



“The Rapture of the Church”

Lesson 5: Revelation Lesson Series Addendum

Introduction

We have just completed Revelation chapters 4 and 5. In those chapters, John is taken into heaven, and the focus shifts from the Church on earth to preparation for judgment. What follows in Revelation chapter 6 is the opening of the seals. Before moving forward, we must pause.

Two of the three doctrines that are foundational for understanding everything that follows in Revelation are:

- The **Rapture of the Church**
- **Daniel’s Seventy Weeks**

Without them, the book’s structure blurs, the timeline collapses, and confusion reigns. For that reason, we are taking a brief, intentional deviation from our verse-by-verse study.

- **Lesson 5** focuses on the Rapture of the Church
- **Lesson 6** will focus on Daniel’s Seventy Weeks

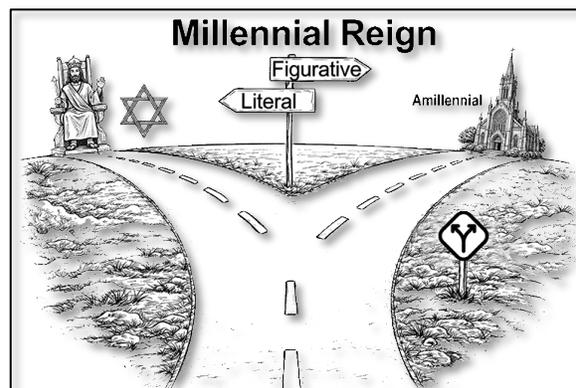
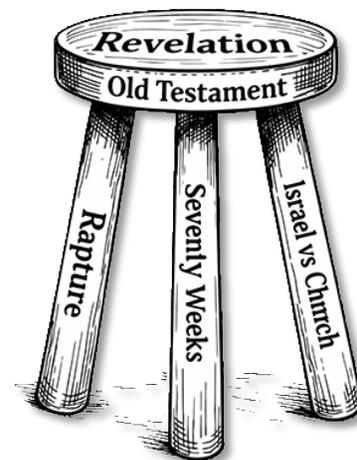
These lessons are not a side tangent. They are structural. Once these doctrines are in place, Revelation chapters 6–19 can be read clearly, chronologically, and coherently. The third, Israel vs the Church, we will follow naturally as we go along. This lesson will answer a few questions:

What is the Rapture, and why must it occur *before* judgment begins?

“The Rapture: Why Have I Never Been Taught This?”

For many students, the doctrine of the Rapture feels unfamiliar, not because it is obscure in Scripture, but because it has been largely absent from denominational teaching for centuries. This absence did not happen by accident.

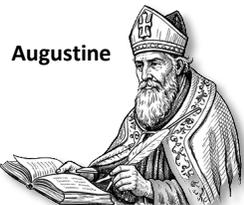
Most historic Christian denominations—Catholic and Protestant alike—operate within an **amillennial** framework.



In that system, *Christ is not expected to return to the earth to establish a literal kingdom*. Instead, His reign is understood primarily as spiritual, taking place now in the hearts of believers. Once that assumption is in place, the Rapture becomes unnecessary, awkward, or even disruptive to the theological system.

This amillennial framework **did not** originate with the apostles or the early church. It developed gradually, reaching maturity with **Augustine**, who was deeply influenced by earlier allegorical interpreters, especially **Origen**, who took allegory to an extreme. While Scripture certainly contains symbolism, Augustine’s approach increasingly treated (eschatology) prophetic passages as figurative by default. Over time, this method became embedded in church tradition.

When the Catholic Church rose to dominance, prophecy—especially prophecy involving the downfall of earthly powers—became politically uncomfortable. Teaching that Christ would return to overthrow corrupt rulers was not welcome in a state-sponsored church. Allegorizing prophecy solved that problem neatly.



Augustine

Luther



The Protestant Reformation recovered many essential doctrines, particularly justification by faith. However, it did **not** substantially recover eschatology (end times). Reformers inherited the Catholic Church’s prophetic assumptions largely intact, and those assumptions were passed down into modern seminaries.

As a result, most pastors today are trained extensively in systematic theology—bibliology, soteriology, ecclesiology—but receive little or no instruction in **Israelology**, the study of God’s ongoing covenant purposes for Israel. This omission has enormous consequences, because much of biblical prophecy—especially end-time prophecy—is **Israel-centered**.



Please Notice This



When Israel is removed from the prophetic equation, the Church is forced into roles Scripture never assigns to it. Confusion follows, and difficult passages are either avoided, allegorized, or spiritualized. Over time, entire portions of Scripture—especially Revelation—are quietly sidelined.

The Rapture: A “Preposterous” Doctrine That Refuses to Go Away

Even when first encountered, the Rapture often strikes people as implausible—if not outright absurd. The idea that living believers could be suddenly removed from the earth while the rest of humanity continues seems more suited to science fiction than to theology. That reaction is understandable.

Yet Scripture routinely presents truths that initially offend intuition. Resurrection, incarnation, creation ex nihilo, and miracles all stretch ordinary human experience. The Rapture belongs in that same category. It does not arise from human reasoning, but from divine revelation.



