

WHAT YOU
NEED
TO KNOW
About the
RAPTURE

CHARLES C. RYRIE



HARVEST PROPHECY
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What You Need to Know About the Rapture

Copyright © 1996 by Charles C. Ryrie

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-9013-4 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-0-7369-9014-1 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024931371

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Printed in Colombia

24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 / NI / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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FOREWORD

JACK HIBBS

From the very outset of the New Testament revelation, Jesus Christ made it clear that for His people, the church, there would come a time when, at the end of her earthly commissioning, the Lord Himself would call His followers up into the atmosphere to meet Him in the air as He clearly stated: “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 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” (John 14:1-3). This spectacular announcement that the church would one day be happily interrupted by His

sudden appearing continues to be the hope and comfort of every longing heart.

Unfortunately, far too many Christians have not been taught the full counsel of God, let alone its eschatological doctrines. Yet it is Bible prophecy that stands invincible before an unbelieving world and sets the Bible apart from all religious writings. It is the perfect, unwavering, and inerant testimony that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwells outside of time and speaks regarding past and future events. No one articulates this more clearly than Dr. Charles C. Ryrie.

During his incredible career, Dr. Ryrie authored more than 50 books, including *The Holy Spirit, Transformed by His Glory, So Great Salvation*, and one of my favorites, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. I am reminded of Dr. Ryrie every morning when I open what I consider to be his most remarkable work, *The Ryrie Study Bible*.

Those acquainted with Dr. Ryrie knew him to be an avid student of God's Word and gifted at making the Bible's eschatological or end-times teachings easy to understand. In *What You Need to Know About the Rapture*, Dr. Ryrie draws from his voluminous writings, lectures, and studies to give a simple, concise, and biblically accurate understanding of what the Bible teaches regarding the rapture. You will learn its biblical origins, why it is consistent with the whole of Scripture, and how the rapture plays

such a pivotal role in the spiritual well-being of the church in the last days. *What You Need to Know About the Rapture* is an excellent introduction to the foundations of the biblical argument for the rapture of the church.

I cannot stress enough the incredible benefits you will receive from reading this outstanding work that we would not only expect to receive from Dr. Ryrie but have consistently come to enjoy from him over decades as a faithful servant of God.

Awaiting His return,
Jack Hibbs, pastor
Calvary Chapel Chino Hills and Real Life Network



WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS?

Can anyone predict the future?

Many people hope someone can, and some try. Millions read the horoscope columns every day, and the money spent on phone calls to psychics speaks for itself. Clearly, people long to know what the future holds for them, for their families, and for the world itself.

World events are a constant cause of worry for many people, and for good reasons. In recent years, we have seen rioting, violent attacks, shooting sprees, and rampant crime. Piled onto these senseless, lawless acts are economic and health crises that have many people worried. Corporations have reduced their work forces without much notice. And there are unstable conditions in countries all around the world.

There are many global political uncertainties that disturb people. Tensions are rising in Europe, Asia, South America, and Africa. The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East cause deep concern. People are wondering about the advancements being made toward the making of nuclear weapons. Does North Korea have the bomb? Does Iran? Our world is never free of wars, and there is the continual threat that new wars could break out. Will there ever be widespread peace? And so it goes. No wonder ordinary people are concerned about the world, its future, and their place in it.

But who has the answers? Can anyone make truly accurate predictions? Politicians? Fortune tellers? Astrologers? Futurologists? Columnists? Preachers? Only the Bible has the answers. Only the Bible offers true and accurate prophecies. It reveals that not until Jesus Christ returns to the earth will the world experience peace and safety, and that will happen under His government. The Bible also reveals that before Jesus returns, times will become worse and worse—indeed, worse than ever before. And then the time of the dreadful Tribulation period will come.

