

Many religious groups believe and teach that Christ will return to this earth to establish a kingdom, over which He will rule from the literal throne of David, in the literal city of Jerusalem, for a literal thousand years.

Emphasis is placed on certain events that are supposed to occur just prior to the Lord's coming. One of these events is what is called the **RAPTURE**.

This is one of the most popular doctrines of our day. Many get very excited about the prospects of such an event, which most seem to think will take place any day now.

One of the first observations to be made about this supposed event is that the word "rapture" nowhere appears in the Bible. The word means, "to carry away." It can mean, to be seized by violence or to be carried away with joy, excitement and ecstasy.

It is in this latter sense it is used in the doctrine of the rapture. It is theorized that when Christ returns the second time it will be to take all the saints both living and dead up in the air where they will be with Him for seven years "hovering over the earth."

It is to be secret and mysterious, without any warning. Those remaining on earth will be shocked to find that many people have mysteriously disappeared and are missing.

The purpose of the rapture is to deliver the righteous from a terrible tribulation (suffering as never seen before) that God is going to pour out on all unrighteous people remaining on the earth for a period of seven years.

At the end of these years (some say 3 ½), Christ is to return to earth with His saints and begin His rule over his kingdom. He will place those who have been raptured in high positions over cities and countries on the earth.

If this doctrine is true it would seem the word "rapture" would appear somewhere in the Scriptures. But you can search from the beginning to the end of the Bible and you cannot find the word "rapture."

Surely such an important doctrine would be named some where by the Lord.

The main proof text used for this doctrine is **First Thessalonians 4:14-17**. Please read the text below carefully and then we will make some observations about what is not taught in these verses.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For 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. 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."

Now notice the following facts.

The word "rapture" does not occur.

Not one word is said about "hovering" over the earth for seven years.

The dead and the living will meet the Lord in the air where they *"shall always be with the Lord."* There is no hint of their returning to earth. The word "always" eliminates the possibility of a second existence on earth.

There is nothing to suggest a secret or mysterious "snatching up" of the saints to rescue them from a tribulation.

The passage does say his coming will be with *"a shout, and the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God."* This sounds like it is going to be very noisy, not secretly and mysteriously

There is no indication in the passage that Christ will ever set foot on earth again. The meeting will take place in the air, *"and thus we shall always be."* This leaves no time for Christ to have a thousand year reign on earth.

Nothing said in this passage indicates His returning to establish a kingdom on earth, in Jerusalem, where He will reign for a thousand years.

The fact is the kingdom has already been established. In **Mark 9:1** Jesus told his disciples, *"Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God come with power."*

If His kingdom is yet to be established then there would have to be some very old people left on earth, for Jesus said that some in his audience that day would live to see that kingdom come with power.

Jesus uses the words "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably in **Matthew 16:18, 19**. In other words the church is the kingdom and the kingdom is the church.

Acts chapter two, reveals the church (kingdom) came on the day of Pentecost with power, which was about fifty days following Jesus' death. One waits in vain if he or she thinks the kingdom is yet to come.

WHAT THE BIBLE DOES TEACH

The truth is, Paul is speaking of the end of the world and the great general resurrection of the faithful and not the so called raptured.

The Lord left earth. He has gone to prepare a place for his faithful servants. He said, *"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; 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, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:2, 3).

Certainly Christ will return a second time. However, this will be the only time He will return. He will take the faithful with him to heaven for eternity and the wicked will be condemned for punishment in hell.

He said, *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation"* (John 5:28, 29). This will be the only time that the Lord will return.

This earth will then be burned up. Peter writes, *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Seeing then that all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells"* (2 Peter 3:10-13.) There will be no material earth left for Christ and His saints to live on.

The new heavens and earth is the New Jerusalem beautifully described in **Revelation 21**. This is heaven itself where God dwells. (See **Matthew 5:12, 6:9, 2 Corinthians 12:2-4**.)

It is said that one of the purposes of the rapture is to rescue the faithful from the sufferings of a great tribulation God is going to bring upon the earth. The fact is, Christians have always suffered tribulation from the beginning down to the present time.

The Bible nowhere teaches there will be a period of seven years called the "TRIBULATION" for the punishment of all unfaithful Christians and unbelievers here upon earth.

John wrote to the seven churches of Asia saying, "*I John both your brother and companion in tribulation*" (*Revelation 1:9*). Christians were suffering tribulations even at the time John lived. They have suffered tribulation ever since.

Paul said, "*Yea, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*" (*2 Timothy 3:12*). Punishment of the wicked will take place but it will be in hell and not on earth.

Those who look for a rapture will look and wait in vain for there will be no rapture. This theory has no basis in the Bible.

Be prepared for the second and only coming of the Lord. That day and hour no one knows (*Matthew 24:36*). We can live each day as if it is the last. Then we will be prepared when He does come.