

The Rapture

I. Dispensations

A. God planned the dispensations from the foundation of the earth

B. God always has the answers before the problems are manifested

1. The plan of redemption was in place before Adam fell

2. There is no problem that we can face in the future for which God has not already made provision

C. Each dispensation ended in failure

1. The failure was not God's

2. The failure was man's every time

II. Seven main dispensations

A. The Dispensation of Innocence

1. Began right after the creation

2. Ended with the fall of Adam

B. The Dispensation of Conscience

1. Began after the fall of Adam

2. Ended with the Tower of Babel

- a. Man erected a tower

- b. Man wanted to try to get to God

c. Man thought he was as big as God

C. The Dispensation of Human Government

1. Began with the destruction of the Tower of Babel
2. Ended with the flood of Noah's day

D. The Dispensation of Promise

1. Began after the flood of Noah's day
 - a. The Abrahamic Covenant was given during this dispensation
 - b. The children of Israel went into captivity in Egypt
2. Ended after Israel was released from captivity in Egypt

E. The Dispensation of the Law

1. Began after the children of Israel were released from captivity in Egypt
 - a. Ten Commandments were given to Israel through Moses
 - b. Man could not keep the Law
 - c. When Jewish believers at Jerusalem began going back to the law as a requirement for salvation, Peter refuted them

Acts 15:10 "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke (the law) upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

d. Since Jesus Christ kept the law, He took it out of the way

Colossians 2:14 "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

2. Ended with Jesus at the cross

F. The Dispensation of Grace or the Dispensation of the Church (The Church Age)

1. Began on the Day of Pentecost

2. Will end at the rapture of the Church

G. The Millennial Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ

1. Will begin after the Second Coming of Jesus

- a. When it looks like Satan has won the final victory, Jesus Christ will descend from the clouds

- b. Satan and all of the demons will be bound for a thousand years

2. Will end after Jesus reigns for a thousand years

III. The Mystery

A. The Church Age was a mystery in the Old Testament

B. The Church Age was still a mystery during Jesus' day

1. Jesus lived under the Dispensation of the Law

2. Jesus died under the Dispensation of the Law

3. Jesus was resurrected under the Dispensation of the Law

4. Jesus was ascended under the Dispensation of the Law

IV. When Jesus made reference to the Church Age he spoke in parables

A. The parable of the pearl of great price

Matthew 13:45-46 *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:*

Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

1. The pearl of great price is a type of the Church and the Church Age believer

2. Jesus is a type of the one who paid the price for the pearl

B. The parable of the treasure hidden in a field

Matthew 13:44 *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."*

1. The hidden treasure is a type of the Church and the Church Age believer

2. Jesus is a type of the man who gave up everything to purchase the field where the treasure was hidden

V. Old Testament Inferences to the Church Age

A. Solomon's temple

1. Solomon kept the building of the temple a secret for a long period of time

2. The temple was to be built in Jerusalem, but Solomon hired laborers to go up into foreign countries

- a. The laborers went to Lebanon to cut down cedars for the building of the temple

- b. The laborers went to stone quarries and molded the stones for the temple in secret

c. When the time came for the temple to be built, all that had been prepared secretly was brought back to Jerusalem

d. The Bible says that Solomon's temple was built without the sound of a hammer (I Kings 6:7)

e. When the temple was erected it fit perfectly together

B. The Church

1. The Holy Spirit has been molding and shaping lively stones

I Peter 2:5 "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

2. Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has been molding a shaping each stone

3. When the last stone has been shaped and put into place, Jesus Christ is coming back to take His Church into Heaven

VI. All of nature is groaning and waiting for redemption

Romans 8:22 "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

A. The earth has been waiting for years and years for the Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ

B. When Jesus returns, the final curse will be removed from the earth

C. Death will be put away at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

VII. The Body of Christ

Colossians 1:24 "...for his body's sake, which is the church."

A. The body of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Church

B. The Body of Christ did not exist until the Day of Pentecost

C. The Church did not exist until the Day of Pentecost

D. Jesus Christ is head of the Body of Christ

1. All things flow from Him

2. All praises flow back to Him

3. Jesus is part of God

a. Because we are the Body of Christ, we are part of God

b. We are heirs with God the Father

c. We are joint heirs with Jesus Christ

VIII. Men like Paul, Peter, James, and Jude wrote and completed the Word of God

Definition: "pleroma"- to fill to completion

Colossians 1:25 *"Wherefore I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill (pleroma) the word of God."*

IX. The "mystery" was incomplete until the Dispensation of the Church

Colossians 1:26-27 *"Even the mystery which was hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:*

