

The Rapture

Behold, I tell you a secret; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (1 Corinthians 15.51-52).

Introduction

Great controversy and confusion exists in Christendom regarding the doctrine of the Rapture. This unfortunate state is a result of not understanding Pauline theology—a failure of both Biblical neophytes and theological professionals. Much of the failure is simply unbelief—a refusal to believe the straightforward message of the Scripture. This study will examine the Pauline texts with the goal to end the confusion and turn unbelief to faith.

The Word “Rapture” (ἁρπάζω)

The word “rapture” does not occur in our English Bibles. We get the word by way of St. Jerome (c. 347-420 A.D.). In his work of revising the Latin New Testament from the Greek New Testament, he translated the Greek word [ἁρπάζω](#) into the Latin “rapiemur.” The Latin verb form is “rapio” and means to be “caught up” or “taken away.” From these Latin words come our English word “rapture.” While Paul used the word ἁρπάζω only once (1 Thessalonians 4.17), he taught the doctrine of the Rapture in other places using other expressions. The Greek word ἁρπάζω means to “seize” or “snatch away.” It is used 13 times in the following verses: Matthew 11.12, 13.19; John 6.15, 10.12, 28-29; Acts 8.39, 23.10; 2 Corinthians 12.2, 12.4; 1 Thessalonians 4.17; Jude 1.23; Revelation 12.5.

What is the Rapture?

To begin to understand the Rapture we must first define it. The Rapture is the resurrection of the Church, the body of Christ. It is part of the great Biblical doctrine of resurrection in which all who have put their trust in the God of the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ, will receive resurrection bodies and be with the Lord forever. The resurrection of the Church occurs when Christ returns to earth in the clouds for His Body. The Lord meets us in the air because heaven is our destiny and abode. The Church is God's heavenly people. Contrasted to His return for His body is His return for Israel and the nations. This is His second coming, when He returns to earth (Acts 1.11; Zechariah 14.4). Israel is God's earthly people who have an earthly destiny (Matthew 6.10). After this advent, God will establish His long-promised kingdom on earth in which Israel will be preeminent among the nations (Deuteronomy 28.1, 13). But the Rapture comprises the largest ingathering of believers in the resurrections unto life. For Paul, the Rapture WAS the return of Christ.

The Key to Understanding the Rapture

Some have stated that the Rapture is wholly Paul and that Jesus never predicted such an event.¹ This is correct. The Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist knew nothing of it. Jesus, in His earthly ministry taught nothing about it. Nor did the Twelve. The resurrected, glorified Lord revealed this truth to Paul alone.

Paul provides us with the key to understand the Rapture in 1 Corinthians 15.51. He wrote the Corinthians,

Behold, I tell you a secret; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed (1 Corinthians 15.51).

Paul wrote that the Rapture was a "secret" ([μυστήριον](#)). This is key to understanding the Rapture: it was a secret. The Greek text is "ἰδοὺ μυστήριον ὑμῖν λέγω" and may be

translated, "Look!, I am telling (λέγω, present active indicative) you a secret!" Paul worded his sentence emphatically to get his readers' attention. He wanted them to understand that he was revealing something *new* and *important*.

A μυστήριον is something hidden, a secret. If something is a secret, what does that mean? It means that it is unknown, hidden, and previously unrevealed. What Paul revealed to his audience was an event God had kept hidden. He did not reveal it to His Old Testament prophets, Jesus did not disclose it in His earthly ministry, and the Twelve knew nothing about it. God revealed this secret to Paul alone.² Had God revealed the resurrection? Yes. Job knew about it (Job 19.26), Jesus taught it (John 5.24-25, 28-29, 11.23), and the common people during Jesus' time knew about it (John 11.24). The Pharisees taught it (Acts 23.6,8) and the Sadducees rejected it (Matthew 22.23). Paul was not revealing something new when he wrote about resurrection. But the revelation of the Rapture was new, a secret part of the resurrection.

