

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

This *End Times* note is largely based on the book *The Bible & Future Events* by Leon J. Wood (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1973). The sequence of last-day events as set out here is from a pretribulational, premillennial point of view.

DEFINITION:

The “**rapture of the church**” refers to the “catching up” of the Church into heaven by Christ just prior to the beginning of the tribulation period.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION:

The first occurrence in the sequence of last-day events is the rapture of the church. Christ will come to meet the church, His bride, in the air (1 Thess 4:17), without descending all the way to the earth's surface at that time. Christians then living will be caught up to meet Him and given glorified bodies at the same instant (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

These glorified bodies will be constituted after the fashion of Christ's resurrected body (1 John 3:2), not being limited to all the laws of nature as are our present bodies (Luke 24:31; John 20:19, 26; Acts 1:9). Those who have died in Christ will be raised from the dead and given glorified bodies, that they too may meet Christ in the air, preceding the living Christians (1 Thess 4:16-17).

This resurrection will include, only saints of the church and will be an aspect of what is called the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5, 6); two other aspects will occur later. The saints of the church thus united with Christ will be with Him in heaven during the seven years of tribulation on earth.

During this time, two principal events will take place in heaven involving these saints. The first is their judgment by Christ, before what is called the "judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). The issue involved will not be salvation, for only those who are already saved will be there. At issue will be their works as Christians, "the things done in the body" (2 Cor. 5:10), to distinguish between those works which are good and acceptable

and those which are bad and rejected. The former will be rewarded, but the latter will result in a sense of loss for the person (1 Cor 3:14-15).

The second event will be the marriage of Christ and the church, at what is called the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9), when the church, now judged, will be eternally united to Christ as His bride.