

## Who Will Be Taken In The Rapture?

By Alan W. Gruning, DO

Christians have been waiting for 2000 years for the return of Jesus. Titus 2:13 says it is our “blessed hope” while we live in the present age. Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for His disciples in Heaven and that He would return for them, to bring them to Heaven with Him, to be with Him forever (John 14:1-6). He also said that He is the only way to reach Heaven. There is no other way.

When Jesus returns for the Christians, He comes suddenly and without warning, an event called the **Rapture**. This is a term from the Latin Vulgate Bible that means, “**a catching away**” of the saints of God. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says, “*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. 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*” The Rapture includes the dead Christians, who placed their lives in the hands of Jesus while they were alive, and the living believers who have surrendered their lives to live for Christ.

When Jesus returns for the Rapture, those He has chosen will be taken “**in the twinkling of an eye**” (11/100 second) according to 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 and Christians will receive new, glorified bodies; those not chosen will be left behind to endure a seven year period, under the rule of the Antichrist, called the Tribulation. This will be a terrible time of God’s judgment on the Earth, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon where all forces of evil will be defeated. According to John 10:14, Jesus knows who His sheep are and they know Him. What verses do we have from the New Testament to help us understand who will be taken in the Rapture and who will be left behind?

### Can we know the timing of the Rapture?

Many say that we cannot know the details of the Rapture or the timing of His return. However, if that were the case, Jesus would not have gone to such effort to tell us about them. While we don’t totally understand the **mystery** of the Rapture, we know a lot about it through the words of Jesus and the writings of Paul. Paul received the revelation of the Rapture, and other “mysteries”, directly from Jesus. This took place while in Arabia, probably on Mount Sinai, during a period of three years after his conversion (Galatians 1:11-18).

The Bible teaches that the Rapture will occur within the generation that witnesses all the signs Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. Most Bible scholars believe the end time clock began ticking with the rebirth of **Israel** as a nation, in their Promised Land, in 1948. Many believe that the generation alive to see the recapture of **Jerusalem** as Israel’s capital, during the Six Days War of 1967, would be the last generation before the Rapture. This means Jesus could return at any moment. For more information, see my handout entitled, “**The Imminent Return of Jesus Christ.**” We are the generation that is seeing all of the signs fulfilled!

This article is designed to make you think and ask questions. We must examine ourselves at all times – our beliefs, motives, priorities, and works. We must not trust our eternal destiny to our own beliefs, based on misinformation and influence from a culture embracing sin. We must search God’s Word, The Bible, for the truth – God’s truth. The question remains, is Jesus coming for you? How can you know for sure?

## A. Believe in Jesus.

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18)*  
*“They said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’” (Acts 16:31)*

What does it mean to “believe in the Lord Jesus”? James 2:17 says the devil and his demons believe in the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God). Apparently, “believe” must mean more than intellectual ascent that Jesus is God’s Son or the devil and his demons would be saved and heaven bound.

1. *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’”* According to John 14:6, we are to believe that Jesus is:

- **The Way**, the narrow road that is broad enough for all who choose it. He is the Way to a personal relationship with God, forgiveness of sins, and peace with God and self. He is the Way to true happiness and joy. He is the only way, not one of many paths to Heaven. Is Jesus your Way?
- **The Truth**, the Logos, the Word of God. He does not bring man’s ideas of Heaven and eternity, but God’s life-giving commandments and statutes for living. Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises to those who are obedient to Him. His truth is absolute and universal for everyone, not relative and dependant upon circumstances. Is Jesus your Truth?
- **The Life**, for all who choose Him. His life is eternal and abundant. Jesus is Life and He gives life to those who believe, through the filling of the Holy Spirit, whom He sent to live in them. Jesus can give Christians life because He is God! Is Jesus your Life?

2. *“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”* According to Romans 10:9-10, we must:

- **Confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord**. This results in salvation. The name “Lord” here is the Greek name for God, **Kyrios** (like the Hebrew name for God, **Adonai**) which means Lord and Master. This refers back to ancient master-slave relationships. In Biblical times, the master would buy the slave and bring him into the home. An agreement was entered whereby the slave agreed to obey and honor the master, giving him the control of his life. The master agreed to care for the slave, provide for all his needs, and protect him. In fact, after a time, the master might adopt the slave into the family with all the rights of a son. According to 1 Corinthians 6:20, Christians have been **bought** with a price—the body and blood of Jesus Christ! As Christians, we belong to God and are to surrender the control of our lives to Jesus as Lord and Master, becoming His **slave** and servant. He agrees to love us, to provide for all our needs, and to protect us. He even **adopts** us into His family as a son, an **heir**, with our inheritance all of Heaven. We just have to **submit** our will to His and give Him the **control** of our lives. This is what Jesus illustrated in the Garden in Luke 22:42 when He said to the Father, *“not my will, but Yours be done.”* Due to our pride, this surrender of our will and control to Adonai is the most difficult thing some of us have to do. **Pride** will keep many from the Rapture. Have you surrendered your life and will to Jesus?
- **Believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead**. This is much deeper than just intellectual ascent and results in righteousness. Do you believe in your heart that God, The Father, raised Jesus from the dead and that He is alive and will return in His glorified body to claim His own? Do you believe Jesus is your **living** Savior and is returning soon for you?

