

The End?

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To experience the rapture and resurrection means the door we have been knocking at all our lives, finally opens!

And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified. (Rom 8:30-NET)

Let's start with a little review of what we have learned over the last 4 weeks in the series-The End. And perhaps we can have a little fun with this. Ok, you have seen this before, my famous True or False quiz.

Go ahead and answer out loud if you know the answer. Let's start with a couple easy questions.

True or False?

The rapture is the biblical idea of believers being "caught up" or "seized by force" to meet the Lord in the air.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess 4:17-NET)

True or False?

The idea of a pretribulation rapture means Christians will be rescued before the Great Tribulation as described in the book of Revelation.

Because you have kept my admonition to endure steadfastly; I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole world to test the those who live on the earth. (Rev 3:10-NET)

Ok, these get a little harder. Good job! You have been paying attention.

True or False?

Do airlines refuse to pair Christian pilots with Christian co-pilots for fear the Rapture?

Another way to it is, American Airlines will not allow a cockpit crew made up of only Christians to fly one of their jumbo jets.

Why? For concern that the Christian idea of a rapture may occur leaving the airplane without pilots, if such an event were to actually happen.

This presumption is perhaps fueled by the book, *Left Behind*, in which a Pan-Continental Airlines Captain. Rayford Steele weathers the disappearance of many of his passengers during an overnight flight to England.

Many say this is an urban legend. Some of my research indicates that airlines do not assign employees to scheduling based on religious belief. I would be just as concerned about the disappearance of traffic controllers.

True or False?

Will the Holy Spirit be removed from the earth at the rapture of believers who meet the Lord in the air?

Do you not know that I am everywhere? The Lord asks. (Jer 23:24b-(NET)

True or False?

Immediately upon death, the believer's spirit-soul will be raptured into the presence of Christ.

Jesus tells the thief being crucified next to him, "today, you will be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)

Paradise is one of the bible names for heaven.

When you die, the real you, your soul and spirit will enter an intermediate state of existence. This is a period of time when you will live as a spiritual-soulish person without a body.

Your earthly body is in the ground, cremated, or countless other ways your earthly body stopped living, your resurrected heavenly body awaits your reunion.

Rev 6:9, says, Now, when the Lamb open the 5th seal, I saw under the alter the souls of those who had been violently killed because of the word of God and because of the testimony they had given. (NET)

John could have said, "I saw those who had been slain." He doesn't.

John identifies that he sees the souls. Living in this eternal state without a body will not be a problem, because we will not need our heavenly bodies until the creation of a new heaven and earth.

And you won't need a body to interact with the physical world, because you will not be returning to it. The bible teaches that your death will bring you into a glorious kingdom. You have finally arrived as the Lord prayer indicates, to God's kingdom.

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven. Matt 6-(NIV)*

In fact, the transition into the unseen realm will be so sudden and smooth, so seamless and surprising that you may not even know that you have died.

This natural transition may take a while for you to realize. If you happen to turn and see your body in a mangled car crash, on the operating table or seemingly asleep in bed, then you can assume you have passed and entered heaven.

You will immediately begin enjoying a glorious, eternal, and never-ending relationship with Jesus Christ. It will be much more enjoyable than what you experienced on earth.

And as you sit here now, you are longing for this home, longing to be with Jesus, longing to be free of this body that limits your love for God.

A body that is wracked with pain and wretched because of sin.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Cor 5-NIV)

You will fly away at the rapture. Or you will fly way at your death.

A few verses later Paul puts it on the real. He makes it blindingly clear for the believer; *Thus, we are full of courage and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Cor 5:8-NET)*

When you are away from your earthly body, you will be with the Lord. Paul believes that death will bring him into the kingdom of God. And where is that Kingdom, Hebrews 12:22-24, tells us,

²²⁻²⁴ No, that's not your experience at all. You've come to Mount Zion, the city where the living God resides. The invisible Jerusalem is populated by throngs of festive angels and Christian citizens.

It is the city where God is Judge, with judgments that make us just. You've come to Jesus, who presents us with a new covenant, a fresh charter from God. He is the Mediator of this covenant. The murder of Jesus, unlike Abel's—a homicide that cried out for vengeance—became a proclamation of grace.

And this transition could happen at any moment. Are you ready? Because the next event on God's prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church.

Now, all of this type of teaching creates all kinds of mixed emotions. For those ready, bring it on. For those not ready, they are shaking in their boots.

But many simply do not want to think about these matters. Even if you don't think about it, sometimes it comes along at the least expected time, I remember, the days when I used to see cars with these kinds of bumper stickers.

Warning: In the event of Christ's return this driver will disappear; then this car will self-destruct.

Then in bold letters: Go Better Get Ready!

Now, there are two extremes when the end time subject comes up: some go off the deep end. Go nuts over the topic. They seem to lose their theological equilibrium.

