

Rapture

Cue One: On Revival Day, Bessie Smith, Play whole song 2:56, From Booth

Only Cue One and Cue 34 are played from the booth, the rest are played using the sacred computer.

Bishop Bishop, Alter Boy One and Alter Boy Two Enter in a procession onto the stage, steady pace to the song. Alter Boy One is carrying a laptop like it is a sacred object. Alter Boy Two carries a covered tray. Alter Boy One places computer onto the table and plugs it in-, steady movement. Alter Boy One sits at the computer table. Alter Boy Two places tray on small table and sits in chair next to it. Bishop Bishop takes center stage, places her "bible" on the music stand and takes the microphone off its stand. Music ends.

Welcome, welcome, welcome. One and all, laddies and gentlewomen, to my revival tent. I'm Bishop Bishop, and these are my Alter Boys. Don't they look like fine, young men?! Reaching out to youth is an important part of my ministry. I take impressionable youth under my wing at the time when they most need a firm hand . . .guiding them down the not so straight or narrow path. I'm always in search of fresh. . . faces. So if you think you have what it takes, then I encourage you to apply. Come see me after the sermon.

Cue Two: Must be sound file.

But recruiting staff to work in the inner sanctum of my church is not the main reason why I am here. No, I'm here to talk to all of you good and not so good people about something else. I'm here to preach a good word or two, maybe three or four, if you're lucky. My words are so very, very, very good for you. After you hear my words, you're going to get down on your knees and pray, "Please God like being that I may or may not believe in, let Bishop Bishop bestow her word on me again and again and again and again and again. Please, Most Awesome Deity or Lackthereof of my choice, pretty please with sugar on top!

Can I get an Amen?

Waits for audience response, ad lib as necessary to encourage/entice/hector them into vocalizing.

Can I get an Awoman?

Waits for audience response

Can I get a Pretty Please with Sugar on Top?

Waits for audience response

Tonight

Cue Three: Help Me Somebody sound file

I want to talk about rapture

Cue Four: Rapture Bells sound file

Tonight

Cue Five: Help Me Somebody sound file

I'm going to talk about rapture.

Cue Six: Rapture Bells sound file

Now there are many different flavors of rapture

Cue Seven: Rapture Bells sound file

The sexual kind

The New Age Kind

The oh so fun but just slightly on the edge of mental illness hypomanic Kind

But the kind of rapture

Cue Eight: Rapture Bells sound file

That I want to speak to tonight is The Left Behind Kind. So why this interest in this particular flavor of rapture?

Cue Nine: Rapture Bells sound file

All right, Alter Boy One, You can can that Rapture.

Cue Ten: Rapture Bells sound file

clip. It doesn't need to play every single time I say the word "rapture."

Cue Eleven: Rapture Bells sound file

Rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture.

Cue Twelve: Hit five of the presets for Rapture Bells, quick, one right as the word "rapture" is said.

Rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture, rapture.

That's what I thought.

Cue Thirteen: Rapture Bells sound file

Well, I'll tell you why I want to talk about The Left Behind Kind of Rapture.

Cue Fourteen: Rapture Bells sound file, cut off very quickly

Alter Boy One, don't make me come over there.

A week or so ago, at six in the way too early in the morning for my not really a morning person self, I had to drive Daddy, who was drugged up on Valium in preparation for a root canal that he'd be having later that morning, out to a sleep clinic to pick up Momma, who had spent the night being attached to all sorts of sensors so medical professionals could analyze her sleep patterns.

We get there and have to wait a bit because the attendant, so clean cut he squeaks, is waking up some grumpy old granny- you could hear the old age quaver in her voice. Bits and pieces of their conversation intrude on my attempts to nap on the loveseat in this uglier than sin waiting room.

Mister

Cue Fifteen: Squeaky sound file

tells Grumpy Old Granny, Many people believe the world will end in 2012 following Mayan prophecies. These predictions, he says, are incorrect. I can't hear the next bit, but then I hear the word

Cue Sixteen: Antichrist sound file

out of him and the old harpy's unpleasant voice carries this little gem to the front- "I think Obama is the antichrist."

Cue Seventeen: Devil Noise sound file

Obama is the

Cue Eighteen: Antichrist Question sound file

I mean, sure, there is no doubt that he's slicker than cat shit on a linonilum floor. He is a politician after all, but the

Cue Nineteen: Antichrist Question sound file

As diverting as that little moment is, it is not what I want to focus on. Mister

Cue Twenty: Squeaky sound file

starts waking Momma up. He invites us to go back to the room. Daddy goes back. I choose to continue sprawling on the loveseat. Mr.

Cue Twenty One: Squeaky sound file

comes out yet again and encourages me to “come on back.” I politely but firmly decline. Momma’s room is closer to the front, so I can hear every bit of their conversation. As he disconnects Momma from all the sensors, he asks her if she reads her Bible. She replies, “Yes, I read my bible. Mister

Cue Twenty Two: Squeaky sound file

then asks my parents if they have heard of The Rapture.

Cue Twenty Three: Rapture Bells sound file

Daddy- a big bearded, old time, fire and brimstone, organized religion is the devil’s work, atheist- says in his papa bear voice. “Let’s not go there.”

