

# The Rapture

by Sebastian R. Fama

"The Rapture" is a term that is used to describe the belief that at some point in time Jesus will come, and all true believers will literally rise, meet Him in the air and be whisked away to heaven. Non-believers will remain on the earth to be dealt with later. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus will come again and judge the living and the dead. The righteous will be saved and the unrighteous will suffer eternal damnation. No one will be left on earth.

Belief in the rapture first appeared in the late 1800's. One verse of Scripture used to support this new doctrine was 1 Thessalonians 4:17 which says: "Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." However, when we read this verse in context, the rapture theory disappears:

**But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep**, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; **then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**; and so, we shall always be with the Lord. **Therefore comfort one another with these words** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

This simply speaks about the end of the world when true believers will be saved. Paul's purpose is not to explain the judgment of the living and the dead, but rather he is assuring believers that the dead will participate in the Second Coming of Christ. Notice what the first and last verses of the passage say: **"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep ...therefore, comfort one another with these words."** The words "caught up in the clouds" are used to illustrate how quickly things will transform at the Second Coming of Christ: "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Matthew 24:36-44 is also used to support belief in the Rapture. It reads in part, "Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left." This speaks of the final judgement. Luke's account is more explicit: "...one will be taken the other left. They said to Him in reply, 'Where, Lord?' He said to them, 'Where the body is, there also the vultures will gather'" (Luke 17:37). As Tim Staples points out, that does not sound like heaven.

The seven verses that directly follow the above quote in Matthew, also back this view:

**"Who then is the faithful and wise servant** whom his master has set over his household to give them their food at the proper time? **Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.** Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, **and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites. There men will weep and gnash their teeth."**

Whenever the term "weep and gnash their teeth" appears in Scripture, it refers to eternal damnation. Note that verse 45 begins with the words "who then." This shows us that we are still on the same subject as we were in verses 36-44. This is important because it illustrates that on the appointed day the righteous are being saved and the unrighteous are going to hell. So, who would that leave on earth? No one! If we combine all the verses of Scripture that deal with this issue, we find that the Rapture is simply not possible. Consider the following:

**Jesus will be coming back to earth one more time not two.** The Rapture requires a second coming, (the Rapture) and a third coming (the end of the world). Some try to get past this by claiming that the Rapture is not the

Second Coming because we meet Jesus in the air and not on the earth. But the verses used to support the Rapture such as 1 Thessalonians 4:15 speak of it as **"the coming"**, which indicates that it is a coming and a singular event.

1 Thessalonians 4:15: "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until **the coming** of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep."

Matthew 24:27: "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will **the coming** of the Son of man."

1 Corinthians 15:22-23: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at **His coming** those who belong to Christ."

1 Thessalonians 2:19: "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at **His coming?**"

**Jesus must stay in heaven until that time.** (That leaves no time for the Rapture before the end of the world)

Acts 3:19-21: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, **Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from old.**"

**When He comes, He will be coming all the way down to the earth.** (Not hovering in the air)

Acts 1:9-11: "And when He had said this, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will come in the same way as you saw him go...**"

**When He comes, He will be coming to judge the living and the dead.** (That would leave no one on earth)

Matthew 25:31-46: "**When the Son of man comes in His glory**, and all the angels with him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you'...Then He will say to those at His left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'...**And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**"

**In conclusion the Scriptures teach us the following:**

1. Jesus will be coming back to earth one more time not two.
2. Jesus must stay in heaven until that time.
3. When He comes, He will be coming all the way down to the earth.
4. When He comes, He will be coming to judge the living and the dead.

In John 16:13, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would lead His apostles into all truth. And yet we find no support for the Rapture in the scriptures, the early creeds, or the writings of the early Church Fathers. As we noted earlier, the idea of the Rapture was first taught in the late 1800's. If the apostles and their successors were ignorant of the Rapture for eighteen centuries, it would mean that Jesus lied in John 16. That, in itself, rules out the Rapture.