified and rise to meet the Lord.

From the swelling bosom of the sea, they will come. From the winding sheets of desert sands, they will come. From the battlefields of this world, they will come. From country graveyards, they will come. “The dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which remain and are alive will be caught up with



them to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Now, the word that is used is the word caught up. We get the word rapture from the Latin word *rapto* which means, “To seize or to catch away, to be caught up.” The Greek word *harpazzo* means the same thing. Now again, I call it a mystery. Here’s another verse I want you to put in your margin. First Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 51. Paul said, “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep,” that is, not everybody’s gonna die before Jesus comes; there are millions who will miss death. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.”

Again now Paul uses the word mystery. The word mystery means: “Something that has been hidden but it is now revealed.” The Old Testament prophets saw the Lord Jesus Christ coming in power and glory. They saw Messiah reigning and ruling, but they did not see the Church Age, and they did not see the Rapture. The only way that people today know about the Rapture is not by studying what the Old Testament prophets had to say, but what the New Testament prophets had to say. This is revealed to the apostle Paul, and he says, “Behold, I show you a mystery.” And he explained the Church Age. That’s what we see right here, the things which are. That is that interval between the time when Jesus came the first time and when He is coming again the second time. What a majestic and mysterious thing that is going to be.

If you were to take some metal, let’s say all kinds of metal, take some silver and some gold and some zinc and some copper and some iron, and sprinkle it on the ground, bits of it, put some of it beneath the surface of the ground, and it’s all there in the ground. Then take one of these giant electromagnets and sweep it over those bits, those particles of metal there in the ground. Some of the metal would rise to meet the magnet. Other of the metal would stay in the ground. The gold would stay in the ground, the silver would stay in the ground, the zinc would stay in the ground, the copper and the bronze would stay in the ground, but the iron would do what? It would rise. Now why would the iron rise? Because it has the same nature as the magnet. When Jesus comes again, those who are Heaven-born will be Heaven-bound. Those who have the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, “The dead in Christ, will rise first and we which remain and are alive will be caught up to meet them in the air.”

Now let me say that there is not just a general resurrection; we’re going to talk about that in just a moment. “Adrian, do you, you were college educated, seminary educated, do you believe in the Rapture?” Yes, yes. Well, you say, “Doesn’t that smack a little bit of supernaturalism?” Yes indeed, yes it does. And you see, that’s what the apostle Paul is talking about. He’s explaining it here in First Thessalonians chapter 4. Listen to His reason, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,” do you believe that? Now if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, why should it be difficult for you to believe in the Rapture? You see, “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so in like manner them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

So why do I believe in the Rapture? Number one, because I believe the Gospel. What is the Gospel? The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You see the Rapture is linked to the redemption. God is not finished. If you have Calvary without the Rapture, it’s like having east without



west, up without down. It's like having night without day. You cannot have the incarnation without the coronation. You see, I believe it because Jesus has already gone through that grave and come out on the other side. I believe it, friend, because of the Gospel. I believe it because the Word of the Lord says it. I'm not here to explain it away. Paul says in verse 15, "For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent," that means precede, "them that are asleep."

Now Paul had divine revelation. Now we have a lot of soothsayers today, prognosticators, we have a lot of astrologers, we have a lot of so-called prophets, but they're not prophetic, they're pathetic trying to tell us what's going to happen. All the wiseacres in the Pentagon put together and all of the lawmakers on Capitol Hill and all of those who sit in executive offices and all of those who run the banking industry don't have one shred of an iota of a scintilla of what's going to happen apart from the Word of God. That's it, that's it. "This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord."

Now, that's the: what. It is the sacred mystery. Let's move to the second one. Not only the what, but the who: the select multitude of the Rapture. Not everybody is going to go up. Look if you will now in verse 4, "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats." Actually that word is the word for thrones, four and twenty thrones, "and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment and they had on their heads crowns of gold." Now who are these? These are the dead in Christ and those who have been transformed. Paul sees them as twenty-four elders. Now, why are they called, "Twenty-four elders?" Well, we're going to talk about that a little bit. You remember that twelve is God's governmental number, four is the earth number, and three is the divine number. Three times four is twelve, but, here we have twice twelve, which is twenty-four and, and why are they called elders?