A helpful analogy comes from modern physics. Scientists had found that quantum mechanics is famously counterintuitive. Particles behave in ways that defy common sense, yet the theory works with astonishing precision. As physicist Richard Feynman once observed, “*quantum mechanics may be the strangest theory ever proposed—and yet it is unquestionably correct.*”



The same tension exists with the Rapture. It may be the most “preposterous” doctrine in Christianity, but that strangeness is not evidence against it. The real question is not whether the doctrine feels reasonable, but whether Scripture teaches it clearly and consistently.

I will not teach or dismiss any biblical teaching simply because it challenges our expectations. The Bible does not ask permission to align with modern sensibilities (that is, modern culture). It asks to be read carefully and believed honestly.

How I Came to Believe the Rapture

I did not begin my Christian life believing in the Rapture. My background was Lutheran and amillennial, and I accepted that framework largely without question. Christ would return, judgment would occur, and **the details were assumed to be symbolic.**

As I studied prophecy more carefully, I examined alternative views—preterism, historicism, and idealism. Each explained certain passages but failed to account for others. The problem was not interpretive complexity, but contradiction. Some texts describe Christ coming in comfort to receive His people, while others describe Him coming in wrath to judge the world. Some emphasize imminence, while others require clear, unmistakable signs.

For a time, I assumed the fault was mine. But the contradictions persisted. They only resolved when I allowed Scripture to describe **two distinct future comings**, not one. Read that way, the passages no longer conflicted; *they aligned.* I had moved from Allegorical to Precise.



That conclusion was not driven by my preference, tradition, novelty, or some pastor’s teaching. It emerged from the cumulative force of the text itself. Once seen, the Rapture ceased to be optional. It could not be unseen, and it became necessary to preserve the clarity and coherence of biblical prophecy.

Scripture does not present the Rapture as a vague or isolated idea. It presents it as a structured doctrine. For clarity, we will examine the Rapture under three simple headings: **the Promise, the Process, and the Purpose.** This approach allows us to see not only *that* the Rapture occurs, but *what was promised, how it unfolds, and why it is necessary.* We will begin where Scripture begins—with the promise itself.



The Promise

The doctrine of the Rapture begins with a **promise** Jesus made the night before His crucifixion. It **does not** originate in Revelation, nor does it begin with Paul. Later passages explain and expand the promise, but they do not create it. That promise is recorded in the Upper Room discourse:



John 14:1, 2] *Let not **your** heart be troubled: **ye** 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 a place for **you**.*



John 14:3] *And if I go and prepare a place for **you**, I will come again, and receive **you** unto myself; that where I am, there **ye** may be also.*

Jesus speaks these words to His disciples in a moment of deep concern and uncertainty. He begins by telling them not to be troubled. The tone of the passage is important. *This is not a warning to the world, nor a description of judgment.* It is comfort given to believers. Several features of this promise stand out when read plainly.



- **The audience** is specific: Jesus repeatedly addresses “*you*.” This is a promise to His believers or followers, **not** to humanity at large.
- **The destination** is clear: Jesus speaks of the *Father’s house*, **not** of establishing a kingdom on earth. The direction of movement matters.
- **The purpose** is reassurance. There is **no** language of wrath, judgment, or upheaval. The emphasis is peace, **not** fear.
- **The action** is personal. “*I will come again and receive you unto myself.*” The focus is on the relationship, not the spectacle.

Please Notice This



Jesus’ promise here establishes the core idea of the Rapture: Christ will return to take believers to be where He is. This is done in comfort, peace, and tranquility. There is no mention of vengeance, war, or judgment.

Soon, Paul will tell us how this wonderful promise will be fulfilled (1 Thess. 4:16-17), and then why this process must occur (1 Cor. 15:50-52). This doctrine rests firmly on the **plain meaning** of Scripture. No symbolism or typology is needed at this stage. The promise stands on its own.

Now let’s look at **how Scripture reinforces it**. That will require us to shift interpretive gears and look carefully at a **Remez** or something deeper (see the appendix for more on PaRDs).

Pattern Is Prologue (The Galilean Wedding Model).

Let’s shift interpretive gears—briefly and deliberately. The doctrine of the Rapture rests entirely on **Peshat**, which is the plain meaning of Scripture. What follows does **not** replace that foundation. Instead, it reinforces it through a **Remez**—a hint or biblical pattern that confirms what has already been promised. This is not an allegory. It is typology.

Throughout Scripture, God consistently uses **marriage** as a teaching model to communicate foundational spiritual truths. This pattern begins in the Old Testament and runs unbroken through the New. Marriage is used to reveal covenant, faithfulness, separation, anticipation, union, and restoration. Israel is portrayed as the wife of Yahweh (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32), while unfaithfulness is framed as adultery (Hos. 1–3). In the New Testament, the Church is revealed as the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25–27; 2 Cor. 11:2), awaiting final union at His return (Rev. 19:7–9). Because God repeatedly uses marriage to teach these truths, it should not surprise us that He also employs the marriage model to illuminate the nature and timing of Christ’s return for His people.



