



A Quick Look at the Rapture and the Second Coming

Tim LaHaye



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*Dedicated to Beverly,
my beloved wife of more than 65 happy years.
She is the mother of our four children, Linda, Larry, Lee,
and Lori; grandmother of our 9 grandchildren;
and Gigi to our 14 great-grandchildren.
She is the founder of Concerned Women for America,
the nation's largest public policy women's organization,
and serves as the Chairman of the Board.
She has been an ideal companion and shares with me
our lifetime ministry of heralding the soon coming of
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
Our ultimate dream is to go up in the rapture to the
Father's house—together—which we believe will be soon!*

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CONTENTS

The Growing Interest in Bible Prophecy	6
1. Jesus Promised to Come Again to Rapture His Church	9
2. What and When Is the Rapture?	13
3. Setting the Stage for His Coming and the Signs of His Coming	17
4. The Two Stages of the One Second Coming	26
5. The Judgment Seat of Christ	30
6. The Coming Seven-Year Tribulation	35
7. The Glorious Appearing, or the Coming of the King.	38
8. Israel—the Super Sign of Christ’s Coming.	43
9. The Only Way to Heaven	48
10. Quick Answers to Questions About Bible Prophecy	51
Notes	59

The Growing Interest in Bible Prophecy

Over the six decades I have been a gospel-teaching minister and careful student of Bible prophecy, I have never seen more interest in what the Bible teaches about the chaotic times in which we live. Man's inhumanity to his fellow man—from violence on our streets to vicious dictators killing millions of their own people—continues to worsen. The fact that mankind has at its disposal the most frightening weapons from nuclear arms to bacterial gasses has more people than ever seeking answers to the uncertain future. Many of them are turning to Bible prophecy in their search. Even secularists who cling to the empty theories of both man's and the world's origin are turning to the God of the Bible for insights. That is a good sign, for the Bible has much to say about the future.

The crux of the issue is whether or not there is a God in heaven who has given us a guide of past history, the present crises, and His detailed plan for our future—and especially whether we will truly live in another life, what it will be like, and whether it will be forever. The 66 books of the Bible contain an incredible number of prophetic teachings that answer the questions people are asking in this time of uncertainty and chaos.

One of the greatest Hebrew prophets—called by scholars “the prince of prophets”—lived about 800 years before Jesus Christ and spoke frequently for God to His people. This prophet's name was Isaiah, and his track record of fulfilled prophecies serves as proof that he spoke for God because only God can foretell the future with precision and have it come to pass.

In Isaiah 46:9-10, the prophet spoke on behalf of God, saying,

Remember the former things of old,
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,
declaring the end from the beginning,
and from ancient times things that are not yet done,
saying, “My counsel shall stand,
and I will do all My pleasure.”

Here, God declared beyond all unbelief that He alone is God, and for proof, He pointed to the accurate fulfillment of His prophecies as evidence. Only He can tell, in advance, what will happen in the days to come.

Prophecy scholars say there are more than 1000 prophecies in the Bible. More than 500 have already been fulfilled. The skeptic might say that is only a 50-percent fulfillment rate. The trouble with that objection is that the other 500-plus prophecies haven't been fulfilled yet because they are still future. They have to do with the end times, an area of study known as *eschatology*. These prophecies are now starting to be fulfilled in our day, and we can expect them to continue being fulfilled at an increasingly rapid pace.

For example, it is more than interesting that the people of Israel began returning to the Holy Land after expulsion from the land for some 1850 years. And since 1948, Israel has been recognized by the United Nations as a sovereign nation. This regathering of the people and rebirth of the nation are among hundreds of signs of the end times that are being fulfilled today—signs we'll examine more closely later in this book.

The point in Isaiah 46:9-10 is that God, through Isaiah, pointed to fulfilled prophecy as proof that He is God. On the basis of God's perfect track record when it comes to prophecy, we can trust what He has said about who He is, what He has said about the past, and what He proclaims will happen in the future.

The most basic definition of authentic Bible prophecy is that it is history written in advance. Anyone can utter a prophecy, but having it come to pass on schedule can only be done by God, for He alone knows the future. This is why it is possible to say that fulfilled prophecy proves beyond question that the originator of the prophecy is authentic. And when you consider that more than 500 of God's prophecies have been accurately fulfilled without a single error, pure logic tells us that God is surely the source of all things behind those prophecies. I like to call Him "the uncaused cause of all things."

With that in mind, let's turn to what God has said will take place in the future.

