

## Are You Ready?

A. A missionary to Albania tells about a tradition in that country. Three days after a funeral friends come to the home of someone who died to sit with the family, drink bitter coffee, and remember their friend. One Good Friday the missionary used that tradition to invite people back to church on Easter.

In a packed room this man talked about the “not quite empty tomb.” In John’s account of the resurrection we read that Jesus’ grave cloths were lying in the tomb, but the napkin was folded by itself. In Albania, when someone leaves the table he crumples up his napkin to indicate he is finished. But if he gets up and leaves the napkin folded, it means that he’s coming back.

B. Jesus’ napkin was folded – he is coming back, and when he comes the church will be “caught up” to meet him. I Thessalonians 4:13-18 is a passage everyone should know. It gives us the order of what will happen at the Rapture. (Read I Thess 4:13-18)

C. Do you have the assurance that when Jesus comes you will be ready to meet him? The NT is full of assurances for believers:

John 1:12; John 5:24; I John 5:11-12; Romans 10:9, 13  
You don’t have to wonder if you are good enough; you don’t have to count on all your good deeds; you don’t have to have the right name or degree or skin color or heritage. It is the atoning work of Jesus that saves us. Jesus made it clear in our text from John 14:

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

D. I believe that the primary reason the Rapture has not yet taken place is the immense patience of God – His desire is for all people to know him. As we pray and witness, see people come to faith in Christ we participate in bringing about the Rapture. This year we have prayed 101 people into the Kingdom, not counting our missionary conversions. Will you pray that one more will come to Jesus today – one more for Jesus! One more for Jesus – and then pray with the last thing John heard in Revelation, “Come quickly Lord Jesus.”

“Are You Ready for the Rapture?” 5/30/10  
John 14:1-6

RMBC  
Pastor Dennis

## Introduction

A. For several years there has been a TV drama series called “Without a Trace” in which a special FBI Missing Persons Unit tries to find people who have disappeared suspiciously. One day there is going to be a great disappearance of up to a billion people from the face of the earth. They will leave “without a trace” other than the chaos that will erupt from their absence.

Can you imagine 25% of the US population being removed – the Christians in government, business, entertainment, and education? Try to picture only unbelieving people running the nation or the world.

B. When you think of this great disappearance in those terms it seems almost ironic that we call that event “The Rapture.” I guess it depends on which side of that event you stand. There’s a perfume called “Rapture” designed to give only pleasant sensations. A New York-based rock band calls itself “Rapture.” But when we disappear “without a trace” it will be more like “chaos”.

C. The word “rapture” is not found in the Bible. It is from a Latin word meaning to “catch up” or “wrap up” and we use it to describe that moment when Jesus returns for his Church. Paul says in I Thess. 4:17 that we will be “caught up” in the clouds when Jesus comes again. Let’s read our Lord’s own words: John 14:1-6

D. My first memory of responding to God and the idea of heaven was as a 6 year old child in a Central OK Baptist church on a hot summer night. A man with a big movie projector was showing us a movie. It was in black and white and I still remember a woman coming into her bedroom and crying out as she discovered her family missing. In the darkness I crept over to my mom, snuggled up to her and tearfully told her that I was scared to be left behind.

In John 14 Jesus told his disciples they didn’t need to be scared into heaven. He said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” This morning, I don’t want you to be troubled in heart, but I want you to receive the truth about the return of Jesus Christ – the Rapture. I want you to know that you can be ready for the Rapture. I want you to understand some things about our age and how it fits into Bible prophecy.

## I Am Going Away

A. Jesus made it clear that he was going away. As shocking as this was to the disciples he made it clear that his leaving was for a purpose. He was going away to prepare a place for them.

B. Earlier that evening Jesus had explained that it was necessary for him to go away so that the Holy Spirit could come. Fifty days later he met these same men on a hillside outside of Jerusalem. Luke tells us the details in Acts 1 where Jesus gives us essential information for living until he comes again. (Read Acts 1:6-11).

C. What is clear is that Jesus went away as he said he would. His purpose in leaving was for us to receive the Holy Spirit, carry on his work, and for him to prepare a heavenly place for us. But here in John 14 he makes something else very clear:

### I Am Coming Back

A. Down through the centuries Christian after Christian has found hope and assurance in the words of Jesus, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” What a promise! What a hope! Jesus left just as he said he would, therefore we have no reason to question that he won’t come back in the same way he said he would.

B. Let me clarify something about this event we call the Rapture. The Rapture is when Jesus will come back for us (the saints, the Church). There is a Second Coming, mentioned numerous times in the OT and at various places in the NT, at which time Jesus will come with us (the saints, the church). Did you catch the difference?