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

X. Components of the "mystery"

A. The existence of the Body of Christ is part of the mystery

B. Gentiles becoming believers is part of the mystery

C. Having Christ in us is part of the mystery

D. The fact that believers are the Church is part of the mystery

XI. The disciples did not understand the mystery

A. The disciples thought that Jesus came to destroy the Roman Empire and establish His kingdom

B. When Jesus arose from the dead, they asked Jesus when His kingdom would be established

Luke 24:21 *"But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done."*

C. After the disciples received the baptism in the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit brought back to their remembrance what Jesus had said to them before His resurrection

2. They understood that they were in a new dispensation

XII. The two "comings" of Jesus Christ

A. The first "coming" is the rapture of the Church

1. For seven years following the rapture, the Tribulation will take place on the earth

2. During the Tribulation, believers will be in Heaven going through the Judgement Seat of Christ and being rewarded for our deeds done in the flesh

B. The second "coming" is seven years after the rapture

1. At the Second Coming, every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord

2. Satan and his demons will be bound for a thousand years

3. Jesus will rule and reign on earth for a thousand years

XIII. In order to study the rapture of the Church, you must study the epistles

A. The rapture was not prophesied of in the Old Testament

B. The rapture was not prophesied of in the Gospels

C. The Old Testament and the Gospels only refer to the Second Coming of Jesus

D. The rapture of the Church is another sign pointing to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

E. The earth will not change much after the rapture of the Church

F. The radical change in the earth will take place at the Second Coming

XIV. At the rapture, we will rise to meet him in the air

2 Thessalonians 2:1 *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,*

A. References to the rapture

1. *"...by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* refers to the rapture

2. *"...and by our gathering together unto him"* refers to the rapture

a. *"...our"* does not mean "some"

b. The entire Church will be raptured at the same time

1). Believers on the earth today probably comprise only two to three percent of the Church

2). The Church has existed for 2,000 years and the majority of the church is in Heaven

c. The dead in Christ will come back when

Jesus returns and they will receive their resurrection bodies with those who are alive and remain

B. If the Church that "is alive and remains" when the rapture occurs has to go through the Tribulation, those in the Church who had previously died should also have to go through the tribulation since they are part of the Church

C. The entire Church will be raptured and then judged during the seven years of the Tribulation

XV. Rewards in Heaven

A. When we are in Heaven, we will each be rewarded differently for our deeds in the flesh

1. Some will shine as the moon

2. Some will shine as the sun

3. Some will shine as the stars

I Corinthians 15:41-42 *"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."*

B. The rewards begin while we are on earth and before the resurrection

C. We should strive to have an abundant entrance into Heaven

I Peter 1:11 *"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."*

XVI. The Thessalonians thought they had missed the rapture

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,*

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that is the day of Christ at hand."

A. Because of all of the persecution that was taking place in Rome, the Thessalonians thought they had missed the rapture

B. The Thessalonian believers thought that they were in the tribulation

XVII. The tribulation cannot come until the rapture of the Church

A. The presence of the Church in the earth is what is holding back Satan today

B. The Antichrist cannot be revealed until the Church is removed from the earth

C. The Church will be removed at the rapture

2 Thessalonians 2:3 *"Let not man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (apostasia) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."*

Definition: "apostasia" - to depart; this is where we get the English word "apostasy"

"...a falling away" literally means "...THE falling away"

Acts 21:21 *"And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake (apostasia: to depart from Mosaic law) Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."*

Hebrews 3:12 *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing (apostasia) from the living God."*

Kenneth Wuest says that *"falling away"* could only refer to the rapture of the church

XVIII. It is not the Holy Spirit that is restraining the Antichrist

2 Thessalonians 2:4-7 *"Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."*

Remember not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

And now ye know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now lets (hinders or restrains) will let, until he be taken out of the way."

A. People think that because our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, that once the Church is gone the Holy Spirit will be gone

B. When the Church is raptured, the Holy Spirit will still be on earth drawing men to Christ during the time of the tribulation

1. One of the greatest times of evangelism will be during the tribulation

2. Thousands and millions of people will be brought into the kingdom of God during the tribulation

C. It is believers, using the name of Jesus, that prevents the Antichrist from coming to power today

D. The "he" who hinders is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ

2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 *"And now ye know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time."*

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now lets (hinders) will let(hinder) until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall the Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