3. *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless one is born again he can not see the kingdom of God.’”* According to John 3:3, you must be **born again** to be taken by Jesus at the Rapture. What is God’s definition of being born again? You must be born of the **Holy Spirit**,

made into a new creation. That only happens as you believe and surrender your life to Jesus, as discussed above. Are you born again, by God's definition?

### B. Be a follower of Jesus

*And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." (Luke 9:23-24)*

Jesus made it pretty clear what it means to be a follower, or a disciple, of His. He offers it to anyone, not just a special elite group. It is our choice; He gives us **free will to choose** to follow Him or the ways of this world. He wants us to come after Him, meaning a **passionate pursuit** of Him, as you would pursue the most important thing in your life. When we follow Jesus, as would have happened to a group of students following a rabbi in that time, you go everywhere with your teacher; you eat with him, spend all your time with him, sleep next to him, learn from him, and **become like him**. To follow Jesus, you have to **deny yourself**, your agenda, your plans, your selfish motives, and your lusts. You have to **take up your cross**, an instrument of torture and humiliation reserved for the lowest of criminals, and lug it through the streets as Jesus did. That means proclaiming you belong to Jesus in your home, neighborhood, job, and community. And you have to do that every day. As a follower, you realize that giving all this up for Jesus and suffering potential **persecution** is not a burden, because the **eternal rewards** awaiting you far outweigh the loss of comforts and pleasures in this life. Jesus is coming for followers, **not fans** who just admire Him.

### C. Look for Jesus

*"But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

According to Luke 21:36, we are to **keep on the alert**, watching at all times. Watching for what? We are to be watching for the return of Jesus. Why? In 2 Peter 3:3-4 we are told that in the last days mockers (or scoffers) would arise that would question and doubt whether the Rapture would ever happen and we would be tempted to give up watching. We are to keep alert and watch for the Rapture.

We are also told to be praying for the strength to escape all the things that are to take place. We are supposed to know about what is to come. We are to be praying that we can stand before the Son of Man. Where? We want to stand at the **Judgment Seat** (the Bema Seat) of Christ, in Heaven, after the Rapture. What makes one worthy to stand before Jesus to be judged for the works done as a Christian? Our surrender to Jesus as Kyrios (Adonai) makes us worthy. Are you watching for Jesus to come for you and praying for strength, from the Holy Spirit, to live a life of obedience to Him? Are you going to stand before the Son of Man?

*"So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."* According to Hebrews 9:28, Jesus will appear for salvation to those who **eagerly await** Him. Are you eagerly awaiting the Rapture, or would you be embarrassed if Jesus suddenly appeared today? Are you living like the Rapture could be today?

### D. Pursue Holiness.

*"Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."* According to Hebrews 12:14, we are to pursue peace with all men. We are to pursue sanctification, living a life of holiness, because without holiness we will not see the Lord. **Holiness** is living obediently to God's commands, separating yourself from the world, and dedicating your life to live God's way. It means to reject sin, trying to live morally blameless, through the power of the Holy Spirit within. It is a commitment to become more like Jesus daily. Are you pursuing holiness?

### E. Keep oil in your lamp.

In Matthew 25:1-13, we see ten virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom to come to start the wedding, but they got tired and fell asleep when he delayed in coming. At midnight, the cry went out through the streets that the bridegroom was coming. Those who were ready were taken into the wedding. The 5 prudent (wise) virgins with oil in their lamps were taken, because they had brought extra oil and their lamps were still lit. The 5 foolish virgins brought no extra oil for their lamps and they were going out. They tried to get some from the wise virgins, but were told that there would not be enough to share; so they were told to go buy some from the merchants. The bridegroom came while they were gone. The 5 foolish virgins were left outside, left behind.

The oil is the **Holy Spirit**; you can't put off having Him in your life and you can't borrow Him or buy Him from someone else at the last minute. You must be prepared daily with the Holy Spirit filling your life with His light. The Jewish wedding ceremony is a tremendous analogy of the Rapture. Note in v. 12 that Jesus (the bridegroom) didn't know the foolish virgins—they did not have a relationship with Him. They were left behind at the Rapture to endure the Tribulation. Jesus said, *"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day or the hour."* Do you allow the Holy Spirit to **fill** your life daily? Are you keeping oil in your lamp while you wait for the bridegroom to come?

