

Fulfilled Prophecies

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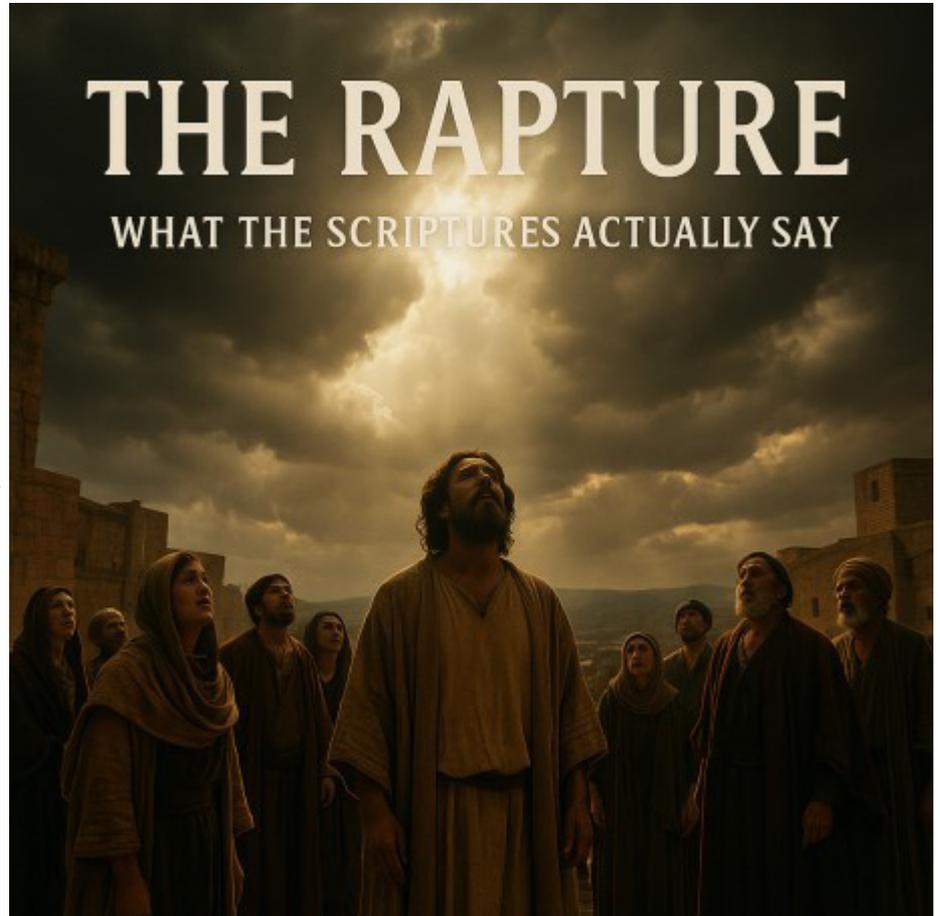
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By Dan Maines

The Rapture - What the Scriptures Actually Say

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

† Paul describes two groups, the dead in Christ who are raised, and the living who are caught up together with them. Nothing in this passage says believers vanish into the sky or escape the earth. It's talking about a resurrection and a gathering, not a flight.

† The same trumpet appears in 1 Corinthians 15:52, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we'll be changed. Paul calls it a change, not a removal.

† He adds in verses 53-54, this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. When this perishable has put on the imperishable, and this mortal has put on immortality, then will come about the saying that's written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. The focus is on victory over death, not vanishing into the sky.

Matthew 24:37-41

For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.

† Those taken are compared to those taken away by the flood. The ones taken were the judged, not the saved. Those left were spared, just as Noah and his family remained after the wicked were swept away.

Luke 17:34-37

I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. And answering they said to Him, Where, Lord? And He said to them, Where the body is, there

also the vultures will be gathered.

† When asked where the taken ones went, Jesus said, where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered. The ones taken were those taken in death and judgment. Nothing here describes believers being lifted into the air.

John 14:1-3

Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 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.

† Jesus promised presence with Himself, not escape from the earth. He said He'd receive His followers to Himself, meaning covenantal union and restored relationship with God.

Acts 1:9-11

After He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.

† The angels said He'd come in the same way, with clouds. Later Scripture explains this image. Daniel 7:13 says, Behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming. Clouds represent divine presence and judgment, not a weather report.

Revelation 1:7

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth

will mourn over Him.

† The ones who pierced Him were that generation. John said every eye would see Him, even those who pierced Him, proving the fulfillment belonged to their time, not thousands of years later.

† Every passage about the rapture shows the same facts. The Lord descends, the trumpet sounds, the dead are raised, the living are changed, and judgment falls on the unbelieving. Nothing speaks of believers flying away or leaving the earth behind.