In Jewish thought, patterns matter (pattern is prophecy). God often embeds future truth in earlier forms, allowing later revelation to “snap into place.” One of the clearest examples of this is the ancient Jewish wedding, based on the marriage model and pattern.



When Jesus spoke of going away and returning for His disciples, His words carried cultural meaning His audience would have understood immediately. The traditional Jewish wedding unfolded in recognizable stages.

1 First, the bridegroom initiated the covenant.

The bride did not choose the timing or set the terms. The arrangement began with the groom’s initiative and the father’s approval. The bride was set apart. From the moment of betrothal, she was legally bound to the groom, even though they did not yet live together. She belonged to him but waited for his return.



2 Second, the groom departed to prepare a place.

He returned to his father’s house and built an addition where he and his bride would live. The timing of his return was known only to the father.

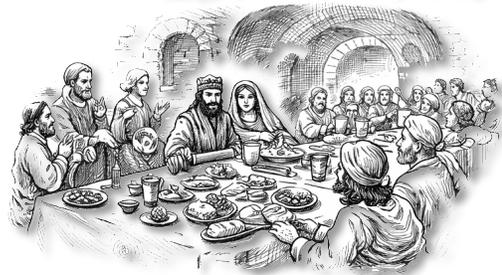


3 Third, the groom returned unexpectedly.

The bride did not know the day or hour. She lived in readiness, expecting his arrival at any time.

4 Fourth, the bride was taken away.

The groom came for her, and together they returned to the place prepared for her. Only after this did the wedding celebration begin.



Each of these stages corresponds naturally to what Scripture teaches about Christ and the Church. This pattern or type does not create the doctrine of the Rapture. It is a Remez that **confirms** it. The language Jesus used in the Upper Room is reinforced by this pattern precisely because the pattern was already established and understood by His audience.

- Christ initiated the covenant (John 15:16; Luke 22:20; Eph. 1:4).
- The Church is set apart as His Bride (Eph. 5:25–27; 2 Cor. 11:2; James 4:4).
- He has gone to prepare a place (John 14:2–3).
- His return is imminent and unexpected (Matt. 24:36; Matt. 25:13; 1 Thess. 5:2).
- The Bride is taken to be with Him (1 Thess. 4:16–17; John 14:3; Rev. 19:7–9).

Seen this way, the Rapture is not a theological novelty or modern man-made invention. It is the natural fulfillment of a form God had been using for centuries to communicate covenant, anticipation, and union.

Having identified this pattern, the next question is practical: ***How does the Rapture actually occur?***

The Process

Having established the **promise** of the Rapture, Scripture also explains **how** that promise is fulfilled. The Bible does not leave the mechanics vague or mysterious. The process is described plainly, primarily through the apostle Paul, and the most detailed explanation is found in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 4, verses 13-18.



1 Thess. 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: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*



1 Thess. 4:17] *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.*

Paul writes to believers who were anxious about fellow Christians who had died. His goal is reassurance, not speculation. What follows is a straightforward sequence of events.

- **First, the Lord Himself descends from heaven.**
This is not a delegated act or symbolic movement. Paul emphasizes Christ's personal involvement.
- **Second, the dead in Christ rise first.**
Those who have died as believers are resurrected before anything happens to those who are still alive. Death does not place them at a disadvantage.
- **Third, living believers are caught up together with them.**
The phrase "*caught up*" translates the Greek *harpazō*, meaning to seize, snatch, or take suddenly. This is not a gradual process. It is decisive and immediate.
- **Fourth, the meeting takes place in the air.**
Paul is explicit. Believers meet the Lord *in the air*, not on the earth. This distinguishes the Rapture from passages describing Christ's return to the Mount of Olives in judgment.



The result is a permanent union. {

- ✓ Both the dead and alive groups are gathered together.
- ✓ No believer is excluded.
- ✓ No believer is left behind.

Paul closes the passage with an important instruction: "*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*" The process he describes is meant to **calm fear**, not provoke it. A second passage adds an essential clarification.



1 Cor. 15:51, 52] *Behold, I shew 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.*

The Rapture, called *harpazō* in Greek, is a biblical "**mystery**" that has been lost or neglected in many churches but brings comfort and courage to those who grasp it.

Paul reveals this mystery. Not all believers will die, but all will be changed. This transformation happens instantaneously—“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” Mortality gives way to immortality. ***This change is not optional.***

- ✓ Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom
- ✓ Corruption must put on incorruption
- ✓ Death is swallowed up, not endured



Taken altogether, these passages describe a clear and orderly process.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Christ descends | 4. All are transformed |
| 2. The dead in Christ are raised | 5. Permanent union with Christ follows |
| 3. Living believers are caught up | |

Nothing in this process requires symbolism or allegory. The language is direct. The sequence is clear. The emphasis throughout is reassurance and hope. With the promise established and the process explained, one question remains: *Why is this necessary at all?*

The Purpose

The Rapture is not presented in Scripture as an escape from difficulty, nor as a reward for faithfulness. It serves a specific purpose within God’s redemptive plan. Without understanding that purpose, the doctrine can easily be misunderstood or dismissed.

