

THE EMINENT RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH
(The Special Transportation Vehicle to Heaven)
Part II
1st Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction: It would be Scripturally reprehensible not to be fully cognizant of the unassailable truth of the rapture of the Old and New Testament saints, and that this happens before the seven years of tribulation. All ambiguities disappear when you comprehend the divisions of the book of Revelation. In context, we will discover that, in addition to the rapture of the Old and New Testament saints, there are three other exclusive raptures, including different sets of people that will occur after the initial catching away.

The Three Divisions of the Book of Revelation

1. "Write the things which you have seen." That is, write in the first division of this book that you saw me, Christ, in the midst of the golden lamp stands. Revelation 1:11-18 (note verse 19).
2. "Write the things which are." That is, write in the second division of the book of Revelation the things that I, Christ, will tell you to write about the churches, that is, concerning their position on earth. Revelation 2:1 – 3:22.
3. "Write the things which must be hereafter." That is, write in the third division of the book of Revelation the things which I, Christ, will show you that will happen after the church age is completed. We should note that the last things that are revealed to John do not concern the body of Christ since we are no longer here.

I. The rapture of the Old and New Testament saints

- A. In revelation 4:1, the scene changes and John, the revelator, is beckoned up into Heaven for the rest of the revelation of Christ.
1. Notice that the (already-raptured) saints are in Heaven at this time. Revelation 5:8-10.
 - a. Note verse 10 – the crowns they received for their works on earth.
 2. Remember also that in Luke 21:34-36, Christ personally promised that we would "escape all these things" and "stand before the Son of Man."
 3. In 1st Thessalonians 4:16-17, the rapture of the saints is described.
Note: After Revelation 4:1, John, the revelator, sees the Lamb, the 7 lamps of fire, the 24 elders, the 4 living creatures, the sea of glass, the book with 7 seals, the various companies of creatures in worship to God, the Lamb, and finally the raptured saints in Heaven. Note Revelation 5:9 – "... You have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

II. The second exclusive rapture: the special company of Jews

- A. Three and one half years after the church is taken up into Heaven, the 144,000 Jews mentioned in Revelation 7:1-8 are taken up. These make up the "manchild" described in Revelation 12:5. They sing their own song unto the Lord. Revelation 15:3.
Note: The 144,000 Jews represent only a remnant of the Jews that God will ultimately deal with. The main body of the nation of Israel will be dealt with when Christ returns to earth to rule and reign for a thousand years. Matthew 24:30.

III. The third exclusive rapture: the tribulation saints

- A. The tribulation saints will make up the third distinct company which will be saved during and then raptured out of the tribulation period as a group separate from the church.
1. In Revelation 6:9, we find the tribulation saints being slain because of their testimony.
 2. They are further described in Revelation 6:13-14. Note: they sing their own song in verse 12 of chapter 7.

IV. The fourth future exclusive rapture: the two witnesses

- A. The two witnesses of Revelation 11:2-12 will make up the fourth and the last of the 4 exclusive raptures.
1. These are most likely Enoch and Elijah, who are sent down from heaven to witness on behalf of the Lord during the Great Tribulation. Revelation 11:3.
 2. Revelation 11:7 shows us that they will be killed. They are raised from the dead in verse 11. In verse 12 they are raptured into Heaven.
Remember that the rest of the dead who died outside of Christ will be raised to face the Great White Throne Judgment seat of God Almighty after the millennium. Revelation 20:11-15. This will be the last resurrection, when the unrighteous will be cast into the final hell.

Conclusion: These four separate raptures will take place at different points in time – before and during Daniel's 70th week (the tribulation). All of these events will happen before the Second Advent when Christ will lead His saints back to earth to defeat the Antichrist and then to rule and reign on earth for 1,000 years. Jude 14, 15; Revelation 20:5-7.