They read prophecies into every news story. Certainly, every major disaster. The ultimate extremist would be those who set dates. No matter how much we love the bible, there is still a life to be stewarded and responsibilities to be faced.

The other extreme is those who don't care about what the bible says about the future. The first group is super intense and the second is indifferent.

The primary benefit in my opinion of an end time focus should be to inspire us to evangelism. And that is always lost on the second group. Little interest in the end, littler or no interest in evangelism.

There is something about Christ's imminent return that stirs up our urgency to engage in God's end time harvest. So, let's not be guilty of either position. We need to be informed not to be ignorant, as Paul tells the Thessalonians believers.

God's rapture is experienced when he transports a person from one place to another.

Jesus was perceiving that he was about to be taken by force to make him a king, withdrew to a mountain to be alone with God. In John 6:15, we see on the 13 or 14 times the word is used in the New Testament.

¹⁵ Then Jesus, because he knew they were going to come and seize him by force to make him king, withdrew again up the mountainside alone. (John 6:15-NET)

There are 7 raptures of specific people described in the bible: Enoch, Elijah, Jesus, Philip, Paul and two witness.

Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them: "Come up here!" So, the two prophets went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies stared at them. (Rev 11:12-NET)

The 4th rapture in the NT, was connected to the author of the most futuristic book of the bible. I am not surprised that heaven brought John, in a rapture like experience directly to God's throne, to **show him the future**.

While John's experience is rapture like, it is a temporary experience. One that will be surpassed by John's resurrection, when he ascends again at the sound of the trumpet. When John returns to Patmos from his rapture-like experience he returns to his body.

When I say rapture - for instance when, I am identifying that John was called up to heaven, whether in a dream or out of body experience like Paul, we can't say for sure... The word **harpazo** is not used in the text, it is **anaba hode**, which means come up here. So, two different words are used for coming up here; Harpazo, to seize violently, to rescue, and anaba hode, which means to come up here. No violent seizing in the second meaning.

Nevertheless, the idea of being transported, even in a vision, shows a pattern of a believer being taken to heaven to gain a new perspective and relationship about the events on earth.

But, for a moment I want to explain to you about a rapture of Two Witnesses during the tribulation. Let's read the text-Rev 11:3:12.

³ And I will grant my two witnesses authority^[i] to prophesy for 1,260 days, dressed in sackcloth." ⁴ (These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that

stand before the Lord of the earth.)^[ij] ⁵ If^[k] anyone wants to harm them, fire comes out of their mouths^[l] and completely consumes^[m] their enemies. If^[n] anyone wants to harm them, they must be killed this way. ⁶ These two have the power^[o] to close up the sky so that it does not rain during the time^[p] they are prophesying. They^[q] have power^[r] to turn the waters to blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague whenever they want.

⁷ When^[s] they have completed their testimony, the beast that comes up from the abyss will make war on them and conquer^[t] them and kill them. ⁸ Their^[u] corpses will lie in the street^[v] of the great city that is symbolically^[w] called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was also crucified. ⁹ For three and a half days those from every^[x] people, tribe,^[y] nation, and language will look at their corpses, because they will not permit them to be placed in a tomb.^[z]

¹⁰ And those who live on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate, even sending gifts to each other, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. ¹

¹¹ But^[aa] after three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and tremendous fear seized^[ab] those who were watching them. ¹² Then^[ac] they^[ad] heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them: **“Come up here!” (ana-baino) to come, to go up, to ascend)**

So the two prophets^[ae] went up to heaven in a cloud while^[af] their enemies stared at them. (Rev 11-NET)

Like many of the other rapture experiences explained in God’s word, we see clearly a rapture in Revelation. That is cool.

The two witnesses are Elijah who shut of the heavens with no rain and Moses who turned water into blood. These two witnesses will be standing outside the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and have the ability to destroy their enemies.

They are Jewish and will be a catalyst for a great Jewish revival that turns the hearts of God’s people toward Jesus the Messiah. At the midpoint of the

tribulation, the beast, the antichrist will kill the two witness and leave their bodies lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 and half days.

The people of the world will celebrate their death. Suddenly, Elijah and Moses will be resurrected, causing great fear and then raptured to heaven.

After that, a great earthquake will destroy of 10% of Jerusalem, killing 7,000 people. The word for rapture to come up, again is the same word used for John, anabode hode, and they went up.

While John goes up in the spirit, the 2 witnesses go up in a body like Jesus. What is the significance of a futurist Revelation rapture?

1. Two is the number for witness. A rapture before the tribulation will be a significant witness to the church's exodus and God's plans.
2. Their enemies will remain on earth.
3. Here comes the judge, as Flip Wilson used to say.

Question: Why did God place this rapture, in the middle of the tribulation? If a greater rapture has already happened, in a pre-trib rapture of the church where billions disappear...

