

BEFORE THE RAPTURE COULD HAPPEN

So many evangelical Christians expect the rapture to take place suddenly any time. But the reality is that there are some things that must happen before the rapture could take place.

*Ep. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
Ep. 5:26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,
Ep. 5:27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

Ep. 5:25-27 shows the lead up to the rapture. The lead up to the rapture began with Jesus Christ dying for our redemption on the cross. We begin the journey to the rapture when we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe it; we then submit ourselves for baptism into the death of Jesus Christ (Ro. 6:3) and receive the Holy Spirit through prayer (Lk. 11:13). At this point, we are born again. We have gone back to the condition of Adam in Ge. 2:7; except that we possess sinful bodies, whereas Adam did not possess any sinful body by the time of Ge. 2:7.

Having been born again (Ep. 5:25), we need to progress to holiness or perfection (Ep. 5:26). We must transform our sinful bodies into holy bodies. Ep. 5:26 shows us how to do it. It says that it is Jesus Christ who makes us holy by washing us with water through the word. The big question is, do we have any role at all to play in the perfecting process, other than just trusting in Jesus?

Why did God give His commandments to mankind? When I was much younger, I used to see some aspects of God's commandments as restricting man's enjoyment. But now I know better; I now know that God's commandments are salvation—to save mankind from activities that cause havoc in the world.

Zec. 4:6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.

The main problem that people have with commandments of God is how difficult it is to keep them. A lot of people would actually love to be holy, but actually being holy has turned out to be an impossibility. The reality is that God never intended that a human being would keep His commandments by human might or power, but rather by His Spirit.

*Ro. 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
Ro. 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.
Ro. 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,*

Ro. 8:4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

The law of God could not save mankind from the havoc of sin because the body of man is already controlled by sin, and sin would not allow man to keep the law of God. God provided a solution to this problem by sending Jesus Christ to be a sin offering for the sins of mankind. Based on this sin offering, God condemned sin in sinful man. Sin no longer has right to control a human being. However, this principle works only in human beings who do not live according to the sinful nature, but according to the Holy Spirit. Living according to the sinful nature means to depend on human might or power for life. Living according to the Spirit means to depend on the Holy Spirit for every aspect of life, especially pertaining to keeping God's law.

Living according to the Spirit

What does it mean to live according to the Spirit? Isn't it trying to please God by human will power or might, which has long been proven to be a total failure?

Jo. 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Is. 55:10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

Is. 55:11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Jn. 3:34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God [Greek: he] gives the Spirit without limit.

Jn. 15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Living according to the Spirit is to base your life on speaking words of God. Speaking God's word seems to be different from doing God's word. As Nigerian youths say on social media, merely speaking words is just audio, but action is video. Incidentally, it turns out that the only way for a normal human being to consistently practice words of God is by speaking them. That is why God told Joshua to make sure that His commandments never departed from his mouth and that he should meditate on God's commandments day and night. That was the only way for Joshua to be able to keep God's commandments.

Speaking words of God means sending His words back to Him. In Is. 55:11, God explains that His words cannot return to Him empty, but must accomplish the purpose for which He sent it. Therefore, if you want to see why God spoke any word, send the word back to Him. The word will be manifested in your life.

In Jn. 3:34, Jesus Christ shows how Is. 55:11 actually works. As a human being speaks words of God, God breathes His Spirit into the human being. The Spirit fulfills the words of God that the human being speaks.

Jn. 15:3 shows that you can purify a human being by speaking God's words to the human being.

During my prayers, I usually pray as follows.

"By your grace the Most High God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Ro. 3:24), I shall be holy as you our heavenly Father are holy. I will always love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and I shall love you my neighbor as I love myself. I shall enter your kingdom of heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ."

The effect of this kind of prayer on my life is so life-transforming.

The Resurrection of Israel

Resurrection of the people of God will occur just before the rapture takes place. But the resurrection of Israel will come first—the 144,000 Israelites. What is the lead up to the resurrection of God's people?

Ez. 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

Ez. 37:2 He led me to and fro among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.

Ez. 37:3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

Ez. 37:4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!'

Ez. 37:5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.

Ez. 37:6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

Ez. 37:7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone.

Ez. 37:8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Ez. 37:9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"

Ez. 37:10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet — a vast army.

As we can see from Ez. 37:4,9, the resurrection of Israel involves a two-stage process. The first stage is prophesying or speaking words of God to the bones. The second stage is prophesying or speaking words of God to the breath (Holy Spirit). The two-stage process causes the resurrection of God's people. Any person that is in Christ can function as the prophet that speaks words of God. If you are born again, you can experimentally apply the two-stage process to yourself and see what happens. You should speak words of God to yourself, just as I do in my prayers, for as long as it takes for your heart to become reasonably pure. That is the first stage. Then you speak to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to actualize words of God in your life (Nu. 20:8). You have to continue until you are transformed as Jesus was transformed in Lk. 4:14. You will begin to manifest as a son of God. Jesus Christ spent 40 days in the desert before he was transformed.

The Rapture

Having successfully passed through Ep. 5:25 and 5:26, 5:27 is the rapture. Only the pure in heart can see God (Mt. 5:8). Without holiness, no one can see Jesus (He. 12:14). If you are hoping to be with Jesus Christ during the rapture, are you holy?

Lk. 13:23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them,

Lk. 13:24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

Lk. 13:25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

Lk. 13:26 "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

Lk. 13:27 "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

Anyone who has any level of sin in his/her life cannot make the rapture. Only the holy and blameless can make it (Ep. 5:27).

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