XIX. Ambassadors for Christ

2 Corinthians 5:20 *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ..."*

- A. An ambassador lives in a country that is not his home country
- B. An ambassador is not a citizen of the country in which he or she lives
 - 1. When we are born again, we become citizens of heaven
 - 2. We should study our citizenship papers (the Word of God) to be the best ambassadors we can be
- C. An ambassador does not live off of the economy of the country in which they are living
- B. An ambassador cannot go under unless their home country goes under
- C. When one country declares war on another, the first to be removed from the foreign country are the ambassadors
- D. The rapture of the Church is God bringing His ambassadors home before He declares war on Satan and all of His demons
- E. An ambassador is judged in his home country for his performance in the foreign country in which he was residing

XX. Receiving our resurrection bodies

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this, we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

A. We are not to be ignorant concerning those born-again believers who have died and already gone to Heaven

1. We escape ignorance through studying the Word of God

2. We escape ignorance through meditation of the Word of God

B. "...them that are asleep" refers to all those who are born again who have already gone to Heaven

C. If Jesus rose again, so will those born-again believers who are already in Heaven

I Thessalonians 4:14 *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."*

D. We who are alive and remain when Jesus comes for the Church, will not precede those who are "asleep"

I Thessalonians 4:15 *"For this, we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep."*

1. "prevent" means "to come before" or "to precede"

2. Those who have died before us will receive their resurrection bodies at the same time those who remain on the earth receive their resurrection bodies

XXI. How the rapture will occur

I Thessalonians 4:16-17 *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

A. Jesus will personally escort to Heaven those believers who remain on the earth

B. Jesus will descend from Heaven with a shout

C. Only God, the Father, knows the day of the rapture and the day of the Second Coming

XXII. The purpose of the archangel coming with Jesus

I Thessalonians 4:16 *"...with the voice of the archangel"*

Jude 9 *"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."*

A. The devil contended with the archangel, Michael, over Moses' body because it had not yet been redeemed

B. The last enemy to be conquered is physical death

C. Michael will come with Jesus at the rapture of the Church

1. Jesus Christ will reclaim our bodies at the rapture of the Church

2. Satan is going to contend for our bodies in the same way that he did for Moses' body

3. Michael will handle Satan in the same way he did over Moses' body by saying "The Lord rebuke you"

XXIII. Jesus Christ can legally remove us from the earth

- A. Jesus will change our bodies into resurrection bodies
- B. Jesus is the only One in Heaven with a resurrection Body
- C. Our bodies will be instantly fashioned after the resurrection body of Jesus Christ

1. The resurrection body can travel through space
2. The resurrection body does not need air
3. The resurrection body does not need food
4. The resurrection body can travel through walls
5. The resurrection body can travel at the speed of thought
6. The resurrection does not have blood
7. The resurrection body has bone and flesh
8. Our resurrection bodies will be perfect
9. The only marred body in Heaven will be Jesus'
 - a. He'll forever have holes in His hands and feet
 - b. He'll forever have holes in His sides

XXIV. The archangel Gabriel

I Thessalonians 4:16 *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."*

- A. Gabriel and Michael work in conjunction with one another
- B. The archangel Gabriel will come with the *"trump of God"*

C. When Daniel fasted and interceded for three weeks, Michael and Gabriel worked together to bring the answer to his prayer

1. One archangel did battle in the atmosphere with prince of the kingdom of Persia
2. The other archangel brought the answer to Daniel

XXV. Jesus will invade enemy territory

I Thessalonians 4:17-18 *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

A. Jesus will literally take us by force from this earth

"...caught up" means "to take by force"

B. Jesus will descend from Heaven in the glory cloud and we will be "caught up" in the glory cloud as we meet the Lord in the air

C. Jesus will invade enemy territory

1. The "air" refers to the territory where Satan and his demons operate
2. Jesus will reach down and take us by force through the "air" which is permeated with demons
3. Jesus will change our bodies into resurrection bodies and Satan and his demons can do nothing about it

XXVI. Only believers will hear the shout of the Lord and the trump of the archangel

A. Only believers will suddenly disappear at the rapture

B. Unbelievers will not hear or see anything

1. Unbelievers hear the voice of Satan

2. Believers hear the voice of the Lord

C. At the Second Coming, everyone will hear and see Jesus return

Matthew 24:27 "For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

XXVII. Not all believers will die, but all believers will be changed

I Corinthians 15:51-52 "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Definition: "atamo" - This is the Greek word where we get "atomic"; an atom is the smallest structure that cannot be further divided; an atom is the smallest measure of time that cannot be further divided

A. We will be raptured in the smallest amount of time that cannot be further divided

B. At the rapture, we will suddenly be gone from this earth

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