

Introduction to the Rapture

The Biblical teaching about the rapture, or catching away, of Christians is not taught in many churches and when many church members are asked if they know about the rapture of the Church they frequently answer that they know nothing about it. The Bible-believing Christian then has to explain that at the end of this age Christ will come into the sky and will bring with Him the souls of all Christians who have died. There will be a resurrection, and the bodies of the deceased Christians will be raised and reunited with their soul to be forever with the Lord.

At that moment, all Christians who are alive on earth will be changed and given a resurrection body. In an instant, dead and living Christians will be caught up to *“meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (1Thess.4:17).

Those who are not caught up in resurrection bodies at this time will be left behind to experience the horrors of a period of seven years of great tribulation, during which the world will be racked with famine, war, earthquakes and disease such that the human race will be almost wiped from the earth (Matt.24:7,21-22).

Immediately after the rapture of the Christians, 144,000 Jewish men will turn to Christ and be saved (Rev.7:1-8; Matt.24:14). These men will preach the *“Gospel of the Kingdom,”* warning the world that soon Christ will return and reign; they will tell men to repent and seek the Lord because Christ will soon come to establish His Kingdom. These men will all be martyred by the mid-point of the Tribulation (Rev.14:1-5).

During the tribulation, the Roman Empire will be revived and Antichrist will rule. By the mid-point of the Tribulation, the earth will be devastated and ready to accept global government under the rule of Antichrist who will be possessed by a demon from the bottomless pit (Rev.9:1-12; 17:8) and become known as the Beast (Rev.13:1-10). The Beast and his False Prophet will demand universal worship of Satan and an image of the Beast which he will set up in a rebuilt Jewish Temple at Jerusalem (Rev.13:14-17). Men will not be able to buy or sell without the mark of the Beast on their forehead or on their right hand. That mark will be 666.

At the end of the seven years of tribulation Christ will return with all the angels and the resurrected saints and will destroy the wicked

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who survive the judgments of the tribulation. He will set up His kingdom over the entire earth and reign for 1,000 years from the throne of David in Jerusalem (Rev.20:1-6).

During this 1,000 years, Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit, in Hades, and great blessing and prosperity will be experienced on earth by those saved people who survive the tribulation. This period is called "the millennial kingdom of Christ."

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be released to test the nations and will raise a great army to attack Jerusalem where Christ's throne will be established. God will respond with fire from heaven and those armies will be destroyed. Satan and his hosts will be cast into an eternal lake of fire which God has prepared for him and his angels (Rev.20:7-10).

The judgment of Satan will be followed by the resurrection of all the unsaved dead from Hades who will be judged by Christ at the "Great White Throne" where they will receive their degree of judgment. They too, will be cast into the eternal lake of fire (Rev.20:11-15).

At this time, all the saved living on earth will be changed and given resurrection bodies (Rev.20:5) and the earth will be renovated by fire. A totally new environment will exist on earth and there will be "no more sea" (Rev.21:1). The eternal New Jerusalem which Christ is preparing for His people in heaven, will come down to earth and God will establish His eternal throne with His saints on the new earth. It will then be said

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev.21:3-4).

So the Rapture applies to all **those people living on the earth in this Church age since the day of Pentecost**. It includes those Christians who have died and those who will be alive when the Rapture occurs.

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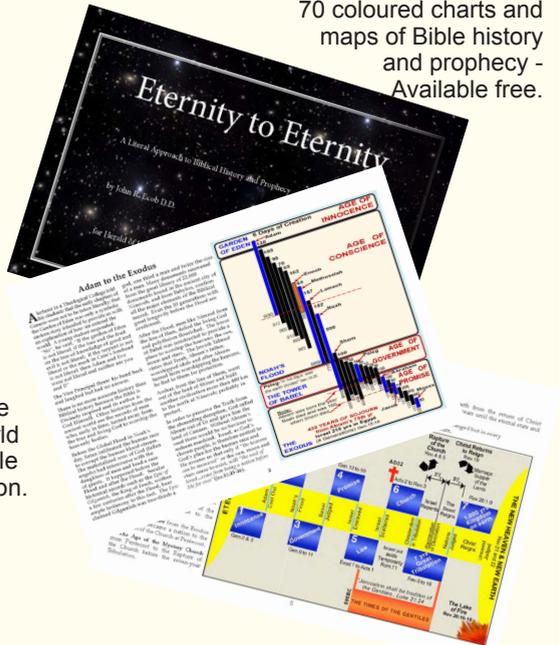
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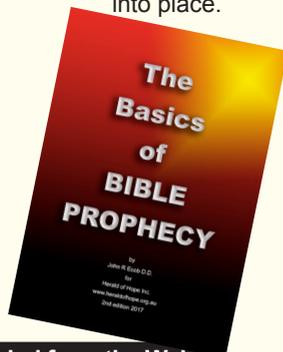
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