

THE FINISH IS THE START

The Rapture (Latin *rapturus* for “caught up”) – When Christ calls believers up to meet him in the clouds

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For 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. ¹⁵ According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For 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. ¹⁷ After 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. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words. NIV

Matthew 24:30-31 [Jesus said,] “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. NIV

The tribulation – A seven-year period of great trial for the earth. The second half is worse than the first.

Mark 13:15-20 “When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁷ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ¹⁸ Pray that this will not take place in winter, ¹⁹ because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again.

²⁰ “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.”

Daniel 9:27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” NIV

Revelation 11:2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. NIV

Revelation 13:5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. NIV

4 major views of the tribulation:

- Pre-trib Christians are raptured before the 7 years of tribulation
- Mid-trib Christians are raptured in the middle of the 7 years of tribulation
- Pre-wrath Christians are raptured somewhere in the middle of the last 3 ½ years before the wrath of God is poured out.
- Post-trib Christians are raptured at the end of the 7 years of tribulation.

The Millennium – A period of 1000 years when Christ rules on earth

Revelation 20:1-10 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized...Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God... They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. NIV

3 major views of the millennium:

- Premillennialism Christ returns at the beginning of the millennium
- Postmillennialism Christ returns at the end of the millennium
- Amillennialism Christ reigns spiritually over his kingdom in our present age and then returns physically at the end of 1000 years

The end of the bad begins the awesome.

Revelation 21:1-8 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” NIV

Knowing the end is in sight helps us run well.

Hebrews 10:36-37 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷ For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” NIV

Romans 8:18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. NIV

Job 14:1-2 [Job said,] “Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble. ² They spring up like flowers and wither away; like fleeting shadows, they do not endure. NIV

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. NIV