

Is the Rapture Coming Soon?

Introduction:

- I. Many people are ready for the rapture to occur at any moment.
 - A. At times they get so excited that they follow after date-setters who claim to have some insight in the matter.
 - B. Back in 1988, a man named Edgar Wisenant had the southern US aglow with talk of the rapture occurring in that year.
 - C. Earlier this year, a man named David Meade claimed Jesus would come on April 23rd. Obviously, He did not.
- II. If you want attention for your doctrine or church, just start telling folks Jesus will be here at a specified date.
- III. In this lesson we want to consider a few reasons why the rapture will not come before the end of this year...

Body:

I. **There Is a Difference Between “Rapture” and “Second Coming”...**

- A. I think we should start by pointing out that the “rapture” is not the “second coming” of Jesus.
 1. The rapture is supposed to be that snatching away of the faithful church, to spare them from enduring a great tribulation.
 2. Seven years later, Jesus is supposed to make His second coming, and set up an earthly kingdom.
 - a. Note that this establishes at least three resurrections.
 - b. We will point out the error of that in a moment.
- B. It is also appropriate to point out the fact that the word “rapture” is not found in Scripture.
 1. Dispensationalists point out that the Latin Vulgate presents this word for “caught up” in **I Thess 4:17**.
 2. This should be an uncomfortable argument, since a “dead language” is being consulted for proper terminology in doctrinal matters.
- C. This subject would never have been difficult if it hadn’t been clouded with theories of rapture and future kingdoms.

II. **The Rapture Theory is Flawed Because...**

- A. ...It Turns Christ’s First Coming into a Failure.
 1. **Last night**, we talked about what Jesus accomplished at His first coming, and it was exactly what God intended.
 2. The kingdom came with power, and prophecy was fulfilled.
- B. ...It Forces Extra Comings of Jesus, along with Numerous Resurrections from the Dead.
 1. Scripture continually refers to a resurrection in the singular, and even points out the participation of everyone in it.
 - a. **Phil 3:10f** *“that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*
 - b. **I Cor 15:20-24** *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. ²¹ For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, ²⁴ then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.”*
 - c. **Acts 24:15** *“having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”*
 - d. **Jn 5:28f** *“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, ²⁹ and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”*
 2. The only place more than one resurrection is mentioned is Revelation 20. You don’t interpret simple to understand passages with difficult passages.
- C. ...The Rapture Makes Israel God’s Primary Plan, and the Church an Afterthought...
 1. The rapture is all about getting the church out of the world so God can finish up with the nation of Israel.
 - a. Just to use their terminology, the church becomes a parenthesis to fill time.
 - b. They harp on the fact that the church is not mentioned in the Old Testament.
 - (1) In a moment we will actually see why.
 - (2) When we do, it will be apparent that it was according to God’s plan.
 - c. Afterthoughts are not glorious, whereas Paul prayed that God receive glory in the church (**Eph 3:21**).
 2. This turns the message of Paul to the Ephesians into nonsense.
 - a. **Eph 2:14ff** *“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.”*

- (1) God brought Jew and Gentile together as one.
- (2) This was the mystery Paul revealed: *“And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶ to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph 3:4-6).*
 - b. Consider connection of rule with being head in **Eph 1:19-23**.
3. The church is God’s eternal purpose, bringing salvation to all mankind.
 - a. **Eph 3:8-11** *“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light what is the **administration of the mystery** which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; ¹⁰ in order that the **manifold wisdom of God** might now be **made known through the church** to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was in accordance with **the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”*
 - b. **Eph 1:9f** *“He made known to us **the mystery** of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to **an administration** suitable to the **fulness of the times**, that is, the **summing up of all things in Christ**, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.”*
 - (1) The verb “summing up” in Greek is in the aorist tense, meaning it took place at one singular point in time.
 - (2) That one point in time was at the cross of Christ.
 - (3) Paul called it a “mystery” because God had hidden it from previous generations (**Eph 3:4-6** — the Old Testament).
 - c. **Heb 9:26** *“Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”*
 - b. People disappear, and others wonder what happened.
 - c. **I Th 4:16** (shout, voice of archangel, trumpet of God)

Conclusion:

- I. The rapture will not come before the end of this year, nor will it come in any year.
 - A. It cannot come because there will never be a secret rapture.
 - B. The rapture is a false doctrine set within a doctrine of intrigue and suspense that is reminiscent of a spy thriller.
- II. Although the rapture will not come before the end of this year, the Lord could make His second coming.
- III. *(extend invitation based on the need to be ready)...*