

Is the Rapture Real? | Matthew 24:37-41 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To better live in the middle of the story by correcting any misunderstandings about the end of the story.

Sermon Reminder: Keith continued our sermon series “Bad Ideas that Good Christians Believe.” His topic this week was on what has become known as “the rapture.” Keith spoke to two questions: 1. Is this the best way to make sense of what the Bible teaches about the end of the story? 2. Does this make any difference to our lives today?

Icebreaker: If you grew up going to church, did you experience it more as an “escape the world” church or a “repair the world” church?

Discussion:

Read:

The predominant current approach to the rapture was developed around 1830 by John Nelson Darby and is now best known by the Left Behind book series. This approach says that Jesus will come again to earth in phases. The first return to earth will be in secret to take Christians up out of the earth to be with him in heaven. Those *left behind* on the earth will go through a time (most say seven years) of tribulation where God brings a foretaste of judgment on those who haven't believed in him. At the end of which Jesus will return to earth this time publicly where there will be a resurrection and a final judgment.

Is this what the Bible teaches?

1. How have you been exposed to “rapture” theology in churches or in culture before, if at all?

Read:

[Matthew 24:37-41](#)

THE **crossing** **small groups**

³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

2. In the example of Noah, who is taken away and who is left behind?
3. How does the comparison of Noah with Jesus' return help us to understand whether we should want to be taken or left behind in verses 40-41?
4. While we might understand who is taken and left behind differently with the current "rapture" theology, how do we share in the need to be ready?

Read:

[1 Thessalonians 4:15-17](#)

¹⁵ According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

[John 12:12-13 \(Jesus Entrance to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday\)](#)

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

5. Keith compared the rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4 to a Cosmic Palm Sunday. What are the comparisons? Where would Jesus be going after gathering his people in the clouds in 1 Thessalonians 4 in that analogy?

6. How might believing in “rapture” theology shape the way you think about the world and what’s important in this life?

Read:

[Acts 3:21](#)

²¹ “Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.”

[Jeremiah 29:7](#)

⁷ “Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

7. How would that be different from thinking about the world in light of these verses in the way Keith presented?

Digging Deeper (Optional): Read “The Great Commission” of Matthew 28:18-20. How does Jesus mission to tell others about him and to help them grow as followers of him connect to the call to repair creation and culture?

[Matthew 28:18-20](#)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Sharing and Prayer:

- If time: Have everyone pray for the person on their left.
- Ask everyone to share a way that he or she would like to better repair the world or culture in his or her life.