These are not angels, some people might think that they're angels, but they are not angels. Let me tell you why, why I tell you that they are not angels. Look in Revelation 5 verse 11, "And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders." So you got angels, beasts, and elders. Well, so we know these elders are not the beasts, actually the zoon, or the living creatures. And they're not angels. So you say, "Maybe they're just some kind of symbol." No, they're not, they're not symbols because they talk one with another. Look in Revelation 5 and verse 5, "And one of the elders saith unto me, 'Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah.'" These are not inanimate symbols, these talk, and they're not angels.

Now, they're elders. What are elders? Elders are representatives of God's people. I'm an elder of the church; I represent Bellevue Baptist Church, but I'm not Bellevue Baptist Church, I represent Bellevue Baptist Church. There're twenty-four elders. Why twenty-four? Well again, twelve is God's governmental number, four the earth number, three the divine number, the rule of God on earth, and yet now we see this scene in Heaven, these who've been taken from earth into Heaven.

If you'll study the book of the Revelation, you will find out that there're twelve gates in the city, the new city, the new Jerusalem, the place that we called Heaven or glory. And each of those twelve gates have the names of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve Patriarchs, the twelve father rulers. You'll also notice that the foundations of the city have the names of the twelve apostles of the



land. Twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles; put them together, they make twenty-four. The twelve patriarchs: all the Old Testament saints. We're gonna meet Abraham, Jacob, Isaac in the kingdom. And the twelve apostles; we're gonna meet, Peter, Paul, John, and all of these in the glory. Put them together, they're elders, they represent all of us. Friend, these twenty-four elders represent you. You're going to be there, thank God, in that glory.

Notice how they are described. They're clothed in white. You see them here, "Clothed in white raiment?" Look in verse 4, what does white raiment represent? Well, white raiment represents the righteousness that we have in Christ and because of Christ. Now, the best interpretation of many of these symbols is in the Bible itself, Revelation 19 verse 8, "And to her," the church, "was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." So we know right away that these who are dressed in white are saints.

And they have crowns upon their head. Isn't that what it says here in verse 4? They have on their heads crowns of gold, diadems. Well, how did they get the crowns? Well, they got their crowns at the Judgment Seat of Christ. You see, the Rapture of the church takes place, and then you have the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now, that's the way I know that the Rapture takes place right here, because over here nobody's going to have crowns of gold. We don't get our crowns until we go to the Judgment Seat of Christ. And here are these, we know they're saints, they're not angels, they're dressed in white, and they're wearing crowns upon their head which means that they have been to the Judgment Seat of Christ, and so what we see is a select multitude of those who are in Heaven.

Not everybody's going to be there. Put in your margin Luke chapter 17 verses 34 and following. Jesus said, "I tell you in that night," He's talking now about the midnight cry, "in that night there shall be two men in one bed. The one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women should be grinding together," that is, at the mill. "The one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field. The one shall be taken and the other left.' And they answered and said unto Him, 'Where, Lord?' And He said unto them, 'Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.'" If you see the eagles circling over a piece of carrion on the ground, you know that because the carrion is on the ground the eagles are circling around there.

What He is saying is this, that just as the eagles will come to that carrion, just as a thief will come to steal away, Jesus Christ is coming and where Jesus is, we are going to be gathered together, we're going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Two in one bed, one taken, the other left. Two at the mill, one taken, the other left. Two in the field, one taken, the other left.

I look at a congregation like this. I wonder if the Second Coming of Jesus, the Rapture, were to take place before I finish this sermon, you all look so much alike, really. I mean, we're all more or less dressed the same, we all have Bibles, we're all looking up and so forth, we all look alike. But there is a vast difference that separates people even in this building: those who are saved and those who are lost; those who are ready for Jesus Christ to come and those who are not. And it may well be that at the Rapture, the person sitting next to you will go and you'll be here. Two will be sitting in church, one taken and the other left. There is a select multitude. Not everybody is going up in the Rapture,



only those who are saved. And so there're twenty-four elders, they represent a select multitude.

