

ECCLESIOLOGY
THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH
Lesson 7

The Destiny of the Church

I. RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

- A. Definition of Rapture. “Rapture” comes from the Latin word *rapere*, which means “caught up” or “snatched up” (1 Thess. 4:17). It refers to the time the true church will be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air.
NOTE: All Christians believe in the Rapture but all do not agree as to when it will take place.
- B. Views on the time of the Rapture.
1. Pre-Tribulational. This group believes that the church, being a totally distinct entity beginning at Pentecost, will be raptured before the Tribulation period, not going through any part of the Tribulation. They see the Lord’s return in two phases—one is the coming of the Lord in the air to meet the church (rapture), and the other is the coming of the Lord to judge the earth and to establish His millennial kingdom on earth (second advent).
 2. Mid-Tribulational. This group believes the church will be raptured in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation period. Thus the church will go through 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.
 3. Post-Tribulational. This group equates the Rapture of the church and the second advent. Thus the church goes through all of the Tribulation period and is then caught up (raptured) at the second advent.

II. FUTURE EVENTS FOR THE CHURCH

- A. The Judgment Seat of Christ. The Christian will not be judged for his sins because Christ paid that penalty at the Cross. However, the Christian will be examined for his works and service for the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8-10). Every believer will give an account for the things done on this earth (Rom. 14:8-12). For faithful service there will be reward (crowns) for Christians (1 Cor. 9:24-27).
- B. The Marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9 cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-23).
- C. The Return of the Church to Earth with Christ at the Second Advent (Rev. 19:7-9 cf. 19:11ff). The church is caught up with Christ and returns with Him to judge the world. Apparently the marriage supper takes place on earth and is connected with the second advent.
- D. The Reigning with Christ in the Millennium (Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12; 4:1, 18; 2 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 15:10; Gal. 5:21). This is believed only by premillennialists and they disagree as to whether it will be a Jewish-like millennium or a Christianized one.
- E. Participating in and Enjoying the Eternal State (Rev. 21:1-8; Heb. 12:22-23). The church, God’s elect people, will experience the joys of the New Jerusalem as the people of God.