At its most basic level, the Rapture is required because **the Church is not designed to inherit the next phase of God’s program in its present form.** Paul states this plainly in **1 Cor.15:50-55.**

 **1 Cor. 15:50]** *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

“*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*” The issue is not worthiness, but capacity. Humanity in its mortal state is unfit for what follows. In your present state, you cannot stand in the presence of God. Transformation must occur before the next stage of God’s plan can unfold.

The Rapture accomplishes that transformation. {

- ✓ Mortality gives way to immortality
- ✓ Corruption gives way to incorruption
- ✓ The Church is made fit for God’s presence

But transformation alone does not explain the timing.

The Rapture also marks the **completion of the Church Age** (Rom. 11:25). Throughout the New Testament, the Church is described as a mystery—something previously hidden and later revealed (Eph. 3:3–6; Col. 1:26–27). Like all mysteries in Scripture, it has a beginning and an end.

When the Church is complete, its purpose on earth is fulfilled. {

- ✓ The Church is removed from the scene
- ✓ God’s focus shifts in accordance with His prior promises
- ✓ A different phase of redemptive history begins

The Rapture also fulfills the imagery of **bride preparation**. Scripture consistently portrays the Church as the Bride of Christ. Before a public union, the bride is made ready (Eph. 5:26–27; Rev. 19:7–8). The Rapture provides that moment of preparation, in anticipation of what follows. Finally, the Rapture preserves the integrity of God’s character.

Scripture is clear that believers **are not** appointed to divine wrath (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 5:9). The kind of wrath that is poured out in The Tribulation. The judgments that follow in Revelation are **not redemptive**; they are **retributive**. God's justice directed toward a rebellious world.

Removing the Church before those judgments is consistent with God's character.

- ✓ God keeps His Promises
- ✓ God distinguishes His purposes
- ✓ God acts in order – not in confusion!

Taken together, the purpose of the Rapture becomes clear.

- 1. It completes the Church Age
- 2. It transforms believers for God's presence
- 3. It prepares the Bride
- 4. It maintains the distinction between promise and judgement.



The Rapture is not an isolated doctrine. It is a necessary transition point in the biblical narrative. Without it, the flow of Scripture becomes strained. With it, God's redemptive plan remains coherent, orderly, and faithful to His Word.

Now with a brief overview of the **Promise, Process, and Purpose** established, we are prepared to address the questions and objections that naturally arise.

The Doctrine of Imminence

One of the clearest implications of the Rapture is the doctrine of **imminence**. In simple terms, imminence means that Christ's return for the Church can occur at any moment. Nothing must happen first.

This idea is taught directly in the New Testament. Believers are repeatedly instructed to **watch, wait, and expect** Christ's return (Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13). The posture encouraged is anticipation, not prediction.

Imminence carries several important implications.

- ✓ No prophetic event is required to precede the Rapture
- ✓ Believers are never told to look for the Antichrist
- ✓ The Church is not instructed to watch for judgment, but for Christ

This stands in contrast to passages that describe Christ's return **in judgment**, which are accompanied by clear signs and unmistakable events. Scripture never treats these two categories as interchangeable. Paul reinforces this distinction when writing to the Thessalonians.



1 Thess. 5:2] *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*



1 Thess. 5:3] *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*



1 Thess. 5:4] *But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

The "day of the Lord" comes suddenly and unexpectedly upon the world, but believers are not in darkness that it should overtake them. The contrast is deliberate. The Church is characterized by expectation, not surprise.



Imminence does not promote escapism or passivity. Scripture consistently connects expectation with holy living.

- ♥ Anticipation produces watchfulness (1 John 3:2–3)
- ♥ Hope produces endurance (Rom. 8:23–25)
- ♥ Readiness produces faithfulness (Matt. 25:13)

When imminence is denied, tension enters the text. If specific signs must occur first, expectancy gives way to calculation. The repeated exhortations to “watch” lose their force.

For this reason, imminence is not a minor detail. It is a doctrinal indicator. Systems that place the Church within events that are clearly sign-dependent must explain why the New Testament repeatedly presents Christ’s return as near and unpredictable.

Imminence fits naturally with the Rapture. It does not fit comfortably anywhere else.

With imminence established, we are now ready to address a smoking gun:



One Event or Two? Scriptural Contradiction

As you study the 2nd coming of Christ in-depth, you start collecting the various verses that reference that event. When Christ came the 1st time, He fulfilled over 300 prophecies. For every prophecy relating to His First Coming, there are eight that reference His Second Coming—over 2,500. If you collect and examine these different prophecies, you will discover something rather strange and disturbing—**direct contradictions**.

It took me many years to discover this, and it undermined the inerrancy of scripture and, for me, was a crack in the foundation, which was unacceptable; this was until I realized that the scriptures were not talking about one event but **two separate events**. For me, this was a smoking gun! The prophecies cluster into two groups.

