

The Rapture

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Introduction

A. The "Rapture" is a word in many conversations and frequently in the sermons preached in the vast majority of American Evangelical churches.

1. It is on the radio and the internet everywhere mainly promoted by the so-called "fundamentalists" who are said to take the Bible literally.

2. We have a sympathy for such teachers because they are ridiculed by the same arrogant unbelievers that ridicule us. The scoffers are Classic Liberals who also ridicule the inspiration of the Bible and many are from the Neo-Orthodox main-line denominations who obviously don't take the Bible as seriously as we do.

3. However, the Evangelicals teach a lot of false doctrine and this makes them enemies of Christ.
a. You might say, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," and that might explain my affection for these Evangelicals. I want to reach out to them because many of their attitudes are beautiful.

b. The problem is that Evangelical doctrines turn the Bible on its head. Ultimately it is a source of UNBELIEF. Seeing the absurdities and failures of these doctrines, causes many to turn away from God.

-- Doctrine of Original Sin or Total Depravity and the Five Points of Calvinism undermine the God's Plan of Salvation and the Bible Concept of Human Responsibility toward sin and repentance.

-- Doctrine of the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the Thousand Year Reign makes a mockery of the sublime prophecies found throughout the Bible and robs us of the faith-building messages and evidence found in those prophecies concerning the church. It robs us of greatness of serving a great King as pictured in those metaphors and leaves us with the carnal crumbs of hoping and trusting in a renewal of the inferior Laws of Moses, Animal Sacrifices, Earthly Jerusalem, and Earthly Glories.

B. Our plan of study will be:

1. to define and describe the modern Rapture Doctrines and show its history of development.

2. to discuss the Principal Texts used in this discussion,

3. to examine the doctrinal presumptions and consequences of such speculations,

4. to list the Six Events that must happen for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture to take place

5. to discuss the Bible truths that are Missed or Minimized as a result of the modern Rapture Doctrines.

6. to explain the confusion over terms such as "literal," "figurative or metaphorical," and "spiritual"

7. to teach a little common sense concerning Context: the who, what, when, where, and why of any text of the Bible so that we might draw some reasonable conclusions from God has said.

-- The Evangelicals enjoy saying that they take the Bible literally and you should too.

-- However, they obviously do not take the Bible literally in all texts. As a matter of fact they take the most literal parts of the Revelation as figurative of "Dispensational Ages" speaking of the letters to the seven churches of Asia. These were real churches in real cities whose ruins remain to this day. You can visit them!

C. At some point we will need to study the Doctrine of the Great Tribulation.

I. What is the Rapture?

A. Dictionary: "1. a. a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion. b. a mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things. 2. an expression or

manifestation of ecstasy or passion." That is, "rapture" describes either great emotion or a religious experience.

B. In our study, we go back to the word as an **English transliteration of the Latin "raptus"** as taken from the Latin Vulgate translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The literal meaning is "caught up" or "taken away." The word "rapture" is not found in any English translation.

C. The Evangelical doctrine is that before or after a seven-year tribulation, sometime in the near future, Christ will come in the clouds and the faithful will be taken from the Earth to be with the Lord.

1. Most Evangelicals say that the rapture will be "**Pretribulation**" so that the faithful will not have to endure the sufferings of the Tribulation.

2. The Adventists and Pat Robertson along with several noted Evangelicals say that the faithful need to prepare to endure the seven years of tribulation because the Rapture will not come until after that period is over. They are "**Posttribulation**"

3. Many others argue for **Midtribulation or Pantribulation** or even a Prewrath position.

4. They are all called **Premillennialists** because they teach that when Jesus comes, He will set up His Kingdom for a Thousand Year Reign.

5. Roman Catholics are **Amillennialists**. They say that there will be no literal thousand year reign.

6. Presbyterians are **Postmillennialists**. They say that the second coming will be after the thousand year reign.

D. Doctrinal History

1. The Evangelical concept of **the Rapture is NEW historically.**

2. Begins with the American **Puritans** and Cotton Mather.

a. The Puritans (1738-1748) advocated that the believers would be caught up in the air, followed by judgments on the earth and then the millennium. Baptist Morgan Edwards also supported this idea in 1788.

b. **John Nelson Darby, 1827**, was the father of dispensationalism as taught by the Plymouth Brethren and popularized by the **Schofield Reference Bible** unto this day.

c. The modern hysteria over the Rapture and the speculation of current events began with the **Dallas Theological Seminary, John Walvoord (1957), Dwight Pentecost (1958), and Hal Lindsey (1970) and his The Late Great Planet Earth** which has sold 35 million copies. In **1995 Tim LaHaye** began the **Left Behind** book series which sold tens of millions of copies and has spawned several movies.