The Order of Resurrections

Paul liked the resurrection to a harvest, based upon what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 15.20-23. According to Leviticus 23.9-10, 19.9-10, Israel had three harvests: the first fruits, the main harvest, and the harvest of the gleanings and corners of a field left for the poor. Jesus was the first fruits along with some Jewish saints buried around Jerusalem (Matthew 27.51-53). The main harvest is the body of Christ. Last is the harvest of the Old Testament and Tribulation believers. All these resurrections are part of what Jesus called the resurrection unto life (John 5.28-29). The resurrection unto death will occur at the end of the Messianic Kingdom at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20.11-15). At that judgment, Jesus will judge all who have rejected Him and His salvation. Below is an outline of the resurrections.

The Order of the Resurrections Likened to Harvests	
I. The Resurrection of Life (ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς), i.e., the resurrection of all who have put their trust in Christ (John 5.28-29) occurs in 3 separate “harvests.”	
A. Harvest of First Fruits (Leviticus 23.9-10)	1. The resurrection of Christ, the first of the “first fruits” (Psalm 16.10; 1 Corinthians 15.20-23). 2. The resurrection of additional “first fruits”, i.e., Jewish saints buried around Jerusalem (Matthew 27.51-53).
B. Main Harvest	The resurrection of the Church, the Body of Christ, a.k.a. the Rapture and the Day of Christ (1 Corinthians 15.23, 52-53; 1 Thessalonians 4.14-17; 2 Thessalonians 1.1-6).
C. Harvest of Gleanings and Corners (Leviticus 19.9-10)	1. The resurrection of Old Testament believers (Job 19.25-26; Daniel 12.1-2, 11-13; Isaiah 26.19-21). 2. The resurrection of Tribulation believers (Revelation 20.4-5).
II. The Resurrection of Condemnation (ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως) involves those who have rejected Christ and His salvation (John 5.28-29) and follows the 1,000 year Messianic reign of Christ (Revelation 20.11-15).	

The Rapture Texts

Paul taught the doctrine of the Rapture in several texts. They include the following: 1 Corinthians 15.51-52, 1 Thessalonians 1.9-10, 4.13-18, 5.1-5, 5.9-11, 2 Thessalonians 1.6-10, 2.1-12, Philippians 3.8-11, 21.

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15 is the great resurrection chapter of the Bible. Paul taught more about the resurrection in that passage than all other Biblical texts combined. Paul made the following points in

the passage.

1. The death and resurrection of Christ is the gospel. Believing it is how one becomes a Christian, that is, how one is saved (1 Corinthians 15.1-4, 5-11).
2. If no resurrection exists, Christ Himself has not been raised. If this is so, no forgiveness of sin exists (1 Corinthians 15.12-19).
3. The resurrection occurs in a sequence. Christ was the "first fruits" as in a harvest. All "in Christ" will be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15.20-34).
4. Two different kinds of bodies exist: earthly and heavenly. A resurrection body is heavenly and eternal (1 Corinthians 15.35-50).
5. Not all believers will experience physical death. Some members of the Church, the body of Christ will receive resurrection bodies while they remain alive. Their earthly bodies will be transformed into heavenly, eternal bodies. This was a secret before Paul (1 Corinthians 15.51-52).
6. The resurrection of the believer's body is his ultimate victory over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15.53-58) and constitutes the final phase of salvation. It was made possible by the Lord's glorious resurrection after his victory over sin and death.

1 Corinthians 15.51-52

⁵¹ *Behold, I tell you a mystery [secret]; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

From the passage above we learn the following about the Rapture.

