

STUDY FIFTEEN – JESUS TEACHINGS ON THE RAPTURE!

INTRODUCTION

Remember that the apostle Paul said the resurrection of the righteous dead and rapture of the Church was once a mystery. This event was most clearly revealed in the epistles of Paul, specifically in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8, and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53. Before it was revealed by the Holy Spirit in the pages of the New Testament, this was a secret that was kept under wraps until the appointed time for it to be revealed.

But you may ask, "Did Jesus ever speak about the rapture of the Church?" In this study, we will see that Jesus did give us glimpses about the Rapture, and we will look at those passages to see what Jesus said as He alluded to this "catching-away" event.

WHAT JESUS SAID IN MATTHEW 24 ABOUT EVENTS AT THE END OF THE AGE.

Matthew 24 is Jesus primary teaching on end-time events. The same discourse can be found along with other important insights in Mark 13 and Luke 21. But in the passage in Matthew 24, Jesus discusses events that will precede the end of the age. He gives glimpses and insight regarding the Rapture itself, discusses events that will occur afterward, during the Tribulation; and teaches about His Second Coming (or Second Advent) at the end of the Tribulation — an event that is separate and distinct from the rapture of the Church.

For the sake of simplicity, we put it this way:

- Matthew 24:4-14 deals with events preceding Christ's rapture of the Church
- Matthew 24:15-31 deal with events leading up to Christ's Second Coming.

As it stands, we are living in the last "moments" of this present age. Many of the signs Jesus said will be seen in the days before the very end of this age are occurring right now. We are surrounded with mounting evidence of what Jesus forecast long ago, and because of where we are on the prophetic timeline, we are seeing and experiencing upfront what other generations could only see from a distance.

Early in Matthew 24, Jesus enumerated several signs He wanted us to recognize as signs of the last of the last days. Then Jesus continues in Matthew 24:37-39, saying:

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

In this passage, Jesus forecasted that the days prior to this event would be a replication of what was happening in the earth in the time frame prior to the Flood in the days of Noah. Since Jesus said what was happening before the Flood is going to be replicated in the time frame just prior to His coming, we need to understand what was happening then, for what was happening before the Flood will be happening again prior to the rapture of the Church and His Second Coming.

But in Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus said that Noah and His family entered the Ark, and as a result, they escaped the Flood that came on the world in that time. Then in Matthew 24:39-41, Jesus continued to say, "...so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left."

THE WORD "TAKEN" IN THIS PASSAGE HOLDS A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE RAPTURE

Jesus is giving us a glimpse into what will occur at the time of the Rapture. He said that just as Noah and his family escaped from destruction that came on the world at that time, and at the end of the age also, "two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left." (v. 40-41).

The word "taken" in verse 40 is an interpretation of the Greek word that means to retrieve, to snatch, to withdraw, or to take warmly and intimately to one's side. It is significant that this word was regularly used in New Testament times to picture a moment when one came to retrieve, take, or withdraw his inheritance.

In Ephesians 1:18, Paul wrote that the Church is Christ's inheritance. Every true believer who is sealed by the Holy Spirit is included in that inheritance. If one correlates that to Jesus' words in Matthew 24:39-41, it informs us that a moment will come when Jesus retrieves, snatch, take, and withdraw His inheritance — the Church. And the passage in Matthew 24 portrays this as a sudden and surprising moment. It is the moment when Christ will descend from Heaven to retrieve, snatch, take, and withdraw those who belong to Him. That is what the word "taken" means in the context of this verse.

We have seen that Paul told us in First Corinthians 15:52 that this event will take place in "the twinkling of an eye," which refers to a nearly indivisible moment of time, as fast as the twinkling, twitch, or blink of an eye. Just that fast, those who belong to Christ - that is, those who are His inheritance and therefore a part of the Church - will be snatched and taken away.

Christ began this portion of Scripture with the example of Noah, and it is important to remember that in addition to building the Ark for 100 years, Noah was a preacher of righteousness (see 2 Peter 2:5). With every pounding of Noah's tools upon the Ark as it was being built, the sounds reverberated to all those who heard it, warning them that the Flood was coming. The sound was a summons for people to repent.

But in spite of the fact that people were warned and were living in the very shadow of the Ark that could save them, they carried on indifferently. Although Matthew 24:39 says people "knew not until the flood came," the truth is that if they didn't know judgment was coming, it was because they weren't listening — for Noah, a preacher of righteousness, continually declared what was coming. If Noah's words to the population of the earth and his actions in building the Ark in obedience to God were not warning enough, the Ark itself was a physical declaration that judgment was on its way.

To double the impact of what Jesus was teaching, He repeated the scenario again in verse 41. But this time, He used the example of two women who were working side by side and going about their daily routines — when suddenly one of them is caught, taken, or snatched away, while the other one is painfully left behind with deep regret and sorrow.

DID JESUS SAY ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH?

Just before Jesus faced the events of His Passion, He met with His disciples to speak the final words He wanted to leave with them. Imagine how difficult it must have been for the disciples to hear that Jesus would be leaving them, especially after they'd walked with Him for more than three years and witnessed Him perform miracle after miracle. It would have been normal for them to feel sorrowful as Jesus announced He would soon be returning to Heaven.

But in John 14:1-3, we read that Jesus told them, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare*

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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."

Jesus said He was going to prepare a "place" for them.

The word "place" is interpreted from the Greek word which speaks of a real physical location. It does not describe a figurative place, but a real geographical location. This means that when Jesus promised to prepare a "place" for us, He was speaking of a real physical location, a real physical residence, or a real physical mansion situated in the Father's grounds.

Therefore, we know that these promises are not allegorical or figurative, but Jesus is presently preparing our residences, readying them for our arrival, and He is excitedly awaiting the moment when believers will occupy those dwelling places.

The words "come again" are interpreted from the Greek that means, "again, I am coming!" Or "I am coming again!" These are Jesus own words — He said He is coming again to "receive you unto Myself" (John 14:3).

The word "receive" in John 14:3 is translated from the same exact word that we saw previously in Matthew 24:40-41, where it is translated "taken" and is used to picture the moment when one will be taken and another will be left behind.

In Second Timothy 2:19, Paul wrote, "The Lord knows those who are his" When Christ descends from Heaven into the lower atmosphere to resurrect the bodies of the righteous dead and to snatch the Church into Heaven, there will be no mistakes, for He knows those who belong to Him and, therefore, who are a part of His inheritance in the Church. Thus, when Jesus said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself," He was declaring to His disciples — and to every believer throughout history — that a moment will come when He comes again to retrieve the Church as His inheritance.

Again, Second Timothy 2:19 says, "...The Lord knows those who are his...." Does this scripture bring comfort to you or make you ill-at-ease? If you have embraced Jesus as Lord and are spending time in His Word and in prayer, you can rest assured you're His and you will not miss any part of His good plan for His people — including His plan to rapture His own from this earth at just the right time.

The rest of this passage talks about the lifestyle of those who are preparing to finally meet the Lord face to face. If we believe He is coming again for His Church, there will be notable characteristics in our life because we're making ready for that glorious day.

Indeed, Jesus addressed the rapture of the Church! Jesus stated that in a future moment, He will come again to take us to Himself. Jesus really is coming again to retrieve His people and transport them to their heavenly residence, where they will be eternally warmly welcomed to abide!

