



A Rhythm Church Perspective: Understanding the End Times and the Rapture

At Rhythm Church, we believe that understanding the end times through the finished work of Jesus Christ brings hope rather than fear. Many Christians wonder about the “rapture” and the end of the world. Instead of seeing these as scary events, we see them as the beautiful completion of God’s plan that began in the Garden of Eden.

THE KINGDOM NOW AND COMING

When Jesus came to earth, He announced that “the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15)^[^1]. This means that God’s Kingdom began when Jesus arrived! This Kingdom continues to grow and expand today through the Church. At Rhythm, we believe that Jesus didn’t just come to save us from this world, but to bring His Kingdom to earth.

N.T. Wright (2008) explains that Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom was not about a distant future but about God’s reign breaking into the present: “The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that he was doing, close up, in the present, what he was promising long-term, in the future” (p. 192). This understanding helps us see that the Kingdom is both “now” and “not yet” in its fullness.

Think of it like planting a seed. Jesus planted the seed of God’s Kingdom, and it’s growing bigger every day until it fully blooms when He returns.

A RENEWED CREATION, NOT AN ABANDONED ONE

The Bible tells us in Romans 8:19–22^[^2] that all of creation is “groaning” and waiting to be set free. This means that God plans to renew and restore the earth, not destroy it. Just as Jesus’ resurrection gave Him a glorified body (not a completely different one), God plans to resurrect and glorify the entire creation.

N.T. Wright (2008) powerfully articulates this vision: “What creation needs is neither abandonment nor evolution but rather redemption and renewal; and this is both promised and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This is what the whole world’s waiting for” (p. 107).

Brian Zahnd (2017) writes, “The good news is not that we get to go to heaven when we die, but that God is going to bring heaven to earth” (p. 149). In his book **Sinners in the Hands of a Loving God**, Zahnd further explains that “creation will be liberated from

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its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (p. 150).

At Rhythm, we believe that God loves the world He created. His plan isn't to throw it away, but to heal it completely from the effects of sin.

THE "RAPTURE" REIMAGINED

One of the most misunderstood passages about the end times is 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17^[^3], which talks about believers being "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. Many think this means Christians will leave the earth forever, but that's not what the text actually says.

N.T. Wright (2008) offers a crucial historical insight: "When the emperor visited a colony or province, the citizens of the country would go to meet him at some distance from the city. It would be disrespectful to have him arrive at the gates as a normal traveler would... When they met him, they wouldn't then accompany him back to his home, but would escort him back to their city" (p. 132).

This ancient custom, known as **parousia**, completely transforms our understanding of this passage.

In ancient times, when a king would visit a city, the people would go outside the city gates to welcome him and then escort him back in with celebration. The "catching up" described in this passage is more like a royal welcome party for Jesus as He returns to fully establish His Kingdom on earth.

Brian Zahnd (2017) describes this as "not an escape plan but a welcome committee," explaining that "we're not being snatched away to heaven; we're being caught up in the air to welcome the Lord who is coming to us" (p. 153). Jesus isn't coming to take us away from earth—He's coming to bring heaven to earth and complete the restoration that began with His first coming.

THE WEDDING IMAGERY

In John 14:1–3^[^4], Jesus speaks about preparing a place for us. This language comes

from Jewish wedding customs. A groom would prepare a home for his bride and then come back to get her. The purpose wasn't for them to live separately but to live together in their new home.

This perfectly matches with Revelation 21:1–5^[^5], which shows God coming to live with His people in a "new heaven and new earth." The goal isn't for us to leave earth behind but for heaven and earth to be joined together under Christ's loving rule.

N.T. Wright (2008) puts it this way: "Heaven and earth are designed to overlap and interlock... The place where that happens is (for the moment) the place where Jesus is... The ascension of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit go together. Because Jesus is ruling the world, we are to be implementing his rule" (p. 116).

THE CHURCH'S VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST

At Rhythm, we believe that because of Jesus' finished work on the cross, the Church is not destined for defeat but for victory. The end times aren't about barely escaping a doomed world; they're about partnering with Christ as He brings His Kingdom to fullness.

Andrew Wommack (2012) teaches that "most Christians today are waiting for God to pour out His power, not realizing He's waiting on them to exercise the authority He's already given them" (p. 37). In his book *You've Already Got It!*, Wommack emphasizes that "you're not fighting FOR victory; you're fighting FROM victory" (p. 42).