1. The Rapture was a secret (μυστήριον).
2. All members of the body of Christ (the Church) will not sleep (Paul's euphemism for death) but all will be changed ([ἀλλάσσω](#)—to change from one thing to another). Paul used this word in Romans 1.23 and Galatians 4.20. In Philippians 3.21, Paul used the term [μετασχηματίζω](#) to describe this transformation.
3. The transformation will occur instantaneously, in a “moment” ([ἄτομος](#)—“that which cannot be divided” from which we get our word “atom” and in the “twinkling of an eye”—[ῥιπή](#)—a throw, stroke, beat, a moment of time).
4. The event will occur at the last trumpet.³
5. Just as the resurrection has an order, the Rapture occurs in a sequence. Members of the body of Christ who have died will be raised first and given resurrection bodies. Then, members of the body of Christ who are alive will exchange their earthly bodies for resurrection bodies. Paul's use of “we” in verse 52 indicated he expected the event to occur in his lifetime.

With regard to the sequence (5 above) Paul wrote the following in 1 Corinthians 15.22-25:

²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.* ²³ *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.*

A universal truth that exists for the human race is 1) all “in Adam” die and 2) all “in Christ” will be made alive. No hope exists for mankind outside of Christ. All that awaits men and women apart from Christ is death (eternal separation from God). Every human being inherits death from Adam (Genesis 2.17). We obtain life from Christ. In verse 23, Paul explained that the resurrection has an order ([τάγμα](#)). The word means something set in a particular arrangement and was used of a

body of soldiers. Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection order. Second in order will be the body of Christ, the Church. These are those who have believed Paul's gospel (1 Corinthians 15.1-4), "those who are Christ's at His coming." Usually, when Paul spoke of the Lord's coming he meant the Rapture (Titus 2.13).

1 Thessalonians 1.9-10

⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Most theologians regard Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians as the first letter he wrote. In this letter, Paul revealed he had taught the Thessalonians about the Rapture even though they were new believers. The "wrath" to which Paul referred was future, the prophesied Day of the Lord or Tribulation in which God will pour His wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world. Believers will not go through this horrific period for God rescues ([ῥύομαι](#)) them (us) from it. Paul had much to say about this rescue in the following passages.

1 Thessalonians 4.13-18

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ 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 not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet

of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.* ¹⁸ *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

In verse 13, Paul comforted his readers regarding believers who had died “are asleep.” Sleep was the language Paul used to describe believers who had died. Paul reiterated the gospel (1 Corinthians 15.1-4) and the hope members of the body of Christ have, that God will bring with Him (Christ) all who have died (verse 14). In verses 15 through 17, Paul gave the sequence of the Rapture. He wrote that his information came by direct revelation from the ascended Christ, “by the word of the Lord” (verse 15). The sequence of events was the following:

1. Those who are alive when the Lord returns will not precede those who have died. Those who are “asleep” will be raised (given resurrection bodies) first.
2. The Lord will vacate heaven with a shout ([κέλευσμα](#)). The Greek word translated “shout” is a galvanizing command, e.g., “Now!” Concomitant to the Lord’s shout will be the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. These commands signal the rising of the dead in Christ (the body of Christ).
3. Second in resurrection sequence will be believers who are alive. They will be transformed (earthly bodies will be exchanged for heavenly bodies). Both groups will be “caught up”, “seized” “snatched away” ([ἄρπάζω](#)) to be forever with the Lord.

Paul told the Thessalonians to comfort one another *with these words*. The word “comfort” is [παρακαλεῖτε](#), the present, active, imperative of [παρακαλέω](#). Thus, it was an ongoing command. Paul *commanded* believers to comfort one another with the doctrine of the Rapture. Those who reject the Rapture have refused the

Lord's orders.

1 Thessalonians 5.1-5

¹ Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day: we are not of night nor of darkness;

Paul had given the Thessalonians a full course on end-time events so that he could write them that they needed no more instruction. Some ask why study or teach prophecy or end-time events. One answer is that Paul did. Another reason is that prophecy comprises about one-fourth of the Word of God and "all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable" (2 Timothy 3.16). Lastly, prophecy provides the believer with the assurance that God knows the end from the beginning and that all is under His control.