Now, let's move to the third division. We've talked about the: what, we've talked about the: who, let's talk about the: when. When is the Rapture going to take place? Well go back to verse 1, look at it, "And after this I looked and behold a door was opened in Heaven and the first voice which I heard was, as it were, of a trumpet." Remember the trumpet shall sound? "Talking with me, which said, 'Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.'" No if, ands, and buts about it. It must happen. "And immediately," underscore that, "immediately I was in the Spirit and behold a throne was set in Heaven and one sat upon the throne." When did this happen to John? It happened to John suddenly, immediately. He was not even expecting it. There he is. He's been looking at the churches, he's been describing the Church Age, and suddenly the trumpet sounds, and immediately he's caught up into Heaven.

That's what's going to happen to you. We're now living in the Church Age, but you're gonna find out beginning with chapter 4 on through the rest of the book, the word church drops out. In chapters 2 and 3 we hear the word, "The church, the church, the church, the church," over and over and over again, "the church." But now the word church drops out. Why is that? Because we leave the age of grace, which is the Church Age, and immediately when the trumpet sounds we're caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Now, we're talking about the: when. When is Jesus Christ coming for His church? I don't know, you don't know, nobody knows, but He and the Father know and Jesus in His humanity even denied Himself that privilege until He was caught up into the glory. Why? Why? It is a sacred mystery, and it is a time known to God alone. The Bible, Jesus said, "That day and that hour knows no man but My Father which is in Heaven." The point, the coming of Jesus, listen to me, is always near, always near. We're not waiting for some fulfillment of prophecy.

Now that may be interesting, if we see things, as I mentioned: the seething cauldron in the Middle East. We can see all kinds of things that seem to indicate that the coming of Jesus is near, and well they might, but now listen carefully. No sign proves that Jesus is coming soon and no lack of signs says that He's not coming soon. I remind you that the apostle Paul was expecting Jesus Christ in his own lifetime. Was Paul wrong? No, he was absolutely right. Every Christian is right to be expecting Christ in his lifetime. If there has to be certain signs to be fulfilled before Jesus can come, that takes away the imminency, that takes away the expectancy, but every Christian, from the time of the Ascension till this time, should be living with that "any moment" mentality that Jesus Christ may come at any moment.

Now I want to give you some Scriptures that prove that, so just jot them down. Matthew 24 verse 36, Jesus speaking of His coming said, "But that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father only." If some high muckety-muck comes along and tells you, "I've set a date for the coming of Jesus, eighty-eight reasons why Jesus is coming in '88," laugh it off, blow it off. Ask him if he's sincere, say, "Will you give me the deed to your home the day after that happens?"

Matthew 24 verse 38, "But as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark." That is,



they're going along the daily round of life. There's not going to be any Great Tribulation, they're not in the Great Tribulation, there're not things that are happening, they're just eating and drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, just going about their business, just like you're going about your business today.

Matthew 24 verse 42, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Matthew 24 verse 44, "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." You say, "I don't think He's coming today;" good sign that He might. "In such an hour as you think not the Son of Man cometh." And then again Paul says in First Corinthians 15 verse 51, "Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment." And that word moment is the word that we get our word atom from. It is the smallest indivisible period of time known to them; in the twinkling of an eye.

I heard a while back that the average individual blinks, twinkles his eye, blinks his eye twenty-thousand times a day. I always am suspicious of these these statistics. Who's going to count how many times somebody blinks his eye? But it does remind us that perhaps twenty-thousand times every day we may hear the trumpet sound, and Jesus is going to come in a moment. In an atomic period of time, in the twinkling of an eye, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come.

"Well, Pastor, what about the signs? Do the signs tell us that Jesus is coming?" Let me see if I can give you an illustration. Now, during the Christmas season, way before the Christmas season I should say, shortly after Halloween, the stores start putting out Christmas decorations. You notice that? It seems to get earlier every year. Well, when you see those decorations in the store, does that mean Christmas is coming? No, it means Thanksgiving is coming! That's what it means. Now when we see the signs, you say, are they signs of the times? Yes, but these are not the times of the signs. Those are things that take place after the Rapture, really. Now if we see them ahead of time, that doesn't mean they're not valid, but what I'm trying to say, dear friend, the Rapture is not Jesus coming in power and great glory, it is Jesus coming for His church before He comes in power and great glory. It's not Christmas, it's Thanksgiving. I hope you get the illustration I'm trying to make. I'm trying to say this; that Jesus Christ may come today, now. Now! And you need to be ready. "For in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man comes."