† The Bible calls this event resurrection and gathering, not rapture. The faithful are gathered to Christ, the wicked are taken in judgment, and the kingdom is fully revealed.

The False 66 AD Rapture Claim

† Some have claimed that believers were physically raptured into heaven in 66 AD before the judgment on Jerusalem. Scripture gives no record of any such event. No historian, apostle, or prophet ever recorded believers disappearing from the earth.

† Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 say, Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The term caught up translates the Greek word *harpazo*, meaning seized, grasped, or taken hold of. It's used throughout Scripture for being brought into possession, not removed from the earth.

† In John 10:28-29 Jesus said, No one will snatch them out of My hand. The word snatch is *harpazo*, showing security and possession, not physical removal.

† Acts 8:39 uses the same word, When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more. Philip wasn't taken to heaven but moved to another location. The word simply means taken hold of by divine power.

† Paul used harpazo again in 2 Corinthians 12:2, I know a man in Christ who was caught up to the third heaven. Whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. Even here, Paul admits the experience was spiritual, not necessarily physical.

† Nothing in Paul's letters teaches that the living saints were taken off the earth in AD 66. The gathering he described was into Christ Himself, the true meeting place of heaven and earth. Ephesians 1:10 says, That in the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

† The gathering was covenantal, uniting the living and the dead in one body through Christ's completed redemption. This fulfilled Jesus' prayer in John 17:21, that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You.

† The saints were caught up into the presence of Christ, not into the sky. His coming was with clouds, the symbol of divine glory and judgment, as in Daniel 7:13 and Matthew 24:30. The righteous were gathered into His kingdom, and the wicked were taken in destruction.

† The 66 AD rapture claim has no biblical or historical foundation. The word caught up describes the saints being joined to the Lord in His victory, not leaving the earth.

Where Did the Saints Go After They Were Gathered?

† Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you. 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 14:2-3). The place He prepared was with the Father, in the heavenly realm.

† Paul wrote, For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (Colossians 3:3-4). The saints were gathered into that glory, hidden with Christ in God.

† To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Those who died before His return entered that presence, and those alive at His coming were changed and joined to the same heavenly life.

† Paul said, Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20). The saints were citizens of heaven, gathered to their King when His kingdom was revealed.

† The saints entered heaven through resurrection, not through flight. Paul said, The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:52). The change was the passage from mortality to immortality, from the natural body to the spiritual body. Through that transformation they entered the heavenly realm.

† Flesh and blood can't inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:50). The saints were given immortal, spiritual bodies suitable for heavenly life, not earthly flesh.

† Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies (John 11:25). Their entrance into heaven came through Him, the Resurrection Himself. When He returned and gathered His people, He brought them where He

is.

† Paul wrote, For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:14). God brought them with Christ into the heavenly kingdom, fulfilling His promise of eternal life.

† The saints didn't ascend by human motion but were raised by divine power, as Paul said, He raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). Their arrival in heaven was through union with Christ, the life-giving Spirit, who opened the way for them into God's presence.

† This gathering fulfilled the promise of eternal life through resurrection, not through escape from the world, for the saints entered heaven by the power of Christ's finished work.

The Reality of Heaven

† Scripture describes Heaven as a real dwelling place of rest and reward for the faithful. John wrote, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on! Yes, says the Spirit, so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them (Revelation 14:13). Heaven is not symbolic, it's the promised rest of God's people.

† Paul longed for this better existence, saying, We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8), and having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better (Philippians 1:23). Heaven is the place where believers dwell with Christ Himself.

† The Scriptures show Heaven as a realm distinct from earth. Solomon said, God is in heaven and you are on the earth (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Jesus spoke of His Father who is in heaven

(Matthew 5:11-12; 6:9), and said He came down from heaven (John 6:38). Heaven is above the earthly realm and is the seat of divine authority and glory.

† Heaven is the hope of every believer. Jesus said, Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great (Matthew 5:12). Paul said, If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:19). Our hope is laid up for us in heaven (Colossians 1:5), secured by the promise of eternal life (Titus 1:2).

† The saints who were gathered to Christ entered that heavenly realm, not through flight, but through resurrection and transformation. Their hope was fulfilled when death was conquered, and they entered the rest prepared for them in the presence of the Lord.

How This Applies to Us Today

† The same Lord who fulfilled His promises then still reigns now. Every believer today shares in that same resurrection life. Though our bodies remain mortal, our spirits are united with Christ in His heavenly kingdom.

† Our faith rests in His finished work, not in waiting for another coming. The hope of Heaven is already secured, and we look forward to entering that same rest when our earthly lives are complete.

† The fulfilled promise of resurrection assures us that death has no power over those in Christ. As Paul said, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (Romans 14:8).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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