You and Them

The Thessalonians knew from Paul about the Day of the Lord (Zephaniah 1.1-18) and that it would come like "a thief in the night." That day will come unexpectedly. Pay attention to Paul's words. When he spoke about believers he used the 2nd person pronoun "you." When he spoke about unbelievers he shifted to third person pronouns "they," "them," e.g., "destruction will come upon *them*," "*they* will not escape." He then returned to the 2nd person, "but you" to tell his readers that the Day of the Lord would not overtake them as a thief, etc. Paul indicated that not only did the

Thessalonians know about these events, they would not experience them. The reason they would not experience them was they were members of the body of Christ. They would be removed from the earth when the Lord returned in the air. This is as clear a teaching as anything Paul wrote. It is impossible, if we believe the Scriptures, for members of the body of Christ to go through the Tribulation. This one passage eliminates all possibility of a mid-Tribulation or post-Tribulation Rapture. How anyone can miss this point in light of this text is hard to understand.

1 Thessalonians 5.9-11

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Paul reiterated that believers will not go through the horrors of the Tribulation, He wrote, "God has not destined us for wrath." The wrath to which he referred was not hell. The context of the passage is the Day of the Lord (Zephaniah 1.1-18), not salvation from sin, death, and hell. Paul taught that believers would *not* experience the Day of the Lord in which God will pour out his wrath upon the earth. The "salvation" to which Paul referred was salvation from the Day of the Lord. In verse 10, Paul declared that because Christ died for us, whether we are awake or asleep (alive or dead), we will live together with Him.

2 Thessalonians 1.6-10

⁶ For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will

be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

In the above passage, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians believers who were undergoing persecution as a result of their faith. He indicated God would afflict those who were persecuting them and “give relief ([ἄνεσις](#)) to you who are afflicted.” Paul believed the Lord would return soon—in his lifetime. When that occurred, the Lord would rescue them from the persecution they were undergoing. After this event, God would initiate the Day of the Lord. During that period He will punish all who “do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

2 Thessalonians 2.1-12

¹ Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? (2 Thessalonians 2.1-5)

These words follow-up Paul's earlier teaching in 1 Thessalonians. Apparently, false teachers had troubled the Thessalonians by telling them that the persecution they were experiencing was the Day of the Lord. These were the first post-tribulationists. Paul was quick to crush this teaching. He wrote them to "not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the Day of the Lord has come." The Day of the Lord was prophesied throughout the Old Testament and Jesus referred to it as the Tribulation (Matthew 24.21-22). Paul admonished them that no matter what they heard or from whom, from a spirit (angel), or some other "message" ([λόγος](#)) or letter purportedly from Paul, to pay no attention to it. They were to stick with Paul's teaching that when the Lord came, He would gather ([πισυνάγωγή](#)) them to Himself before God poured out His wrath—the Day of the Lord.

In verse 3, Paul provided more information about the coming Day of the Lord. He warned them not to let anyone deceive them. Paul wrote that the Day of the Lord would not come unless (ἐὰν μὴ) "the departure" (ἡ [ἀποστασία](#)) came first. The word ἀποστασία means "depart" (cf. Acts 21.21) and in this content is synonymous with the Rapture.⁴

Paul then reminded his readers that he had already taught them these things (verse 5).

⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because

they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. ¹³ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴ It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. ¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word (2 Thessalonians 2.6-17).

In the above verses, Paul declared that this “secret of lawlessness” had already begun. As it was at work during Paul’s day it is still now. What did he mean? He meant that Satan, as the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4.4) has a plan to insert his man to rule the world. Satan is not beyond time and his knowledge of the future is limited. He may have someone ready to fulfill his plan in each generation. The one who restrains (ὁ κατέχων) this evil is God the Holy Spirit. The revelation of Satan’s man cannot occur until the Holy Spirit is “taken out of the way” (ἐκ μέσου γένηται). Literally, this phrase reads, “he becomes out of the middle.” Standing in the middle, between Satan’s plan to establish his man into the world and our present world, is God the Holy Spirit. God will remove His restraint when He comes for the body of Christ (the Church) since God the Holy Spirit indwells every believer. When this occurs, Satan will recognize his opportunity and move to promote his man. After seven years,

when God's wrath has run its course, at the end of the Tribulation, the Lord will return (Luke 13.35) and destroy him (Revelation 19.20, 20.10).