Alright, now, let's move to the next thing. Let's talk about the: why. Why the Rapture? Why not just wait until there'll be a general resurrection? Well, go back to chapter 4 verses 2 through 5, "And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold a throne was set in Heaven," and I like that. "A throne was set in Heaven," how firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord, "and one sat upon that throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone," or sardine, however you wish to pronounce it. "And there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. Round about the throne were four and twenty thrones," or seats, "and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders." Why are they thrones? Because Jesus said, "If we suffer with Him we're going to reign with Him." We're going to sit upon thrones judging this world. We're going to administrate His justice. "And four and twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment. And they had on their heads crowns of gold and out of the throne proceedeth lightnings and thunderings and voices and there were seven



lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God.”

Now what is the motive for the Rapture? Three-fold, number one: reception. Our Lord is going to come and receive His bride to Himself. You know what Jesus said in John chapter 14, “In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you,” what? “I will come again and receive you unto Myself.” What a day that will be. What a day it’s going to be! When the Lord Jesus Christ receives those who come to Him and my first thrill in Heaven is going to see my Lord Jesus Christ. I’m going to see His sovereign majesty. I’m going to see the Lord Jesus sitting upon that throne. No wonder we want to sing: “Our Lord Reigns.”

And we’re going to see not only His majesty, but we’re going to glorify His ministry. Look at Him, in verse 3, it says He’ll be like a jasper stone and like a sardius. What is the jasper stone? Doesn’t say He is one, He’s like one. What is the jasper? Most likely it’s a diamond, because it’s pure and sparkling white. How do we know that? Revelation 21 verse 11, the Bible speaks of the heavenly city having the glory of God, “And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” That sounds like a diamond to me. And so, you look at Him and there’s this sparkling, pure, clear, transparent, translucent, sparkling diamond. Alright, but then also the sardius. The sardius was blood red.

So I want you to see these two emblems of our Lord. I believe that they speak of His purity and His blood sacrifice for the church. You see, He is our High Priest. The high priest in the Old Testament wore upon his breastplate, he had a breastplate, and he wore twelve stones. And these twelve stones represented the people of God that he as the high priest had upon His heart. And the first and the last are represented by these two stones, and just like alpha and omega, they include everything in between. What is the meaning? It is that our dear Lord has us on His heart. He loves us, and He wears us upon His heart. He is our high priest and He ever lives to make intercession for us.

And so one of the motives for the Rapture is reception. The other is rescue, rescue. Notice here in chapter 4 and verse 3 that there’s a rainbow round about the throne. This word rainbow is the Greek word that we get our word iris from, it’s like a halo. All around this throne is a rainbow. But there’s something different about this rainbow. This rainbow is green, it’s like an emerald. All the way around the throne is an emerald rainbow. But also in verse 5 we learn that there are lightnings and thunders and a brewing storm. Now the rainbow means the storm has past, but lightning and thunders mean that the storm is coming. And also this rainbow is a perfect circle. It’s an iris, it’s a halo, and it’s green. Rainbows are not ordinarily green. Green, however, is the color of life.

What does a rainbow stand for? It stands for the covenant of God with His people. Remember after the flood, Noah stepped out of that ark. Can you imagine the carnage and the slime and everything that he looked at down there on the earth, the wreckage? But when he looked up in the vault of Heaven, there was that glorious, beautiful rainbow, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, like a scarf, thrown over the shoulders of the storm. But, while there are seven prismatic colors in a rainbow, there are three primary colors in the rainbow and the three primary colors are red, blue, and yellow. Now, if you take out the red, all that leaves is the blue and the yellow. And if you put the blue and the yellow together, that only leaves green. What is this? The red speaks of suffering, blood sacrifice, that the Lord



Jesus Christ took for us, to leave an emerald rainbow, a covenant around the throne for us.