Through the New Covenant established by Jesus' blood, we now have the Holy Spirit living inside us, empowering us to be part of God's restoration plan. We don't just wait for Jesus to return—we actively participate in bringing glimpses of His Kingdom now through love, justice, and compassion.

KINGDOM AUTHORITY NOW

Bill Johnson (2005) writes, "It has always been God's desire to bring heaven to earth through a people who would accurately represent Him" (p. 32). In his foundational work *When*

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Heaven Invades Earth, Johnson further explains that “our assignment is to bring the realities of His world into this one” (p. 54).

N.T. Wright (2008) affirms this understanding of our present mission: “What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God’s future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly... They are part of what we may call building for God’s kingdom” (p. 205).

At Rhythm, we believe that the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in believers today (Romans 8:11)^[^6]. This means we can partner with God to bring healing, restoration, and transformation to our communities as a foretaste of the complete renewal that will come when Christ returns.

Bill Johnson (2005) teaches that “the Christian life is actually an invasion of heaven coming to earth through yielded people” (p. 75). This means that as believers, we aren’t passive observers waiting for the end times—we’re active participants in bringing God’s Kingdom to earth right now.

THE RESURRECTION HOPE

N.T. Wright (2008) emphasizes that the Christian hope is not centered on going to heaven when we die, but on resurrection: “The point of the resurrection... is that the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die... What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it... What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God’s future” (p. 193).

At Rhythm, we affirm this resurrection hope. Just as Jesus was raised bodily from the dead, we too will experience bodily resurrection. This is not about escaping our physical existence

but transforming it.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

Understanding the end times from this New Covenant perspective changes how we live:

1. We live with hope, not fear – We don’t need to be afraid of world events because we know God’s good plan is unfolding. As Andrew Wommack (2012) states, “Fear is faith in the devil. Faith is fear in reverse” (p. 103).

2. We care for creation – Since God plans to renew the earth, not abandon it, we should take care of it now. N.T. Wright (2008) argues that “if we believe in God’s future for the whole world and for ourselves, that gives us every incentive to be working with him for that purpose” (p. 214).

3. We engage with the world – Rather than withdrawing from society, we work to bring God’s love and justice everywhere. Brian Zahnd (2017) writes, “We’re not called to evacuate the earth, but to anticipate its renewal” (p. 155).

4. We focus on Jesus – Instead of getting caught up in timelines and predictions, we keep our eyes on Jesus and His Kingdom.

5. We exercise Kingdom authority – Bill Johnson (2005) emphasizes that “the believer has been given authority over all the powers of darkness” (p. 125). Through the finished work of Jesus, we have been given authority to represent heaven on earth now.

CONCLUSION

At Rhythm, we believe that through the finished work of Jesus, the end times represent the glorious completion of God’s plan to restore all things. Jesus has already won the victory through His death and resurrection. Now we eagerly await His return, not as an escape from earth, but as the moment when heaven and earth become fully united under His loving rule.

N.T. Wright (2008) beautifully summarizes this hope: “The resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit mean that we are called to bring real

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and effective signs of God's renewed creation to birth even in the midst of the present age" (p. 209).

As Jesus taught us to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)^[^7]. This prayer reminds us that our hope is not in escaping earth, but in seeing earth transformed by heaven's reality.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

^[^1]: **Mark 1:15** – "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

^[^2]: **Romans 8:19–22** – "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."

^[^3]: **1 Thessalonians 4:16–17** – "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

^[^4]: **John 14:1–3** – "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

^[^5]: **Revelation 21:1–5** – "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from

God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"

^[^6]: **Romans 8:11** – "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

^[^7]: **Matthew 6:10** – "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

BOOK REFERENCES:

– Johnson, B. (2005). **When Heaven Invades Earth: A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracles**. Destiny Image Publishers.

– Wommack, A. (2012). **You've Already Got It! (So Quit Trying to Get It)**. Harrison House.

– Wright, N.T. (2008). **Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church**. HarperOne.

– Zahnd, B. (2017). **Sinners in the Hands of a Loving God: The Scandalous Truth of the Very Good News**. WaterBrook.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

– Wright, N.T. (2012). ***How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels***. HarperOne.

– Ellis, P. (2012). **The Gospel in Ten Words**. KingsPress.