In verses 9-16 Paul revealed that this man, empowered by Satan, the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4.3-4), will display Satan's power by supernatural wonders and deceive the world. The world will be deceived "because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." God is fair and allows each person to choose for or against Him. Paul explained that they will not believe the truth because they "took pleasure in wickedness." Paul ended this passage by reminding them of their salvation and encouraged them to hold to the teachings he had taught them.

Philippians 3.8-11

⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a record of Paul's joy and celebration of his life in Christ. Written from prison (Philippians 1.7), Paul declared that what he had lost for the sake of Christ was but refuse or garbage ([σκύβαλον](#)) compared to his life in Christ. In verse 10, Paul desired to know Christ, the power of His resurrection ([ἀνάστασις](#)) and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Romans 6.3-8). In verse 11, he declared he wished to attain

to the resurrection ([ἐξανάστασις](#)) from the dead. What did Paul mean by these statements?

Paul had no doubt he would be resurrected. Even before he put his faith in Jesus he believed in the resurrection: he was a Pharisee. In verse 10, he expressed his desire to experience the power of Christ's resurrection. By this, Paul meant the power to overcome sin daily and live a Christ-empowered (resurrection empowered) life (Romans 6.3-8, 8.10-23). In verse 11, we find something different. He changed from using ἀνάστασις to ἐξανάστασις. The latter word is a *hapax legomenon* (transliteration of ἄπαξ λεγόμενον). It is used only here in the Bible. Paul coined this word to express the hope he held dear. Literally, the word means "out resurrection." Paul formed the word by combining the Greek preposition ἐκ (out) with ἀνάστασις (resurrection). What was the "out resurrection?" The "out resurrection" was that resurrection in which believers who are alive will be taken from the earth to meet the Lord in the air to receive a resurrection body. The "out resurrection" is the Rapture—the "blessed hope" (Titus 2.13).

Philippians 3.20-21

²⁰ *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;* ²¹ *who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

Paul concluded chapter 3 by reminding the Philippians that our citizenship ([πολίτευμα](#)) is heavenly and await eagerly ([ἀπεκδέχομαι](#)) the Lord's return (Romans 8.23; 1 Corinthians 1.7). When He comes, He will transform us to have immortal, resurrection bodies. The word translated by the NASB as "transform" and KJV "change" is [μετασχηματίζω](#). This word (metaschematization) is similar to the the word metamorphose

but emphasizes the process of change rather than its result (e.g., from caterpillar to butterfly). When the Lord returns, he will fashion our bodies to enjoy eternity with Him. Now that's a hope!

The Rapture Vocabulary

Paul used several nouns and verbs to describe the Rapture of the Church. They include the following:

1. Paul used σώζω, "save," in Romans 5.9 to describe the fact that members of the Church will be saved away from God's wrath, the Tribulation, by the Lord's gathering His Church before the Tribulation begins.
2. Paul used ἐξεγείρω, "out-rising" or "out-resurrection," in 1 Corinthians 6.14 to describe Christ's return for His Church. He changed the verb "raised," ἐγείρω, that described Christ's resurrection to ἐξεγείρω for the Rapture.
3. In Philippians 3.10 Paul used the noun ἀνάστασις for Christ's resurrection but in Philippians 3.11, he used ἐξανάστασις, "out-resurrection" to describe the Rapture.
4. Paul used ῥύομαι, "rescue" in 1 Thessalonians 1.10 to describe the Church's rescue from God's wrath.
5. Paul used ἀρπάζω, "catch up," "seize" in 1 Thessalonians 4.17 to describe how God will snatch His Church away from earth so it will not experience the Tribulation.
6. Paul used ἐπισυναγωγή, "gather up" in 2 Thessalonians 2.1 to describe how the Church will meet the Lord in the air before the Tribulation.
7. Paul used ἀποστασία, "departure" in 2 Thessalonians 2.3 to describe how the Church will depart from earth to meet the Lord in the sky before the Tribulation.