Now it is fine and dandy for Mister

Cue Twenty Four: Squeaky sound file

to believe in the Rapture.

Cue Twenty Five: Rapture Bells sound file, short

Freedom of religion and all that. But you have to wonder about his proselytizing to groggy people who have just spent a night trying to sleep while hooked up to all sorts of weird medical devices in a unfamiliar bed in a place that is a crazy cross between a hotel and a doctor’s examination room. Obviously, he does this with everyone. He talked about the rapture

Cue Twenty Six: Rapture Bells sound file, short

with Obama is the Antichrist Grumpy Old Granny, he tried to talk to Momma and Daddy about it, and he really, really wanted me to be there too.

So what is the rapture,

Cue Twenty Seven: Rapture Bells sound file, short

you might ask?

There are, of course, competing versions of what exactly The Rapture

Cue Twenty Eight: Rapture Bells sound file, short

Will entail. I'll give you the gist of one of the most popular ones. Lo and behold, all of a sudden, the true believers and the righteous will be sucked up to heaven. The not quite righteous enough and the not sure what they believe not quite believers will be left behind with all the evil doers and our right disbelievers to suffer through a seven year period of all sorts of horror called the Tribulation. 666, the number of the beast, the

Cue Twenty Nine: Antichrist sound file

and other such delights will mark this period. At the end of the seven year period, Jesus come back to earth, the evil ones, the

Cue Thirty: Antichrist sound file

And the

Cue Thirty One: Devil Noise sound file

Are cast into some lake of fire. And the not quite righteous enough- well, some of them maybe get sucked up during the tribulation once they really, really, cross their heart and hope to die accept Jesus as their lord and savior and maybe, I'm not quite clear on this, at the end of the Tribulation they join the good guys for the 1,000 years of Christ on earth that marks the beginning of eternity.

I know people who were brought up believing The Rapture is The Truth. One person I know said sometimes, she would come home from school and no one would be there and she would be all alone, and she would be terrified that everyone she loved has been deemed righteous, had been taken up to heaven, and she, she somehow didn't make God's cut, and she had been left behind.

I'd like to suck all those I'm too pure to be Left Behind Freaks up to my heaven. I'd gather them all round. I'd be dressed like a cross between Liza Minnelli and Tap dance solo in The Time Warp Columbia. Though my eyebrows wouldn't be plucked to hell. And honestly, I could never ever in a hundred thousand million years get skinny with this particular genetic make-up, and obviously good old Liza could only do it for a wee little while in the seventies when everyone was skinny because they spent more time snorting than eating, but I digress.

I'd welcome them to "heaven" with a musical number

Sooooo

Sings.

Cue Thirty Two: Snippet of King Herod's Song sound file

I'm the antichrist
The great Antichrist
I'll prove that I'm demonic
Change you into something supersonic
That's all I need do
And you'll know its all true
Come on my lovely fools

Now, there is no doubt that making fun folks like The Rapturites can be fabulous fun. But really, I want to be a little more careful, a little more attentive, yes, even a little kinder. Perhaps, the Rapturites have something to offer us. Some lesson we can learn. Not the lesson they would have us take away, but still something of value.

You see, most of the writings about The, don't even think about pressing that button Alter Boy One, Rapture- the nonfiction diatribes, the speculative fiction series Left Behind- these works focus not on what happens to the righteous who are sucked up into heaven. Instead the focus is on the not righteous enough to make the first cut folks who are left behind to live in an apocalyptic world full of danger and pain and suffering.

Part of this is that the stories we tend to enjoy most have shit tons of conflict in them. Without conflict there is no drama, and as Mark Twain tells us, heaven as imagined by most Christians would a hellishly boring place. But part of it, I think speaks to something that is not particular to their faith. I don't think what they believe is The Truth with a capital T. I am doubter not a believer. But I do think there is an emotional truth to be found. I believe that their end of days mythology illuminates feelings we'd rather ignore.

We are all left behind. Each one of us, right here, right now, are the left behind. People we love pass away. They pass on. They perish. They succumb. They depart, They go the way of all flesh, They kick the bucket, They check out, They breathe their last, They are no more. They transcend. They disappear. They die.

We are left behind. People who matter to us, for good and bad reasons, die. Each death is a mini apocalypse. And if you live long enough, you go through many mini apocalypses. Each death is a devastation. A world is destroyed. And we have to figure out how to pick up the pieces of the wreck, how to keep on keeping now that we have been left behind "to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

Someday, each one of us will shuffle off this mortal coil. We will leave others behind. And they will have to remake their worlds without us.

We are the left behind. And for the left behind, I have some communion.

Ad libbed patte with audience while candy is passed out.

Hold on to your chocolate. Don't eat it yet. You get one chocolate. I know you want more than one, but you only get one. Unwrap the chocolate slowly. Say name of someone who has left you behind. Place the chocolate on your tongue. Think of the people who have left you behind. Savor the sweetness of the chocolate. Now eat the chocolate making your bitter memories a little sweeter.

Can I get an Amen?

Waits for audience response.

Can I get an Awoman?

Waits for response.

Can I get a pretty please with sugar on top?

Waits for response.

Goodbye Ev'rybody. Goodbye, Sing Halleluia.

Cue Thirty Four: GoodBye E'vrybody, Valentine Pringle

Bows during song.

THE END