...Then 2 witnesses serve to answer the question, where did all of the people go 3.5 years ago. It shows by example how it happened, thus providing a supernatural and miraculous intervention of God.

The rapture of Christians means there is a time gap between the rapture and the return of Jesus. What will happen during this time?

I want to end the series by focusing on what you will become as a spiritual-soul without a body, until you are united with your heavenly body. You are not a body that has a soul; you are a soul that has a body.

The last stage of your growth in Christ is called glorification as we saw in Romans 8. *And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified. (Rom 8:30-NET)*

In The Time Gap, You Will Achieve Glorious Immortality.

The first stage of your glorious immortality is that we will be resurrected or raptured with a spiritual body. Your body will be like Jesus glorious body during his 40 days before he ascended to heaven.

Resurrected (1 Cor 15:52b)

⁵¹ Listen,^[ac] I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep,^[ad] but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the blinking^[ae] of an eye, at the last trumpet.

During the forty days, Jesus cooked breakfast, moved instantaneously around Israel, walked through walls. Most of all appeared and enjoyed fellowship, then made himself known as on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus body was not a standard issue of flesh and bones. You will have a post resurrection body like Jesus. One that is free of sin. Indestructible. Made for eternity. Eternal.

One that you can enjoy hugs and a moment later be transported across the universe. Now, think that through, you can go any place instantly. This is our confidence based on Jesus'' resurrection.

The second stage of glorification is that you will finally achieve the perfection that you have been working towards.

Perfected (Matt 5:48)

So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus was perfect, and so will you be. Jesus ate and drank with sinners. Perfection means you care about those away from God. Jesus ate and drank at a wedding and when wine was all used up, Jesus made some of the best any wedding had ever enjoyed. And lots of wine, 120 -150 gallons. Jesus first miracle could have been to heal, but it was for his people to enjoy pleasure, marriage, love and celebration.

Your perfected state will allow you to enjoy celebration, pleasure, love and marriage to the Lamb. My point is that God made us for pleasure and in our glorified stage, we will enjoy it the way Adam and Even did, the way Jesus did, and the way you will, for eternity.

I long for the day when in my perfected state, I no longer sin. I love the way God loves. And I no longer drag around shame and guilt for mistakes made, food eaten, pleasure enjoyed.

Eternal life with a resurrected body and a life in eternity that is perfectly lived. What made this possible?

Hebrews 10:14-NIV, tells us, for by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Gloriously Beautiful (Daniel 12:3, Zech 9:16)

*But the wise will shine
like the brightness of the heavenly expanse.
And those bringing many to righteousness
will be like the stars forever and ever. (Dan 12:3-NET)*

*The Lord their God will save his people on that day
as a shepherd saves his flock.
They will sparkle in his land
like jewels in a crown. (Zech 9:16-NIV)*

Moses came down from the mountain, and his face shone like the stars. The priests wore vests that were glorious and beautiful with stones of blue, purple, gold.

And on the Mt of Transfiguration, such light and beauty filled the occasion that we get a glimpse of our lives that shine like the stars.

Throw away the tanning beds. Stop the work outs in the weight room. No waxing or tattooing desired in heaven. Facelifts was granted with you were raptured in you uplift.

Implants, botox, lipo suction, all attempts and keeping your body in a state that will one day die.

The Lord intends to make you glorious. The Lord intends to make you radiant. The Lord intends to make you luminary.

In Rev 22:5, we are told that those who dwell in heaven, their very illumination will provide the light that is needed for the New Jerusalem.

⁵ Night will be no more, and they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever.

You will be the star of heaven, not Hollywood. You will be the star in the galaxy, not the milky way. You will be the star in the Hall of Fame, heaven's hall of fame.

Now, I don't know what all of this means, but I claim the promise, that whatever Jesus' illumination and star quality is, I too shall possess it. *² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears,^[a] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2-NIV)*

Celebrated (Matt 25:21)

One the stage of eternity, bright lights, angelic wings flapping, the sound of trumpets blowing, and everyone's attention will be directed at you, and from the throne of God will come, the only words that matter in eternity...

Well done, good and faithful servant.

The last stage of glorification is the Lord plans to honor us. The world has sought for this recognition and honor with all types of immortality projects: freeze body, walk the red carpet, achieve an Oscar, or have a city, building, or street named after them.

All of these efforts fail.

Instead, we will receive praise and recognition from the only person it matters. God himself. How and when will this happen, at the judgement seat of Christ.

The Judgment Seat of Christ. (2 Cor 5:10-NET)

For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may be paid back according to what he had done while in the body, whether good or evil.

Christ plans to honor and glorify you in eternity. So, let's *seek the things that are above.* (Col 3:1).

Let's, *seek first the Kingdom of God.* (Matt 6:33)

One day as Paul tells us in 1 Cor 3:21, *"all things are yours!"* (1 Cor 3:21)