

129. The Gospel of John—14:1-3 (a)

“Behold, the Bridegroom is Coming!” Pt.1

(1/3/21)

John 14:1 (NKJV)

¹ "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

I. The Context

At this point in John’s gospel, we are roughly 12 hours from the cross.

This command by the Lord Jesus in verse 1 of John 14 that His disciple’s hearts not be **“troubled”** any longer (‘greatly agitated with fear and anxiety’)—is not surprising.

He has just announced that one of His Apostles was a traitor who was going to betray Him, and that Peter (the unofficial leader of Jesus’ disciples) was going to deny Him not once but 3 times!

And then the heaviest blow of all—He revealed that He was going away, and they couldn’t follow Him (John 13:33).

And so, this becomes the context (Jesus’ *‘bombshell’* revelations) that caused fear to grip the disciple’s hearts and led to Jesus’ admonition (a command in the Greek)—**“Let not your heart be troubled...”**

After commanding them to stop being troubled—Jesus quickly follows that command with a promise that was designed to *comfort* their hearts—

John 14:2-3 (NKJV)

² 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. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

This promise by Jesus has both a *prophetic* and a *cultural* application attached to it.

Let's look at the prophetic application today and then the cultural application next week—

II. The Controversy

You may not realize it, but this is the first place in the New Testament where the *Rapture* is alluded to.

I've labeled this point in our outline—"The Controversy" because there are many professing Christians who don't believe in the literal Rapture of the Church.

They either believe it is *allegorical*—or they believe that what's in view in these verses is the *Second Coming*.

A. What is the Rapture?

The "**Rapture**" is a sudden '*snatching away*' or '*catching up*' of Christians off of the earth to meet the Lord Jesus in the air.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

[As Jesus used this teaching to comfort His disciple's hearts in John 14:1-3]

In verse 17 the verb translated “**caught up**” in the Greek is *harpazō*.

In Acts 8:39 that Greek word is used to speak of Philip being ‘*snatched away*’ from the Ethiopian eunuch; and in 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4 it describes Paul being ‘*caught up*’ into heaven.

Because the word ‘*rapture*’ can’t be found in the Bible many refuse to believe that the Rapture is a biblical doctrine.

And while it’s true the word can’t be found in the *English Bible*—it does however appear in the *Latin Vulgate*.

The Latin verb *rapio* was used to translate *harpazō* in 1Thess. 4:17 in the Latin Vulgate which is where we get the English term “*rapture*’ from.

There are 3 places in the N.T. where the doctrine of the Rapture is *clearly* mentioned—first of all 1Thesslonians 4:13-17 (which we’ve already looked at), secondly (and the one that most Christians overlook) is John’s gospel chapter 14—

John 14:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² 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. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

In these verses, Jesus introduces the concept of the Rapture by promising His disciples that, even though He was leaving them for a while—He was going to come back to get them (and all true believers in Christ).

He will do this so that His Bride (the Church) would be with Him from that moment on—never to be separated from Him ever again!

How do we know that Jesus is talking about the Rapture in John 14 and not His Second Coming?

It is because this promise is in keeping with Jewish wedding customs where the bridegroom comes for and takes his bride from her house to his father's house—which in the context of John 14 the 'father' would be *God the Father* and His 'house' would be in *heaven* (we'll study Jewish marriage customs next week).

And thirdly, besides John 14:1-3 and 1Thessalonians 4:16-17—the other classic N.T. passage on the Rapture is found in 1Corinthians 15:51-52:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NKJV)

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

B. Who does the Rapture affect?

The Rapture is the bodily resurrection of all true believers in Christ who have come to saving faith during the period of time from Pentecost (Acts 2) to the Rapture—the period of time that we call the *Church Age*.

But the Rapture will also affect those Christians who are *still alive* on the earth when the Rapture takes place—

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...

Please don't confuse the Rapture of the Church with the Second Coming of Christ—they are two entirely different events.

At the time of the *Rapture* Jesus comes **for** His Church in the air (1Thess. 4:17) to take us to heaven for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—whereas the *Second Coming* of Christ is where Jesus comes **with** His Church to the earth after the Tribulation Period to establish His Kingdom. (Colossians 3:4; Revelation 19:11, 14)

C. Why is God going to Rapture His Church?

1. Our physical bodies must be glorified

1 Corinthians 15:50-53 (NLT2)

⁵⁰ What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. ⁵¹ But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! ⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

2. God will not punish the righteous with the wicked

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, 9, 11 (NKJV)

² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape... ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ... ¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

2 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

⁹ ...the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations [tribulation] and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment...

