

**Family Night Special Feature Study
What in the World is Going On?**

What in the World is Going On Study Schedule

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	SUMMARY
FIVE	February 18	Vanished Without a Trace	The rapture is a word that has become popular by the Left Behind series. What is the truth about this mysterious event?

NOTE:

Allow Dr. David Jeremiah to challenge you with his pertinent message, *What in the World Is Going On? 10 Prophetic Clues You Cannot Afford to Ignore* and discover the hope we have in Christ.

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Joyce Center @ University of Notre Dame

113 Joyce Center.....Notre Dame, IN 46556 Start: 7:00 pm Doors Open: 5:30 pm

Study #5 – Vanished Without a Trace

The phrase “Vanished without a Trace” is an overwhelming phrase that brings thoughts of dread and fear to our hearts and minds. We hear this phrase used on the news and radio in reference to missing persons and our natural thought is “I Wonder...” We are drawn to the phrase because we drawn to the mystery. The Bible speaks of a great vanishing point that will take place during the course of the world’s future. It is will be a worldwide phenomenon that will happen in an instant and will leave the world in awe. Some people will be sleeping next to their wife and the next instant she will be gone. Some will be hugging their loved on and in an instant they will vanish from their arms. Some will be driving down the road and they will look over to their friend or family and in mid-sentence they will disappear before their very eyes. Some may even be in the midst of a crowded church service and suddenly the service will be virtually empty, no more music being sung, no more instruments being played, just the sound of fear being sounded out by the cry of the people that are left. It will be a moment the Rapture and it will be a moment of chaos!

Questions to Consider

- *What are your first thoughts that come to mind when you think of the rapture along these lines?*
- *Why will the world be in a state of chaos? Explain what this would do to the world.*
- *How would you describe the rapture to someone that wants to know more about it?*

The term “Rapture” sends a chill down the spine of many. It makes some people feel uncomfortable and it makes some people just turn their nose up in disgust and unbelief. The term “Rapture” as used by the worlds definition us much different than the Biblical definition.

Webster’s Online Dictionary: Rapture

- An expression or manifestation of ecstasy or passion
- A state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion.
- A mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things

God’s Definition: Rapture

- To be snatched up in a sudden manner
- To be seize or carried off by a great force.
- To be caught up and taken with Jesus Christ as He returns for His church.

Questions to Consider

- *Compare and contrast these two definitions*
- *What is the difference between these two definitions?*
- *Why is this important to note that the world is operating under a different definition?*

The Biblical Study of the Rapture

If we truly want to understand what is going to take place when the rapture occurs then there is only one source that we can look at: the Bible. As we look at the Word of God then our souls can be laid to rest because of the fact that we can realize the hope that awaits for all believers in Christ. We begin our study by looking at two different texts that refer to a Promise and the fulfillment of a Promise.

The Promise of a King

The nation of Israel was awaiting a great king that would come and free them from the oppression of the Roman empire and they waited with great anticipation of the coming of this king. Many noticed and recognized the king as He first entered into Jerusalem in such a lowly and humbling state as He rode a donkey. The Jews had no concept as to what the King of the Jews would do on their behalf. They wanted freedom from physical bondage but the King would give His life for freedom from eternal bondage. This king is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who died on the cross to free man from their sin and give them hope of eternal life and before He left this earth He gave His disciples a Promise and a Hope in John 14. **John 14:1-3 (NIV)** – ¹Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

- *What promise is stated in this passage?*
- *Who said it and who was He talking to? Why is this important?*

The Description of the Fulfillment of the Promise

The church in Thessalonica was a church that was infant in their faith. They were babes in Christianity and they knew many things about Jesus Christ. They knew that Jesus Christ had died for their salvation and that He had ascended into heaven and is now sitting at the right hand of God. They knew that Christ would come back some day to judge all the inhabitants of the earth. They also knew that He would come back before that time and “Rapture” the church but many were afraid they had missed it. Paul writes to them on this subject and describes the fulfillment of the promise made by their kind.

