

The Midnight Cry and the Rapture of the Church

Revelation 1:7; 4:1-8

1:7) Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen.

4:1) After this I looked, and there in heaven was an open door. The first voice that I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “*Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.*” 2)

Immediately I was in the Spirit, and there was a throne in heaven and someone was seated on it. 3) The one seated there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian stone. A rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald surrounded the throne. 4) Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones sat twenty-four elders dressed in white clothes, with golden crowns on their heads. 5) Flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder came from the throne. Seven fiery torches were burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. 6) Something like a sea of glass, similar to crystal, was also before the throne. Four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back were around the throne on each side. 7) The first living creature was like a lion; the second living creature was like an ox; the third living creature had a face like a man; and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. 8) Each of the four living creatures had six wings; they were covered with eyes around and inside. Day and night they never stop, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.

Jesus Christ – the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, the glorified one – spoke directly to John in Revelation 1:17-18 –

- *Write what you have seen* = past things. Revelation 1 – a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- *Write what is* = present things. Revelation 2-3 – the messages to the seven churches. Actual churches, application to our day, because we are living in the *what is*.
- *Write what will take place after this* = the prophetic things. Revelation 4-22 describes the future of what will take place following the Second Coming of Jesus. So, we must “fill in the gap” between the end of (*what is*) and what John sees in Revelation 4-22 (*what will take place*) = the event referred to in Christianity as the Rapture.

The Baptist Faith and Message, Article 10: Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, **Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness.** The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

1. **The Certainty of the Rapture.** (Revelation 1:7) *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be.* Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. For all who have opposed Jesus – His return will mean judgment and sorrow.

Paul believed that Jesus could return in his lifetime. 1 Thessalonians 4:13) **We** do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. 14) **For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.** 15) For we say this to you by a word from the Lord: We who are still alive at the Lord’s coming will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel’s voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17) Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be

caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18) Therefore encourage one another with these words. Verse 17: “caught up” = Greek *harpazo*. Latin *rapto* = “to seize, catch up, snatch away”

The implication: 2000 years of elapsed time does not, has not, and will not reduce the certainty of the second Coming and the rapture.

2. The Suddenness of the Rapture. (Revelation 4:1-2) After receiving the messages to the seven churches, John is suddenly standing before an open door in heaven, implying the suddenness of the rapture.

Jesus predicted the suddenness of the Second Coming and the subsequent Rapture: Matthew 24:36) Now concerning that day and hour no one knows – neither the angels of heaven nor the Son – except the Father alone. 37) As the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. 38) For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. 39) They didn’t know until the flood came and swept them all away. This is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be. 40) Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41) Two women will be grinding grain with a hand mill; one will be taken and one left. 42) Therefore be alert, since you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. 43) But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into. 44) This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Paul affirmed the suddenness of the Second Coming and the Rapture: 1 Corinthians 15:50) What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption. 51) Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, 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 incorruptible, and we will be changed.

The implication: Jesus is coming soon and the rapture will be instantaneous.

3. The Substance of the Rapture. (Revelation 3-8)

The imagery of what John sees in God’s throne room is stunning. The appearance of jasper and carnelian stone. Exodus 28 affirmed the last of stones embedded into the high priest’s breastplate, indicating the most precious of all stones. Revelation 21 confirms jasper as the first of the twelve stones used in the foundations of the New Jerusalem and is described as “like crystal”. Sounds like a diamond. Carnelion – red stone = ruby. Both of these precious stones represent the most desired of all the stones – God’s throne is worthy of the best. The rainbow is emerald – green, the color of life, and is a complete circle, representing eternal life. From an earthly view, the rainbow can only be viewed as a half-circle. Pilots can witness a complete-circle rainbow from 30,000 feet above the earth. In heaven, God’s throne is surrounded by a complete circle – eternal life is now fully realized.

The 24 elders – who are they and what do they represent? In Revelation 22:12-14, the New Jerusalem (heaven or glory) is surrounded by 12 gates. The 12 Old Testament patriarchs of the tribes of Israel are inscribed on those gates. The city wall settled on 12 foundations, and the names of the 12 apostles of the New Testament were inscribed on the foundations. The 24 elders are representatives of God’s people – the dead in Christ and living saints who have been transformed from earth into heaven. And what are they doing? Worshipping God around the throne of heaven. The implication: In our heavenly bodies, we will worship around God’s throne. Next week – the heavenly worship service.

Conclusion:

1. The Christian life is a life of faith – faith is confident assurance, which produces hope. **Christian hope looks ahead.** *If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.* (1 Corinthians 15:19)
2. **Christian hope looks up.** *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.* (Titus 2:11-13) I agree with Adrian Rogers: Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, but hope looks up!