#### F. Be a good steward.

In Matthew 25:14-30, a man went on a journey and entrusted his possessions to his slaves. This is a picture of Jesus entrusting His disciples with **time, talent and treasures** while He has been gone for 2000 years. To one he gave five talents, to one he gave two talents, and to another he gave one, according to their abilities. The one with five earned five more, the one with two earned two more, and the one with one put it in a hole to hide it. When the master returned after a long time, he called the slaves to see what they had done with what he had given them while he was gone. To the two who had earned more, he said, *"Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."* Those who are **good stewards** of their time, talent and treasures, given to them while waiting for the return of Adonai, will be taken at the Rapture. The one who hid his talent in a hole and did nothing with it was called a **wicked, lazy slave**. He was not a good steward. Jesus said, *"Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* He was left behind to endure the Tribulation. If we were truly surrendered to Adonai as his servant and slave, we would want to make a difference in the Kingdom of God for Him. Are you using your time, talents and treasures for Jesus, in gratitude for all He has done for you?

#### G. Be a witness.

*"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny Him before My Father who is in heaven."*

According to Matthew 10:32-33, there is no option to be a silent Christian. Jesus said that if we do not acknowledge Him before men then He will not acknowledge us before His Father. We are to be witnesses for Jesus. In Romans 10:9-10, the mouth is used for confessing. We have to open our **mouth** for Christ and tell others what He has done for us and what He will do for them. Are you using your mouth to be a witness for Jesus?

#### H. Abide in Jesus.

*"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, and you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned."*

According to John 15:4-6, we must stay close to Him. That requires **spiritual disciplines** of Bible study, meditation, prayer, fasting, and church attendance. In v. 6, those that say that they are branches, but don't abide in Jesus, are thrown away and burned in the fire. We have to get our life and nourishment from Jesus. Are you abiding in Jesus daily?

### I. Bear much fruit.

*"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."* According to John 15:8, we are told to bear much fruit to prove we are His disciples and to glorify the Father. What is fruit? Fruit includes the Fruits of the Spirit (our character-being like Christ), soul-winning, answered prayers, and acts of service. These acts are mentioned in Matthew 25:35-36:

1. **Feed the hungry**-meet their physical needs and give them the Bread of Life.
2. **Give drink to the thirsty**-meet their physical needs and give them Living Water.
3. **Invite in strangers**-practice relational evangelism with those rejected, the outcasts, the "strange". They need Jesus, too.
4. **Clothe the naked**- give the righteousness of Christ to naked sinners.
5. **Visit the sick**-pray with them, encourage them, comfort them. Provide spiritual healing that lasts beyond their physical illness by giving them the Great Physician.
6. **Visit prisoners**-they need forgiveness that only Jesus can provide. The chains of Satan must be broken off. They need hope in a seemingly hopeless situation.

Are you being a disciple and glorifying the Father by bearing much fruit for Jesus?

### J. Be an over comer.

*"He who has a ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."* (Revelation 2:11). *"He who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name."* (Revelation 3:12).

Those who **persevere** and maintain their faith despite trials and persecution are over comers for the Lord. They hold fast to what they have and let no one take their crown. *"Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."* (Revelation 3:10) Over comers will be **kept out of** the time of testing (the Tribulation) that is to come on the earth. The Greek word here is "eck" which means to be taken out of, not to go through it. In Luke 18:8, Jesus is looking for those who have faith on the earth, who persevere in prayer like the widow who didn't give up with the unjust judge. He is looking for those who hold on to God's promises and have the Fruits of the Spirit of patience, endurance, long-suffering and self-control. Are you an over comer for Jesus?

### K. Do the will of the Father.

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew You; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"*

According to Matthew 7:21-23, not everyone who says that Jesus is Lord will go with Jesus in the Rapture. Only those who surrender the control of their life to Adonai (Kyrios), and show it by how they live their life, will be taken. There will be many left behind who will argue that they have said and done great things for Jesus. But, Jesus says **He never knew them**. Why? He did not know them because they had not done the will of the Father. What is the Father's will? It seems good works are not enough and we are told

they were rejected because they practiced lawlessness. They were doing acts of service **apart from Christ**, motivated by their own glory and not out of love for Adonai.

The will of the Father is to **make Jesus your Kyrios (Adonai) , Lord and Master, and obey His commands.** See John 15:10-14. When we surrender to Jesus and obey Him, we abide in His love and our joy is made full. The greatest commands are to love God and love one another. If we do what He commands, then we are His **friends**, not just slaves. Friends get invited into the wedding banquet, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Are you a friend of Jesus? Are you doing the will of the Father?