As you study these two lists, and you're honest with yourself, you realize this has to be talking about two different things:

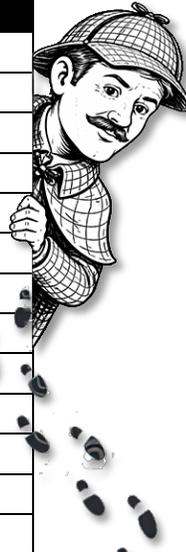
- ① A coming for Israel.
- ② A coming for the Church.



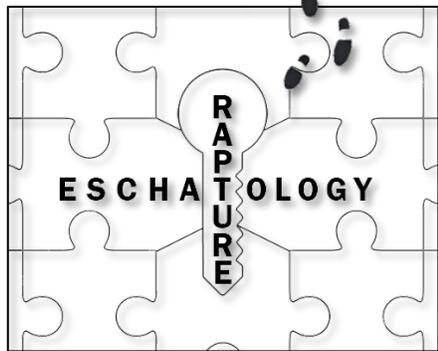
2 nd Coming 1	Rapture 2
Ezek 21:27	John 14:1-3
Ezek 28:25	Rom 8:19
Dan 2:44-45	1 Cor 1:7-8
Dan 7:9-14	1 Cor 15:51-53
Dan 12:1-3	1 Cor 16:22
Zech 2:10	Phil 3:20-21
Zech 12:10	Phil 4:5
Zech 13:9	Col 3:4
Zech 14:1-5	1 Thess 1:10
Zech 14:14-15	1 Thess 2:19
Zech 14:16-19	1 Thess 4:13-18
Mal 3:1	1 Thess 5:9
Matt 13:41	1 Thess 5:23
Matt 24:15-31	2 Thess 2:1
Matt 24:29-31	2 Thess 2:3
Matt 26:64	1 Tim 6:14
Mark 13:14-27	2 Tim 4:1
Mark 14:62	Titus 2:13
Luke 21:25-28	Heb 9:28
Acts 1:9-11	James 5:7-9
Acts 3:19-21	1 Pet 1:7, 13
1 Thess 3:13	1 Pet 5:4
2 Thess 1:6-10	1 John 2:28-3:2
2 Thess 2:8	Jude 21
Jude 14-15	Rev 3:10
Rev 1:7	Rev. 18:4
Rev 19:11-20:6	
Rev 22:7	
Rev 22:12	
Rev 22:20	



Rapture	VS	Second Coming
Translation of believers	-VS-	No translation involved
Translated saints go to heaven	-VS-	Translated saints return to earth
Earth not judged,	-VS-	Earth judged
Imminent, any moment, signless	-VS-	Follows definite predicted signs
Not overtly in the O.T.	-VS-	Predicted throughout the O.T.
Believers Only	-VS-	Affects all men on the earth
Before the Day of Wrath	-VS-	Concludes the Day of Wrath
No reference to Satan	-VS-	Satan is bound
Christ comes for His own	-VS-	Christ comes with His own
He comes in the air	-VS-	He comes to the earth
He claims His bride	-VS-	He comes with His bride
Only the Church sees Him	-VS-	Every eye will see Him
Tribulation begins	-VS-	Millennial Kingdom Begins



As you can see, when Scripture speaks about the future return of Christ, it does not do so in a single way. Some passages describe His **coming as a moment of comfort and rescue for believers**. Others describe it as a **time of wrath, judgment, and global upheaval (Rev. 4-19)**. If these descriptions refer to the same event, serious contradictions immediately arise.



These tensions are not minor, and they appear repeatedly and consistently across both the Old and New Testaments.

Some passages describe Christ coming **for** His people. Others describe Him coming **with** His people. Some emphasize imminence—no warning, no prerequisites. Others require specific, identifiable events to occur first. Scripture never treats these descriptions as interchangeable.

Rather than forcing these passages into a single event, which creates contradictions, the relevant passages, examined carefully, can be put into two distinct prophetic profiles:

Christ coming <i>for</i> His Church	Christ coming <i>in judgment</i>
“comfort, expectation, and gathering.”	“Wrath, accountability, visible intervention.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoken to believers, not the world 📖 John 14:1-3 Characterized by imminence 📖 Titus 2:13; Phil. 3:20 Involves believers being taken to Christ 📖 1 Thess. 4:16-17 Gathered in the air, not on the earth 📖 1 Thess. 4:17 The event is comforting, not terrifying 📖 1 Thess. 4:18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preceded by unmistakable signs 📖 Matt. 24:15, 29) Involves Christ returning to the earth 📖 Zech. 14:4 Portrays the defeat of God’s enemies 📖 Rev. 19:11-21 Describes Christ accompanied by His saints 📖 Rev. 19:14 Results in severe bloodshed and judgment 📖 Isa. 63:1-9

A futurist, dispensational framework recognizes that these passages describe **two distinct future comings**, separated in time and purpose. Christ first comes *for* His Church, removing her before judgment begins. Later, He returns *with* His saints in power and wrath to conclude the Tribulation and establish His kingdom.