The great Tribulation worries many believers. Will they have to go through the Tribulation? Some say yes. These believe that the “catching away” of the church will not occur until the end of the Tribulation. Others say no. They believe Christians will be raptured before the Tribulation begins. This book examines these two different time scenarios. But before we consider the *time* of the rapture, we need to survey the different millennial viewpoints.

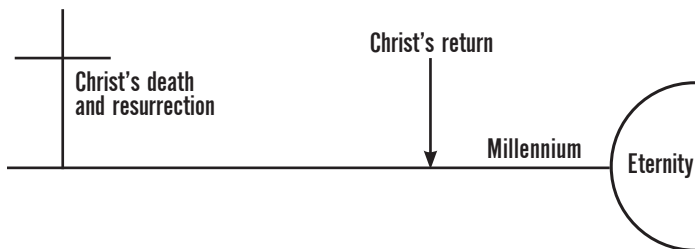
The Millennial Question

The millennial question asks what kind of Millennium there will be. That there will be some kind of Millennium is clearly taught in Revelation 20:1-6. But what kind of Millennium that will be is and has been strongly debated through the years. Early Christians expected Jesus Christ's speedy return to establish an actual kingdom on this earth, over which He would reign for 1,000 years. This premillennial view of the return of Christ was taught by almost all the church fathers of the first two centuries.

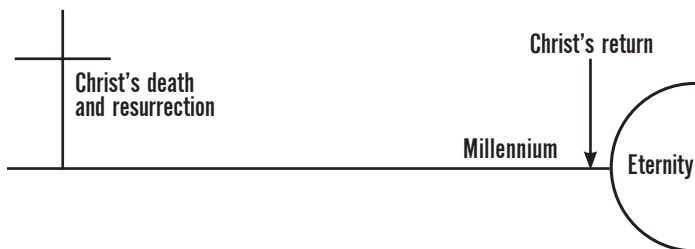
When Christ did not return as soon as some people thought He would, the church's concept of the Millennium changed to a nonliteral one called "amillennialism." Augustine (354-430) taught people to look for a Millennium that would be wholly spiritual in character during the Christian dispensation. During the Middle Ages and the Reformation periods, the idea of an actual kingdom was not taught by mainline groups, some of whom considered such teaching heretical. In the seventeenth century, a new millennial teaching, postmillennialism, appeared. It affirmed that before the return of Christ there would be a worldwide experience of peace and righteousness due to the efforts of the church.

THREE VIEWS OF CHRIST'S RETURN

Premillennialism



Postmillennialism



Amillennialism



Since then, there has been a revival of premillennialism, a continuation of amillennialism, and most recently, a resurgence of postmillennialism.

These viewpoints—pre-, post-, and amillennialism—concern the relation of the coming of Jesus Christ to the Millennium, His 1,000-year reign.

The Rapture Question

In the nineteenth century, teachings about the rapture of the church began to be widely disseminated. This raised such questions as whether the second coming of Christ involves several stages, the relation of those stages to the Tribulation period, and the distinctiveness of the church from Israel in God's program. Thus, one of the prominent eschatological questions of this century is the question of the timing of the rapture and its ramifications for the total picture of the future.

For the *amillennialist*, the single event of Christ's second coming is followed by a general resurrection, judgment, and eternity. For the *postmillennialist*, there is also no distinct rapture; a second coming after the Millennium has already been brought about by the church, and eternity follows. *Premillennialists* agree that the rapture and second coming are distinguishable, although they do not agree as to how much time separates them.

Pretrib and Posttrib

The principal disagreement today lies between pretribulationists and posttribulationists, both of which are premillennial. *Pretribulationists* teach that Christ's coming for His church—the rapture—will occur before the Tribulation (the entire seventieth “week” of Daniel) begins. *Posttribulationists* teach that the rapture and the second coming are facets of a single event occurring at the conclusion of the Tribulation. Both agree that the second coming of Christ will be followed by the Millennium on earth. Those are the principal views we will discuss in this book.

