

# The Rapture

## Part 4 - There is a rapture

Pentecost in the year Jesus was resurrected was a turning point, because that's when the "gathering up of his elect from all over the world" began.

And it's not surprising if people think this means a rapturing of saints up to heaven forever, because Paul describes it in "rapture-like" terms too. In **Ephesians 2:6** he writes that God **"raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms."**

But in context here, Paul isn't talking about a one time 'Rapture' event at some time in the future before "the end of the world" hits and the Earth is burnt up by fire. Instead, he's talking about a **personal** rapture, in which we're being lifted out of the typical life "we all lived at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. And just like everyone else, we too were by nature objects of (God's) wrath" (3). Just like the Jews of Jesus' day, therefore, we too deserved to be swept away for rejecting Jesus and living purely for ourselves.

But "because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions" (5). He lifted us out of our dead lives "in which we used to live when we simply followed the ways of this world" (2), and he opened our minds instead to how things are done in heaven, and **living that life here**. It's the opposite of leaving the Earth to go to heaven; **it's being lifted into heaven to bring heaven to Earth**.

And that's been happening every day since the Holy Spirit came "declaring the wonders of God" in **Acts 2:12**. Minds were opened to the amazing plan of God, that through the death and resurrection of Jesus he's now in the process of fulfilling all those wonderful prophecies in the Old Testament that speak of this planet and us humans being restored back to what God made us for in the first place (3:17-21). Not, though, by rapturing off the good people to heaven - and to hell with the rest - but by "blessing us by **turning each of us** from our wicked ways" (3:26).

In other words, God wants to rapture everybody into living the life of heaven - not **in** heaven but as typical, ordinary human beings right here on the Earth. And why does God want that? Paul answers that in **Ephesians 2:7** - it's "in order that in the coming ages God might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." Because it's in Christ Jesus, through his life, dead and resurrection the first time he came, that this was set in motion.

All through "the coming ages" since then, a remarkable change can be seen happening to people, where instead of them being subject to "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (2), they have become "God's workmanship," **Ephesians 2:10**, "created in Christ Jesus to **do good works**" here and now, as **visible proof** that Jesus' kingdom and the restoration of this planet and the renewal of all creation is real and on its way, in preparation for Jesus kicking it into full swing when he comes here the second time.

Jesus is into renewing the Earth, therefore, not into destroying it. He's not into warning us the whole planet is falling apart to get us focused on wanting to be raptured off it forever. He doesn't want us in "escape" mode, he wants us mucking in doing what good we can in preparation for going great good on a grand scale when he arrives. He wants people eager and ready to expand on the good they so wished they could do, and tried to do, during their lifetimes.

It's all positive, good news. There's no fear of what might happen "if we're not "rapture-ready." No embarrassing selfish focus on getting raptured to "save our own skins" before the trouble hits. No awkward questions to answer like, "What happens to children when their parents are 'raptured away'?" Or, "What kind of God would rapture a Christian pilot and let the plane crash?" Or, "If all the good people are raptured off to heaven, who's left here on Earth to show people in the coming ages what God is like, as he intended (2:7)?"

There's no need to worry, then, about when Jesus is coming, or looking for signs so we're not caught by surprise like the Jews of Jesus' day. That was all meant for them. But what if things get tough for us too? Does God rapture us out of it?....(continues in Part 5)