### **How should you respond?**

I pray that this gives you food for thought as we approach the return of our Lord. Jesus said in Luke 21:28, *“But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”* After reading this, you should be asking yourself if you are **ready** for the imminent return of Christ. If you have not given the control of your life to Jesus Christ, surrendering all to Him and relying on His work on the cross to save you, then you need to consider doing that right now. The alternative is too awful to think about. Eternity in hell is a long time.

The place to start is **Romans 3:23**: *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* You and I are sinners, guilty before God. In fact, we are all sinful from birth, not only in our actions, but our thoughts. **Romans 6:23** says, *“For the wages of sin is death.”* Because of our sins, we deserve eternal death, in a horrible place called hell. God’s Heaven is perfect and free of sin. He cannot allow sinful people to enter it and contaminate it. We are separated from Him because of the sinful choices we have made. And there are no amount of good works we can do to make up for the sins we have committed. The Judge has pronounced us guilty as charged.

In order to repair our relationship with the Lord and allow us to enter Heaven, God became a man and came to this earth. As Jesus, He lived the sinless life we can’t live and then allowed Himself to be broken, nailed to a cross, to take the punishment we deserve. He allowed His blood to be shed for you and me, to pay the price for our sins and to give us forgiveness and new life. **Romans 6:23** also says, *“But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* It is not something we have earned or deserve. He did it for us because He loves us too much to leave us going to hell. It is a free gift. And it is only thru Jesus Christ, our Lord. However, as any gift you receive from someone, you have to decide to take it and open the gift and make it your own. God has given you the gift; you just need to accept it and say thank you.

After He gave up His life for us, Jesus arose from the dead on the third day. He is God, co-eternal with the Father, and could not remain in the grave. He ascended to the right hand of the Father and is ready to return as King and Lord. The next event is the Rapture, which we have discussed above. Are you ready for His return?

### **How can I be Born Again?**

We read in **John 3:3**, *“Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Are you born again, by God’s definition? First, you must agree that Jesus is the only way to salvation. In **John 14:6** we read, *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”* There is no other way to be born again and have eternal life in Heaven. It is only through Jesus. Not through any other religion, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, or your own good works. Jesus left us no other options. He is the way.

Second, to be born again, you just need to follow the apostle Paul’s directions in **Romans 10:9-10**, *“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”* You don’t need to go to church or follow a certain set of rules or give money to be saved. You need to confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord, your Master and Owner.

You need to give Jesus the control of your life and stop trying to run your own life. He can do it better. And you need to believe that Jesus is alive and will return as He said.

**Revelation 3:20** says, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*” Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart and mind. He will never force His way in. It must be your free will choice to open the door and let Jesus in. Are you ready to open your heart and mind to Jesus?

### **How do I give my life to Jesus?**

If you want to give the control of your life to Jesus Christ, to be born again, then you must do the following: confess that you are a sinner and ask forgiveness from God the Father, repent of your sins (turn from that old life to a new way of life), and give the control of your life to Jesus, our Lord and Master. Commit to follow Him, surrender to His leading daily through the Holy Spirit whom He sent to live in us, and be used by Him while we wait for His return. Here is a **prayer** that you can say with your mouth so that Satan and everyone else know your decision:

My Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me and never giving up on me. I confess that I am a sinner and I am sorry for my sins; I commit to turn from that old way of life. I thank you, Jesus, for coming to this earth, and dying on that cross, for me. I surrender the control of my life to you. Come into my life and make me into the Christian you want me to be. Thank you for saving me, Jesus. Amen.

Congratulations! If you sincerely prayed that prayer and meant it, God heard and He has responded. You are now a **Christian**! When you prayed that prayer, the Holy Spirit came to take up residence in you. He will never leave. Ephesians 1:13-14 says that the Holy Spirit has sealed you, or marked you, as belonging to Jesus. He is the deposit, guaranteeing your inheritance of Heaven.

### **What do I do next?**

Now, you need to **grow** as a Christian. This process is called sanctification. You need to be a disciple, or a follower, of Jesus Christ and become more like Him. This involves spending time with God daily in Bible Study, Meditation, and Prayer. We call this a daily **Quiet Time** (see the outline available in our office). You need to start attending a good, Bible-believing church that loves Jesus and teaches from God’s Word. And you need to start doing the things covered in this message. Remember, we are saved by faith, but James 2:26 says that faith without works is dead.

If you have previously asked Jesus into your life, but you are not living like we have been discussing, and you are not absolutely sure you will be taken in the Rapture, then you need to make a decision right now— for Jesus! You may or may not be born again, by God’s definition. Why not be sure? Determine right now to **rededicate** your life to Jesus Christ. Pray the prayer above, and follow the instructions, to truly become a Spirit-filled Christian.

Please let one of us know your **decision** for Jesus Christ so that we can **celebrate** with you and encourage you to grow spiritually. Remember to always be ready for the Rapture. It could be today!