1 Thessalonians 4:13- 18

¹³Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Sequence of Events of the Rapture

Let us break this text into the sequence of events that will occur at the time of the rapture. As we begin our study we must note that there are a difference of opinions upon when the rapture will occur. Some believe that it will happen before the Tribulation, some believe it will happen halfway through the Tribulation, and some believe that it will happen after the Tribulation. The fact is that we all agree it will happen. The following is the layout of events given to us from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Step #1 – The Pillars are Set

The first step is seen in verses 13-15 as we observe four basic pillars that are stated before the people. These pillars are what the rapture is based upon.

1 Thes. 4:13 – *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.*

Pillar One – Believers are Set Apart

- Observe these key words in verse 13: **Brothers...Fall Asleep...Grieve...No Hope**
- *Why does Paul use the term brothers?*
 - Keeping this statement in mind who is Christ coming back for during the rapture?
 - Now tie this term to that of “No Hope.” Where does our hope come from?
- *What does the term fall asleep mean?*
- *Why does Paul use this terminology and tell the people not to grieve?*

1 Thes. 4:14 – *We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*

Pillar Two – Death of Jesus Christ

The second pillar is that of the firm belief in the death of Christ. At this moment in time many Jews were going around trying to convince people that the death of Christ never happened yet the truth prevailed and could not stop the Word of God from triumphing over the lies.

- *Why does Paul tie in the importance of the death of Christ for the Christians of Thessalonica and today?*
- **1 Corinthians 15:55-58 (NIV)** – ⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Pillar Three – Resurrection of Christ

The Word of God gives us a road map as to where we will spend our future. It tells us of a future apart from Christ and one united with Christ. It tells of the results of living apart from the Savior and of living in the Savior. Paul points this out with the words spoken in this text.

- *Why is the Resurrection of Christ an essential belief for Christians? Explain.*
- **John 14:19 (NIV)** – Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

Pillar Four – Revelation of Christ

The final pillar of the Rapture is the firm belief that the Word of God is true and accurate in what it states. It is not a manmade document but one that is truly inspired by God.

1 Thes. 4:15a (NIV) – According to the Lord's own word, we tell you...

- *How do we know that the Word of God is authentic and true as His inspired Word?*
- **2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)** – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...

Step #2 – Order of Priority (v. 15)

The second step comes to us as we reflect upon verse 15. It is here in this text that we see a precedence being set for us as to the priority of who will be raptured. This may seem insignificant to the average reader of this text but it is loaded with meaning.

¹⁵According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

- *What is the priority of who is taken first in the rapture?*
- *Why would Paul emphasize this to the Church of Thessalonica and the church of today? Explain.*

Step #3 – There will be a Return (v. 16)

The third step comes to us as we reflect upon verse 16 and the profound meaning that comes from it. Pay close attention to the key words and phrases stated in this verse. Circle or underline and connect them.

¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

- *What is the significance of the first part of verse 16?*
- *How is this different from the second coming of Christ on the Day of Judgment?*
 - *There is one other time that an archangel is mentioned in Scripture and that is Jude 1:9.*
- *What is the significance of the trumpet call according to Scripture?*

Revelation 1:7 (NIV) – Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

Step #4 – There will be a Resurrection (v. 16b)

The fourth step in the sequence of events come to us as we once again reflect upon these words found in verse 16. It is at the end of this text where we find the hope that we long for as Christians.

¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

- *We will be called and we will be raised from this life to eternal life with Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 (NIV) – ⁵⁰I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- ⁵²in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

- *What does it mean for the perishable to be clothed with the imperishable?*
- *What does this text say for Christians and non-Christians?*

Step #5 – Rapture and Reunion

The fifth and final step is described in verse 17 and this is where we see the truth revealed that the rapture will take place even in spite of the naysayers of this world. God will prevail and He will take His children home.

¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

- *What does the term "caught up" mean?*
- *Why do we call this event a reunion as well as a rapture? Why is this important for people to hear?*

The Comfort Given

The Apostle Paul ends with these words from verse 18: *Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

The words may seem a contrary statement to the people in this world but they prove to be right mindset and heartset for the people that leave not of this world but of a different world.

- *How can this text serve as words of encouragement to the people of Thessalonica and even of today?*
- *What challenge does Paul's illustration of the rapture leave for us today?*
- *Upon reflecting on the rapture, what attributes of God is shown through the great event? Explain.*

Bibliography

Jeremiah, David. What in the World is Going On? Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nashville, TN. 2008.
NIV Holy Bible. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 1984.