This distinction does not multiply events arbitrarily. It preserves the integrity of the text, maintains chronological flow, and allows each passage to mean what it plainly says. When the Rapture and the Second Coming are properly distinguished, the apparent contradictions disappear—not through explanation, but through clarity.

Silencing the Critics

“Was This Invented by Darby?” One of the most frequently repeated objections to the Rapture is the claim that it is a modern invention—specifically, that originated with **John Nelson Darby** in the nineteenth century. This assertion is often presented as a settled historical fact. **It is not.**

The confusion arises from a failure to distinguish between **systematization** and **origination**. Darby did not invent the idea that Christ would remove His people before a period of divine judgment. Rather, he helped organize and clarify a futurist, dispensational framework that had existed in various forms long before his time.



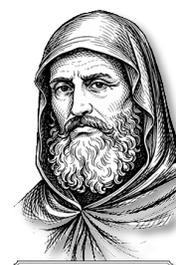
John Nelson Darby

Long prior to Darby, early Christian writers expressed the expectation that believers would be gathered to Christ before a time of unprecedented tribulation. While they did not use modern terminology such as *pre-tribulation rapture*, the underlying concept is clearly present. These writers consistently distinguished between the Church and a future outpouring of divine judgment upon the world.

Pretribulation Eschatology		
Epistle of Barnabas	Ephraim the Syrian (306-373)	Phillip Doddridge (1702-1751)
Papia of Hierapolis (60-130)	Abbot Ceolfrid (642-716)	Morgan Edwards (1722-1795)
Justin Martyr (110-195)	Brother Dolcino (1250-1307)	James MacKnight (1721-1800)
Irenaeus (130-202) ❖	Hugh Latimer (1487-1555)	Thomas Scott (1747-1821)
Shepherd of Hermas	Joseph Mede (1586-1638)	William Cuninghame (1775-1849)
Hippolytus (170-235)	Peter Jurieu (1639-1723)	James H. Frere (1779-1866)
Cyprian (200-258)	John Asgill (1659-1738)	Edward Irving (1792-1834)
Lactantius (260-330)	John Gill (1697-1771)	William Witherby (d. 1818)
St. Victorinus (death 303-304)	Grantham Killingworth (1699-1778)	John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

A representative example comes from **Ephraim the Syrian** (4th century), who wrote that the saints would be gathered to the Lord before the tribulation in order to be spared from the coming judgment. Similar expectations appear in other early sources, scattered across centuries and geographic regions. This diversity makes the charge of a single nineteenth-century origin untenable.

What changed over time was not Scripture but interpretive method. As allegorical and amillennial approaches of the Catholic Church gained dominance—particularly following Augustine—literal expectations of future prophetic fulfillment were gradually muted.



Ephraim the Syrian

When Darby later emphasized a consistent historical-grammatical reading of prophecy, critics mistook the recovery of earlier ideas for innovation.

It is, therefore, inaccurate and irresponsible to claim that the Rapture was “invented” by Darby. At most, one can say that Darby articulated and systematized a view that had long existed but had been obscured by centuries of non-literal interpretation.

The decisive question, however, is not historical popularity but biblical fidelity. Doctrine is not validated by its age or dismissed by its obscurity. Scripture itself remains the final authority. History shows that the Rapture is neither novel nor contrived but is firmly rooted in the stream of early Christian expectation.

“The word Rapture is not found in the Bible.” Some critics—both Christian and non-Christian—argue that the Rapture cannot be biblical because the word *rapture* does not appear in English Bible translations. This objection misses the point. Many important Christian doctrines are taught clearly in Scripture, even though the exact word is not used. What matters is whether the teaching is there, not whether a modern English label appears on the page.

In 1 Thess. 4:17, believers are described as being “*caught up*.” In the Latin Bible, this phrase is translated as *rapiemur*, a form of the verb *rapiro*, meaning to seize or carry off suddenly. From this Latin word comes the English words *rapt* and *rapture*. So while the English word “rapture” may not appear in modern translations, the concept and the very term itself are rooted directly in the biblical text. If you were carrying around a Latin Bible, a predecessor to our modern translations, you would see the word. ➔



deinde nos qui vivimus qui relinquimur simul rapiemur cum illis in nubibus obviam Domino in aera et sic semper cum Domino erimus. 1 Thess. 4:17 (Latin Vulgate)

On a side note, some commonly accepted Christian terms or doctrines that do not appear in the Bible as words whose concepts are clearly present: Bible, Trinity, Rapture, Incarnation, Omniscience, Monotheism, Original Sin, Sovereign, Millennium, Pastor, and Second Coming, just to name a few.