Rapture	Second Coming
Could happen any moment	Will happen after the Rapture
Jesus comes for the Church	Jesus comes with the Church
Everything is ready	Prophecies still to be fulfilled
Believers only	Affects all humanity
Only his own see him	Every eye will see him

David Jeremiah, *What in the World is Going On*, p. 216

C. A common understanding in biblical prophecy is that the Rapture will take place before a time of world-wide trouble known as the Great Tribulation. Some scholars teach that believers will be raptured before the tribulation and spared the suffering coming during that time. Others suggest a rapture that takes place somewhere during that tribulation – that God will spare us from the worst of those times at some mid-point in the great suffering.

D. My caution is to never live carelessly thinking this world’s trouble can’t touch us. Too many Christians have died for that to be true. It is calculated that 70 million Christians have been killed since the church began, nearly 43 million in the last 100 years. Jesus clearly taught that in this world we will have trouble (John 16:33). Spiritual warfare is real.

### Between Christ’s Going and Coming

A. Between Jesus saying “I am going away” and his “I am coming back for you” lies the history of the church. The same John who wrote this Gospel also wrote Revelation. In Revelation 12 John shares the vision he saw that describes the period of the church age. Walk with me through Revelation 12:

1. Vs. 1-2: The woman in this scene pictures the nation or people of Israel, the 12 stars being the 12 tribes. This nation, chosen by God, gave birth to his Messiah, Jesus the Savior of the world.

2. Vs. 3-4: If we glance ahead vs. 9 tells us that this dragon is Satan, whose goal has always been to destroy the work of God, especially to destroy God’s Son, the source of salvation. His waiting to devour the child when it was born reminds us of Herod killing the babies of Bethlehem, Satan’s attempt to kill Jesus.

3. Vs. 5: This male child was Jesus, whom Satan could not touch. Herod couldn’t kill him as a baby and the cross couldn’t destroy him permanently. He defeated sin and he defeated death on the cross. As we read in Acts 1, he ascended to heaven, “snatched up to God and to his throne.”

4. Vs. 6: The woman fled to the desert where God protected her. This is a picture of the Jewish people over the last 2000 years. They have been dispersed to the far corners of the globe without losing their identity. Wherever they are, they are still the Jews. Since 1948 they have returned by the thousands to re-establish their place in Israel. This prophecy is being fulfilled.

5. Vs. 10: This verse pictures Jesus’ conquering work on the cross and the victory of his resurrection. It parallels Paul’s words in Ephesians 1:18-21 where he says the power of God raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at the right hand of the heavenly throne. There he is interceding for us and preparing a place for us.

6. Vs. 13-17: These verses describe the times in which we live. Satan knows his time is short (vs. 12). He knows God has protected the Jews so he has turned his wrath on “the rest of her offspring” which is the church birthed out of blood of Christ. This is a warning to the people of God to be faithful, watchful, obedient, and full of zeal for the things of God.

B. To know that God gave John a vision of all these things that have already come to pass fills me with great anticipation. I am so concerned for the condition of America as we seem to be turning from God so quickly – It’s as if the pace of decay is speeding up. But Jesus will return for us at just the right time. “Don’t let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Jesus.”

## Introduction

Rapture: A word not found in the Bible

From a Latin word: to be \_\_\_\_\_ up or to \_\_\_\_\_ up  
Believers will be caught up; God will wrap up this time of grace

First word about the Rapture: Don't be \_\_\_\_\_

## I Am Going Away

Jesus made it clear: He was leaving to \_\_\_\_\_ a place for us  
Acts 1:6-11 tells us:

What would happen after Jesus \_\_\_\_\_  
How he went \_\_\_\_\_  
How he will \_\_\_\_\_

## I Am Coming Back

We find great assurance in Jesus' words, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

<u>Rapture</u>	<u>Second Coming</u>
Could happen any moment	Will happen after the Rapture
Jesus comes for the Church	Jesus comes with the Church
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## Between Christ's Going and Coming

Revelation 12 – Prophecy of the New Testament Age

Vs. 1-2 The woman = the nation or people of Israel  
Vs. 3-4 The dragon = Satan (see vs. 9)  
Vs. 5 The child = Jesus the Messiah  
Vs. 6 The 1260 days = The Jewish dispersion; God's protection  
Vs. 10 “Now” = Jesus' death, burial and resurrection  
Vs. 13-17 “The rest of her offspring” = Gentile believers on whom Satan now focuses his wrath. This is our age/generation

Much of John's vision has come to pass; America is in moral decay; We have the hope of the Rapture!

## Are You Ready?

Assurance: John 1:12; John 5:24; I John 5:11-12; Romans 10:9  
Hope: I Thessalonians 4:13-18  
Are you ready?  
Are you participating in the harvest?