CHAPTER 1

Jesus Promised to Come Again to Rapture His Church

One of the greatest promises in the Bible is the promise from Jesus to His disciples (and to us) that someday He will come again to take us to heaven with Him. Just hours prior to His unjust trial before the Roman governor Pilate and His crucifixion, Jesus said,

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:1-3).

That is my favorite passage of Scripture, for Jesus' words were the words of God—words that will never pass away (see Matthew 5:18). At the time, Jesus was warning His disciples and followers that He would soon go to heaven, where His Father's house is located. He also guaranteed He would “come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” While this is not the first time He promised He would come in what we call the second coming of Christ (which is mentioned more than 300 times in the Bible), this is the first time He or anyone else referred to the *rapture phase* of His coming. As we will soon see, we have good reason to believe that the return of Christ is very close to taking place, and could even occur during our lifetime.

In His promise, Jesus said there are many dwelling places in the Father's house, and that He Himself—who is also the creator of the

earth and the heavens (Colossians 1:14-18)—would go there “to prepare a place for you.” This means that ever since His return to heaven, Jesus has been building a place for us that we will occupy. And we will be with Him as well! Think of it—He built this earth in a moment of time, and there are many beautiful places in it. Can you just imagine the beauty of the place He will have spent some 2000 years preparing for His followers? It is too marvelous to imagine.

One of the greatest men I ever had the privilege of working with was Dr. Henry Morris. He authored the book *The Revelation Record*. Dr. Morris, who had a PhD degree and was well schooled in science, reported that according to his mathematical calculations, the New Jerusalem will be large enough to accommodate at least 20 billion people with a “home” about the size of one-third of a mile cubed.¹ And that’s just the New Jerusalem—there will also be a new heaven and new earth!

When we consider that Jesus accurately fulfilled all 109 of the prophecies about His first coming, we can believe with certainty that Jesus will come again just as He promised. In fact, that is how we know without a doubt that He is the one and only Son of God, for no one in the history of the world even comes close to fulfilling all the prophecies in the Bible that are about the coming Messiah. For example, He must be a man. He must be of the seed of Abraham, the tribe of Judah, the seed of David—further narrowing those who could possibly claim to be the Messiah. And 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Micah predicted that the Messiah would be born in the little town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

Today, almost the entire world knows Jesus was born in that tiny obscure village of Bethlehem, which is about five miles away from Jerusalem. What is even more remarkable is that Mary, the mother of Jesus, didn’t live in Bethlehem at the time she was pregnant. Rather, she was obligated to go there with her husband Joseph because of a census ordered by the government. Mary had to travel by oxcart or on the back of a donkey 90 miles from her and Joseph’s home in Nazareth to get to Bethlehem. She did this shortly before giving birth,

the most dangerous time of a woman's pregnancy for traveling such a great distance on rough roads. But she had no choice, for she had to comply with the state-ordered registration of all the people, after which she and Joseph could return home.

Keep in mind that if Jesus had been born a little earlier or a little later, He could have been born in the wrong place. Yet Micah's 700-year-old prophecy was fulfilled exactly as predicted. Jesus was born in the right place at the right time. Some might say this was mere coincidence. But that is more difficult to believe than it is to believe that God was at work bringing about the fulfillment of something He said would happen. Yet another prophecy is that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), which was indeed the case because Mary had not yet married Joseph. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, of a virgin, during a very brief window of time that had been predicted 700 years earlier.

Only the Bible provides that kind of prophetic accuracy. Only God can tell us history in advance. And in doing so, He proves that He is God, and that His Word is true. Given the track record of more than 500 Bible prophecies fulfilled with 100 percent accuracy, we can confidently call the Bible alone a divinely inspired book. There is no other book like it.

So far, we have considered only a few of the messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled during His lifetime. Remember, He fulfilled at least 100 more! No one in the history of the world can come even close to fulfilling that many. Of all the billions of people who have ever lived, no one can say he has fulfilled the 109 prophecies that affirm He alone is the true Son of God. Only Jesus can make that claim. And if He fulfilled all the prophecies about His first coming, we can know with absolute certainty that He will one day come again and rapture His church to be with Him in heaven. How can we know? Because in John 14:2-3, He said He would. And earlier, He had told His disciples, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18).

The best part of the rapture teaching of Jesus is that in addition to

the incredible place He has been preparing for us, we have His promise in John 14:3 that He will come again and receive us to Himself. As the psalmist said, we will “dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23:6). There are many wonderful promises in the Bible about what life will be like for us in heaven. But none surpass the promise that we will live forever with God’s only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we are about to see, that may happen sooner than we think, for prophecy scholars have found at least 19 credible signs that we are living in or close to the fulfillment of these signs. More on this in chapter 3.