So very simply—the Rapture is Jesus *evacuating* His Church (Bride) off of the earth before pouring His judgment (wrath) out upon it during the Tribulation Period (Rev.6-19).

This judgment will cleanse the earth of the “earth-dwellers” (defiant rebels against God) in preparation for Jesus establishing His Kingdom.

D. When will the Rapture Occur?

First of all, let me say that the Rapture is *imminent*—which means it could happen at any time.

In other words, nothing needs to happen before the Rapture of the Church takes place (hold on to that thought, we'll come back to it).

Even though evangelical Christians will never try to predict the exact day and hour the Rapture will take place (even Jesus said He didn't know the exact day and hour of the Rapture)—that hasn't stopped Christians over the centuries from debating (often intensely) the *general* time or *about* when the Rapture will occur.

This has given rise to 4 main views concerning the general timing of the Rapture:

1) Pre-Tribulation Rapture; 2) Mid-Tribulation Rapture; 3) Post Tribulation Rapture; 4) Pre-Wrath Rapture View. (Explain)

We at Calvary Chapel are committed to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture eschatology.

In other words, we believe that Jesus will come for His Church *before* the Antichrist rises to power and signs a peace treaty with the nation of Israel as prophesied in Daniel 9.

The signing of this peace treaty will officially begin the final 7 years of human history as we know it called the "Tribulation Period" which is chronicled in Revelation 6-19.

At the end of this 7-year period Jesus will return *with* His Church to the earth at His Second Coming to establish His Kingdom.

Again, I am a firm believer that the Church will not go thru the Tribulation Period—that the Rapture will take us off of the earth before God's wrath (judgment) is poured out.

One reason would be the promise Jesus gave to His true Church in Revelation 3:

Revelation 3:8, 10 (NKJV)

⁸ I know your works. See, I have set before you an **open door**, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name...

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will **keep you from the hour of trial** which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Jesus promised His true last days Church (represented by the church of Philadelphia—the evangelical church) that He would keep her from (the Greek is “deliver her out of”) the judgment (the Great Tribulation) that is coming upon the whole world to test (‘try’) those who dwell on the earth (militant unbelievers).

And then we read in Revelation 4:1—

Revelation 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ 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."

First of all, John sees “**a door standing open in heaven**”—which I believe is a ‘*door of deliverance*’ to evacuate His Church off of the earth (as He promised in Revelation 3:8, 10) before His divine judgments are poured out on the world.

Secondly John says—“**And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here...’**”

That sounds like Rapture language to me—as both of the classic passages of Scripture on the Rapture (1Thess. 4:16-17 and 1Cor. 15:51-53) talk about a trumpet sounding at the very instant the Rapture takes place.

Something else very interesting to me about the Book of Revelation is that—the Church has been mentioned 19 times in the first 3 chapters of the book—but now starting with chapter 4 suddenly she ‘*disappears*’ from the earth (and from the book)!

She disappears and we will not see her again in the book until we see her as the Bride of Christ in chapter 19 returning with the Lord Jesus (her Bridegroom) to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

J. Vernon McGee—

“From here on you will not find the word church mentioned...But now the church goes off the air—there is no mention of it. It has gone off the air because it went up in the air; it was caught up in the air to meet the Lord in the air. The church has gone to heaven—that is what has happened to it.”

So, after the Church is removed from the earth at the Rapture—the scene now shifts to heaven in Revelation chapter 4 where the Church, once seated with Christ in heavenly places *spiritually* (Eph. 2:6), is now seen safely seated with Christ in heaven *literally* before the judgment of God is poured out upon this Christ rejecting world starting in chapter 6.

Also, in the Book of Revelation there are recorded numerous judgments of God which He unleashes on the inhabitants of earth during the Tribulation Period—they are, the 7 Seal Judgments; the 7 Trumpet Judgments; and the final 7 Bowl Judgments.

All of these judgments are called ‘**the wrath of God**’ which He pours out on the ‘*earth-dwellers*’ (militant Christ rejectors)—and yet with regard to the Body of Christ—

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

This ‘salvation’ thru Jesus isn’t salvation from hell—this is talking about how He will save His Church from the ‘*wrath to come*’ by rapturing us off of the earth before the wrath of God (Tribulation Period) begins.

Furthermore, the First Seal (wrath or judgment of God) brings the Antichrist to power (Rev. 6:1-2).