And notice that it's a perfect circle. Really rainbows we see, we call it a bow; it goes like this. But if you were up high enough to see a rainbow, you wouldn't see it like this, you'd see a perfect circle. What does the circle speak of? It speaks of eternity, it has no beginning, no ending, and you know, sometimes we only see half the story, don't we down here? We go through the storms, and we look up, but we see a rainbow and we say, "Well thank You, Lord; I know it's going to be alright." But one day, friend, we'll know as we're known. One day we'll see it all, and one day the circle will be complete. Not now, but in the coming years. It may be in a better land, we'll read the meaning of our tears and there someday we will understand. But down here on earth, now, the rainbow's up there in Heaven. This beautiful emerald rainbow round about the throne, speaking of God's covenant, telling us that we have been caught up to meet the Lord and for us there is a rescue, the storm is over.

But down on earth we are getting ready. Up here, there's the rainbow, but down here on earth there's a storm brewing, and that storm is the Great Tribulation. Now, is the church going to go through the Great Tribulation? No! The church is taken out before the Great Tribulation. Why the Rapture? Well, reception but also, dear friend, rescue. Now we're not going through the Great Tribulation, I'll talk a more about that in the coming messages, but let me give you a couple of Scriptures.

First Thessalonians 1 verses 9 and 10, the Bible says, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, how you turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God," now watch this, "and to wait for His Son from Heaven whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." I'm not waiting for the Great Tribulation, friend, I'm waiting for Jesus. I'm waiting for Jesus. There're those who teach that the Church is going through the Great Tribulation. It will not.

Third reason, we're talking about the motive. One, reception, the second is rescue. The third is: reunion. Chapter 4 and verse 4 speaks of twenty-four elders, it represents all of those of us who'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Remember First Thessalonians 4:17? "For 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." What a day that's gonna be.

What does that mean to you? What does that mean to me? Listen carefully. Don't let this just blow past you. We should learn of His coming. You cannot afford to be ignorant concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and Bible prophecy, and that's why I'm preaching this series. Number two: you should live for His coming. The proof that you believe what I'm saying is not whether you get it in your notebook or get it in your head, but whether you get it into your life. Number three, you should look for His coming. You should expect Him to come. You're not wrong to expect Him to come. He may come at any moment. Number four, you should long for His coming. You should desire the Lord Jesus Christ. The last prayer in the Bible is for Jesus to come again.

Now, are you ready? Are you ready? Are you busy about many things? I shared with you a story that is so pertinent right now I need to share it again. Steven Covey has written a book, talking about how we need to get things prioritized. He told about a professor that came into his class with his



students. And the professor had a wow, a wide-mouth jar and in that jar he put some big rocks and he filled it all the way up the top. And he asked the students, "Is the jar full?" And they nodded their head. And he said, "No, the jar's not full." And then took some gravel and sprinkled the gravel on top of the rocks and shook it and then smoothed it off. Then he asked his students, "Is the jar full now?" They said, "Yes, it's full now." "Oh", he said, "it's not full." And then he took some sand and poured some sand on top of the gravel, shook it down good and smoothed it off. Said, "Now, now is it full?" By now they were afraid to answer. And he said, "I'll answer for you, it's not full yet." And then he took some water and poured the water over the sand and it filled every little crevice. Then he asked this question, "Now is the jar full?" And they timidly nodded their head and said, "Yes, it is now full." And he said, "You're right."

Now what is the lesson? What is the lesson? Well, one lifted his hand and said, "Things are not always as they appear to be." Another one said, "There's always room for more." He said, "No! That's not the lesson! Here's the lesson. If I had not put the big rocks in first, it would be too late to put them in. That's the lesson."

Now friend, what are the big rocks? You get right with God. You give your heart to Jesus Christ. I mean, those are the things that count. A lot of things you think are important, friend, are going to turn out to be gravel and sand and water. What about the big rocks? I mean, are you saved? You get that settled, get that settled; you're ready for the rest, Amen?

Bow your heads in prayer. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you would like to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, I want to help you. You say, "Pastor, I really do, I want to know Jesus, not just because of the Second Coming, I want to know Him in this life." Well, good. Let me help you to pray. Would you pray a prayer like this? Just pray it silently but fervently, sincerely, "Lord Jesus, I know that You love me, I know that You want to save me. You shed Your precious blood on the cross to atone for my sin. Thank You for doing that. You came out of that grave to prove You're the Son of God. I now open my heart and I receive You by faith, not only as my Savior, but as my Lord. Take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Like a little child, I trust You to save me and give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray, Amen."



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