Seven “Raptures” in the Bible (Caught up)	
1. Enoch (Gen 5:42; Heb 11:5)	5. Paul (2 Cor. 12:2-4*)
2. Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1, 11)	6. Body of Christ (1 Thess. 4:17*)
3. Jesus (Mk 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; Rev 12:5*)	7. John (Rev 4:1)
4. Philip (Acts 8:39*)	* harpázô used in text

Redemptive Suffering. Many Christians hold, often unknowingly, to a concept of redemptive suffering—the belief that enduring suffering contributes to spiritual cleansing, purification, or worthiness before God. Those who adopt this view are frequently among the most vocal critics of a pre-tribulational Rapture. They tend to regard the Rapture as a form of escapism and argue that believers must pass through the Tribulation in order to be tested or proven worthy. They misunderstand both the nature of salvation and the purpose of the Great Tribulation, which Scripture presents not as a means of sanctifying the Church, but as a period of divine judgment and covenant fulfillment directed toward the world and Israel.

Next Lesson: Lesson 6, Daniel’s 70 weeks. Read Daniel 9, especially verses 24-27. Our next task is to understand the prophetic timetable that governs that judgment—Daniel’s Seventy Weeks.

(Lesson materials available at – www.TrustingInGrace.com)

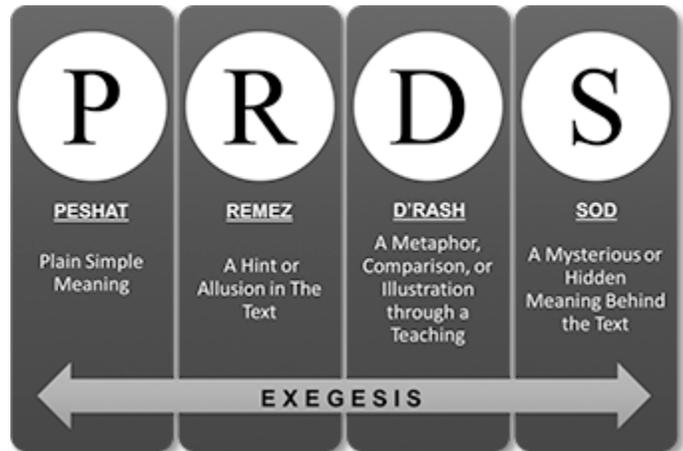
Appendix: References for The Rapture Lesson

Appendix A: PaRDeS (exegesis)

There is an interpretive principle called **PaRDeS** in Jewish biblical exegesis (hermeneutics). The term, sometimes also rendered PaRDeS, is a Hebrew acronym formed from the initials of the four levels of interpretation. The PaRDeS acronym means Garden, or Paradise, in Hebrew.

Each type of Pardes interpretation examines the text's extended meaning. As a rule, the extended meaning **never contradicts** the base meaning.

- **Peshat** (פְּשָׁט) — the plain, grammatical, historical meaning of the text.
- **Remez** (רֵמֵז) — patterns, hints, or typological connections embedded in Scripture.
- **Drash** (דְּרָשׁ) — theological meaning and implications drawn from the text.
- **Sod** (סוֹד)— prophetic mystery, often revealed progressively.