And therefore, if the Antichrist is the first judgment of God during the Tribulation Period, and God has not appointed His Church to judgment (wrath)—then the Church won’t see the Antichrist come to power.

Please understand—I believe he is alive on the earth right now.

But true Christians belonging to the Body of Christ won't see him rise to power as the leader of the one-world government—which won't happen until *after* the Church is removed from the earth:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way [the Holy Spirit in the Church]. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

And so, I believe the Scriptures are teaching that the Antichrist won't be revealed and rise to power until the Church is removed from the earth at the Rapture—which I believe Revelation 4:1 is teaching.

E. How close are we to the Rapture?

The Rapture of the Church could happen at any time—there are no prophetic events that need to be fulfilled before the Rapture can take place.

I believe that is because the Lord wanted us to always be looking for the Rapture (His coming for His Bride, the Church) and living as if He could come back at any moment.

Remember Jesus said that “*an evil servant says, ‘my master delays his coming.’*” (Matt. 24:48; Luke 12:45)—which promotes sinful living—whereas living as if the Lord could come back for His Church at any moment promotes holy living:

1 John 3:2-3 (NKJV)

² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Now even though there are no prophecies that must be fulfilled before the Rapture—the Bible tells us many things that have to happen before the Second Coming of Christ.

I believe that the Rapture will take place at least 7 years before Jesus returns to the earth to set up His Kingdom—which means if we see the signs of His Second Coming all around us—the Rapture is getting very close indeed!

Some of the prophecies that had to be fulfilled before the Second Coming:

1. **The rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948 (Ez. 37).** For the first time in centuries, the Jews have a national existence in their own homeland. This means that the kingdom of God is near.
2. **The return of Israel to the land in unbelief (Ezek. 36:24, 25).** Ezekiel prophesied that it would only be after their return that they would be cleansed from their sins. Israel today is largely an agnostic nation; only a small (but very vocal) segment of the people are orthodox Jews.
3. **The ecumenical movement (Rev. 17).** We understand Babylon the Great to be a vast religious, political, and commercial system made up of apostate religious bodies that profess to be Christian, perhaps a merger of apostate Catholicism and apostate Protestantism.
4. **Christendom is becoming increasingly apostate (1Tim. 4:1; 2Thess. 2:3)** and is moving toward a world super-church.
5. **The worldwide increase in Spiritism (1Tim. 4:1–3).** It is sweeping over vast areas of the earth at this moment.
6. **The drastic decline of moral standards (2Tim. 3:1–5).** Violence and civil disobedience (2 Thess. 2:7, 8). The daily newspapers offer plenty of evidence of this.
7. **The rise of the anti-Christian spirit (1Jn. 2:18),** manifested in the multiplication of false cults which profess to be Christian but deny every fundamental doctrine of the faith. They deceive by imitation (2 Tim. 3:8).
8. **The formation of the European Union** also known as the European Common Market, based on what is known as the Treaty of Rome, may lead to the revival of the Roman Empire—the ten toes of iron and clay (Dan. 2:32–35).
9. **The alignment of nations spoken of in Ezekiel 38 which will attack Israel.**

(Refer to article by Hal Lindsey—“*Talking peace, preparing for war.*”

To these could be added indications such as:

- Earthquakes in many countries, the threat of worldwide famine, and the increasing hostility among nations (Matt. 24:6, 7).
- The failure of governments to maintain law and order and to suppress terrorism creates the climate for a world dictator.
- The building of nuclear arsenals gives added meaning to such questions as, “*Who is able to make war with him?*” i.e., the beast (Rev. 13:4). Also—“*Unless those days be shortened no flesh would remain upon the earth.*”
- Worldwide television facilities may be the means for fulfilling Scriptures describing events that will be seen simultaneously all over the planet (Rev. 1:7).
- The technology needed to put the mark of the Beast in the forehead or on the right hand of those who follow the Antichrist. (Applied Digital Solutions—“Verichip”)

I am told that there is an inscription on a gravestone in an old British cemetery not far from Windsor Castle. It reads:

*“Pause, my friend, as you walk by;
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you will be.
Prepare, my friend, to follow me!”*

A visitor who read that epitaph added these lines:

*“To follow you is not my intent,
Until I know which way you went!”*

Which way are *you* going?

We Christians have wonderful assurance and hope, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His promised return.

Do you have that hope today?

Are you ready?—Behold, the Bridegroom is Coming!