Conclusion

1. The Rapture was a secret God kept hidden until He revealed it to Paul (1 Corinthians 15.51).

2. Paul coined a new word for the Rapture, ἐξανάστασις “out-resurrection” (Philippians 3.11, the “blessed hope” (Titus 2.13).
3. The Rapture is a part of the great doctrine of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15.20-24, 35-58, 51-53).
4. The Rapture occurs according to a sequence (1 Corinthians 15.20, 22-23, 51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18)
5. Believers who are alive will not experience God’s wrath, the Day of the Lord, i.e., the Tribulation, but will be delivered from it. When the body of Christ is complete God will remove His Church and refocus His work upon Israel to fulfill His covenants (Romans 5.9; 1 Thessalonians 1.10, 5.9-10; 2 Thessalonians 2.1-2; Romans 11.25-26).
6. We are commanded to proclaim the Rapture to comfort one another until the Lord comes (1 Thessalonians 4.18).
7. The Rapture is a separate event from the Day of the Lord and the return of Christ to the earth (2 Thessalonians 2.2, 10-12, 12; 1 Thessalonians 4.17; Zechariah 14.1-4; Acts 1.11-12). See the author’s study on [The Day of Christ](#).

¹ See [Farewell to the Rapture](#) by N. T. Wright. Ignorant of Pauline theology, the Bishop of Durham, and others who reject the Rapture, may be likened to Apollos who required instruction from Aquila and Priscilla to understand Paul’s teaching (Acts 18.24-26 cf. Galatians 1.11-12, 2.7-9).

² The ascended, glorified Lord revealed many truths to Paul He had not revealed previously. Paul named these revelations “secrets.” God most likely revealed some of these new truths to Paul after his conversion when he was in Arabia (Galatians 1.15-17). Later, Paul most likely received other revelations. Without an understanding of Paul’s “secrets” one cannot understand his theology. Indeed, without this understanding one cannot understand Christianity. See the author’s study on

Paul's Mystery.

³ This “last trumpet” has nothing to do with the trumpets of the book of Revelation. The trumpets in Revelation signal God’s judgments upon the earth. No hint of judgment exists in Paul’s passage. Indeed, we find the opposite. Paul’s passage deals with the believer’s victory over sin and death and the receipt of a sinless and eternal body. This “last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15.52) is a “trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4.16) whereas the trumpets in Revelation are angelic trumpets (Revelation 8.2, 6). The “trumpet of God” which Paul described signals completion of the Church, the body of Christ and Christ coming for it, not judgments (Revelation 8.7, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 9.1-13, 14-11.14, 11.15-19).

⁴ Only Luke and Paul used the noun and verbs ἀποστασία and ἀφίστημι. Paul used ἀποστασία with the definite article “ἡ”—“ἡ ἀποστασία.” Unlike English, a definite article in Greek is unnecessary to make a noun definite. It can be definite without a definite article depending on the context. The definite article was used originally as a weak demonstrative pronoun, i.e., “this,” “that,” “these,” “those.” Its inclusion draws attention to the object. Thus, Paul’s use of the definite article ἡ with ἀποστασία emphasized its identity: “THE departure.” This “departure” was synonymous with ἀρπάζω of 1 Thessalonians 4.17. See the author’s study on [1 and 2 Thessalonians](#) for more information on ἀποστασία.

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