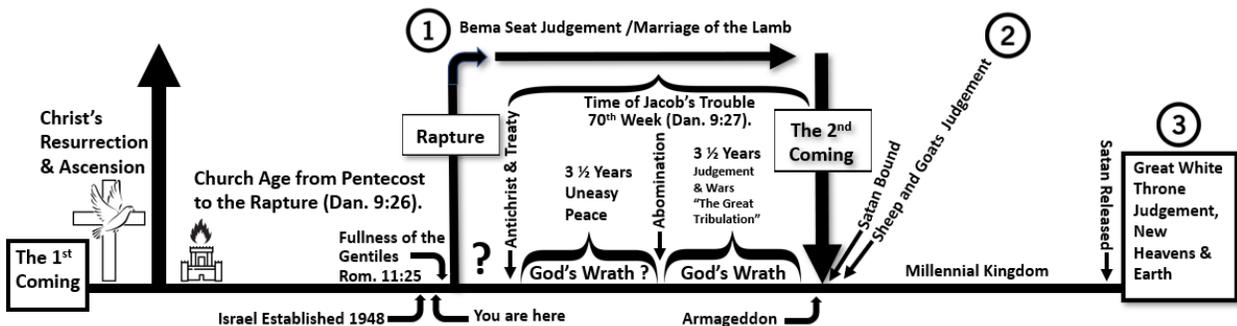
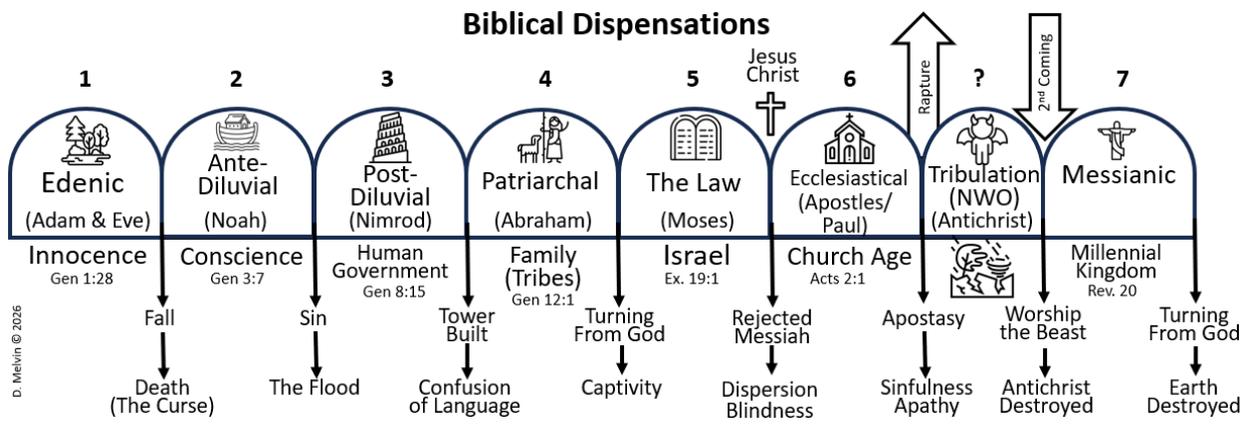
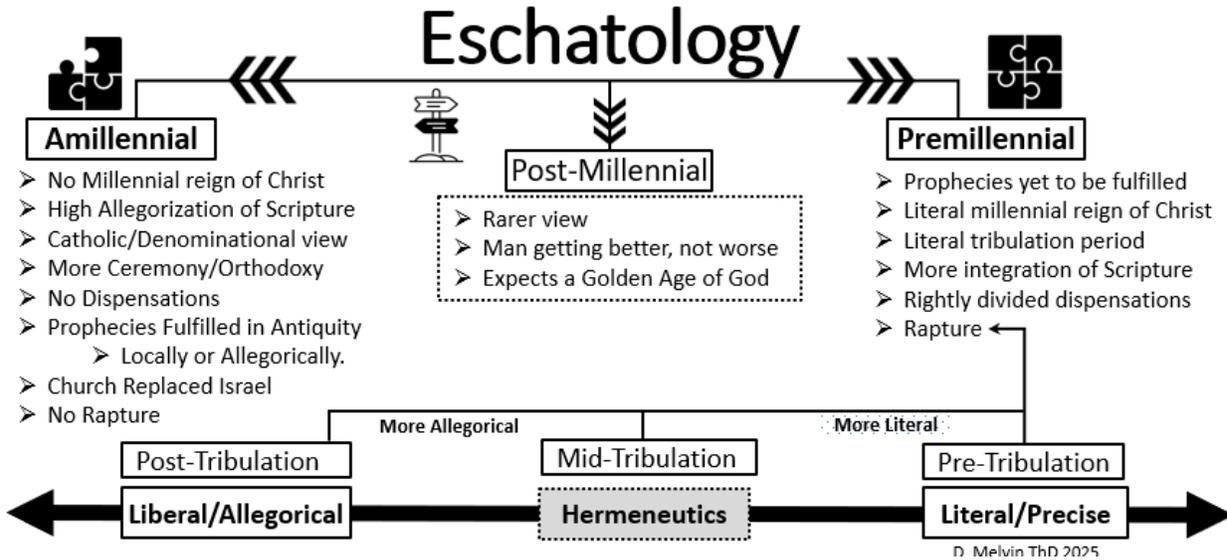


The first three have their parallels in Christian theology. There can be considerable overlaps, for example, when legal understandings of a verse are influenced by mystical interpretations or when a "hint" is determined by comparing a word with other instances of the same word.

Appendix B — Key Terms

- **Rapture (harpazō):** The sudden catching up of the Church to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).
- **Harpazō:** Greek verb meaning to seize or snatch suddenly (1 Thess. 4:17).
- **Imminence:** Christ's return for the Church can occur at any moment; no signs required (Titus 2:13).
- **Church Age:** The present era of the Body of Christ, from Pentecost to the Rapture (Eph. 3:3–6).
- **Mystery:** A truth once hidden, now revealed by God (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:5).
- **Tribulation:** A future **7-year period** of divine judgment on the world (Matt. 24; Rev. 6-19).
- **Great Tribulation:** The final **3 ½ year** intensified phase of the Tribulation (Matt. 24:21). The judgments of God here are **not redemptive**; they are **retributive** for rejecting Christ.
- **Day of the Lord:** A period of divine judgment and intervention (1 Thess. 5:2).
- **Wrath:** God's judicial judgment on sin (Rom. 1:18).
- **Discipline:** God's corrective training of believers, not wrath (Heb. 12:6).
- **Second Coming:** Christ's visible return to earth in judgment and power (Rev. 19:11-21).
- **Rapture vs. Second Coming:** Church removed from the world vs. Christ returning to the world.
- **Israel / Church:** Distinct entities with distinct roles in God's plan (Rom. 11; Eph. 2–3).

Appendix C — Charts



① **Bema Seat Judgment** — Christ's evaluation of believers' works for reward, not salvation, occurring after the Rapture (2 Cor. 5:10).

② **Sheep and Goat Judgment** — Christ's judgment of surviving nations at His Second Coming, separating believers from unbelievers based on their response during the Tribulation (Matt. 25:31–46).

③ **Great White Throne Judgment** — God's final judgment of all unbelievers after the Millennium, resulting in eternal condemnation (Rev. 20:11–15).