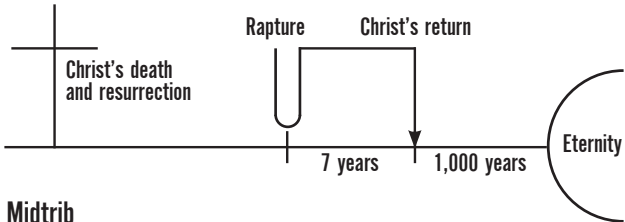
Midtrib and Partial Rapture

There are at least two other views about the rapture's timing. One is the midtribulation view. It teaches, as its name reveals, that the church will be taken to heaven (raptured) in the middle of the Tribulation period. Since the Tribulation will last seven years, this means that the church will be on earth for the first three-and-one-half of those years.

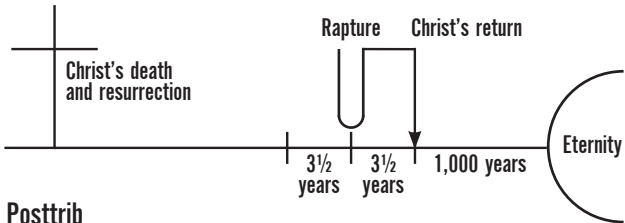
Like pretribulationists, midtribulationists teach that the rapture and the second coming are separated by a period of time: seven years for the pretribulationists and three-and-one-half for midtribulationists. Both teach that the church will be delivered from the wrath of the Tribulation period. Other aspects of the midtrib view include

PREMILLENNIAL RAPTURE TIMING VIEWS

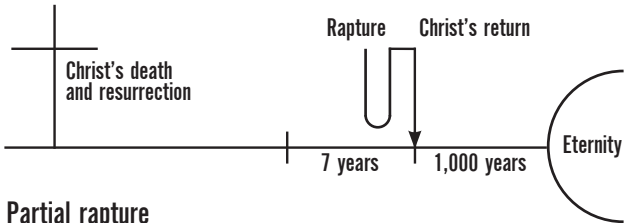
Pretrib



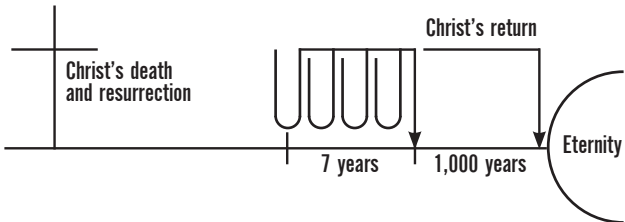
Midtrib



Posttrib



Partial rapture



identifying the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 with the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15, and interpreting the two witnesses of Revelation 11 as symbolic of the larger group of raptured people at the middle of the Tribulation. Most of the arguments that support the midtrib view argue against the posttrib view.

Whereas pre-, mid-, and posttrib views focus on the time of the rapture, the partial rapture view focuses on the people to be raptured. It teaches that only those believers who are “watching” and “waiting” for the Lord’s return will be worthy to escape the Tribulation by being raptured.

Actually, the partial rapture view teaches that there will be several raptures. Like pretribulationists, partial rapture proponents teach that one rapture will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation to take away spiritually mature saints. Then at various times during the seven years of Tribulation, other raptures will remove saints who were unprepared at the beginning of the Tribulation but who have shown themselves worthy in the meantime. There is even to be a rapture at the close of the Millennium.

Generally speaking, the partial rapture teaching understands verses like Luke 21:34-36 and Revelation 3:10 as distinguishing two kinds of saints: those who will be raptured and those who will be left in the trial.

Diagrammed, the four answers given to the question by premillennialists appear on page 15.

To sum up, this chapter has shown us that the church

has questions about the Millennium and the rapture. Throughout the following pages, we will primarily discuss the rapture and its relation to the Tribulation period. We won't be discussing very much about millennial views, except as premillennialism relates to pre- and posttribulationists. But before we get to that, we need to ask: "Are such questions even that important?"