3. The Doctrine of the Rapture is still a major part of the so-called "fundamentalist Christian eschatology" today.

E. Principle Texts

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

2. John 14:2-3

3. Philippians 3:20-21

4. 1 Corinthians 15:49-55

5. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7

6. Matthew 24:30-31, 36-41

7. Over-all application of Daniel 9:27 and the entire book of Revelation.

II. Doctrinal Presumptions, Speculations and Consequences

A. Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the Temple, Matthew 24, is presumed to speak not so much about the imminent destruction in AD 70, but rather to other "end-times" in our own times.

1. v. 15-18 abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, flee to the mountains.
2. Luke 21:20-21 Jerusalem surrounded by armies, flee to the mountains.
3. Luke 21:32 This generation shall not pass away until all has taken place. (Matthew 24:34)
4. They presume that all did not take place. They speculate that the Temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt, animal sacrifices will resume, Roman authority will be reestablished, the tribulation will be reestablished, the war against Jerusalem will destroy the Temple again. Why? Because they will not accept the first fulfillment! Christ failed! Just like some say His church was a last minute substitute for the kingdom when the Jews rejected Him.

B. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

1. Nothing in the context about a tribulation or about a millenium.
2. Presumption is that this was a coming to be followed by another coming seven years later to establish His earthly kingdom, the "real" kingdom.

C. Revelation 1:7

1. It is assumed that this is the Rapture to be followed by another coming in chapter 19:13.
2. It is assumed that the entire book is an outline of dispensational history, with each of the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 representing a different church age of history.
3. Notice that Revelation 1:3 says "the time is near" and verse one "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" and then again in chapter 22:6 "sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." It is assumed that the prophecy is mainly about what is come to pass over a period of thousands of years.!

D. It is presumed that the prophecies of Daniel 9:24-27 concerning the 70 weeks were not fulfilled because they do not accept the way God fulfilled them.

1. **v. 24** The 70 weeks were to accomplish certain things:
 - a. to finish the transgression, **Ephesians 4-5** put off the old man and put on the new man
 - b. to make an end of sins, **Hebrews 9:12-15, 24-28; 10:1-4, 12, 18-22**
 - c. and to make reconciliation for iniquity, **Ephesians 2:13-22**
 - d. and to bring in everlasting righteousness, **Romans 6:16-18**
 - e. and to seal up the vision and prophecy, **1 Corinthians 13:8-13; John 16:13**
 - f. and to anoint the most Holy. **1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:20-22; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14; Acts 11:26** called "Christians" (anointed ones); **1 Peter 4:16** suffer as a Christian, glorify God in that name!
2. **v. 25** From the rebuilding of the temple unto the Messiah the Prince would be 69 weeks.
 - a. the street shall be built again, Ezra and Haggai and Zechariah
 - b. the wall, even in troublous times. Nehemiah
3. **v. 26** After 62 weeks, the Messiah would be cut off, but not for Himself, **Acts 2:22-23; Romans 6:3-4; Ephesians 2:13** made nigh by the blood of Christ.
 - a. And the people of the prince shall come and shall **destroy the city and the sanctuary. Matthew 24:2, 34** "this generation"
 - b. and **the end thereof** shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war **desolations** are determined. **Matthew 24:14** "then shall the **end** come" **24:15** "abomination of **desolation**", **v. 16** "**flee to the mountains**"

4. v. 27 He shall confirm the **covenant** with many for a week, **Hebrews 8:6** "better covenant"; **v. 8-12** prophecy of Jeremiah of a new covenant, **v. 13** first covenant obsolete.; **9:15-17**,
a. and in the midst of the week he shall cause the **sacrifice and the oblation to cease**,
Matthew 24:2 -- AD 70 the temple destroyed there has NEVER AGAIN BEEN SACRIFICE AND
OBLASTION according to the Law of God.

- b. and for the overspreading of **abominations** he shall make it **desolate**, **Matthew 25:15**
c. even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the **desolate**.

Matthew 23:37-38

E. Consequences of modern speculations

1. The church is despised and the kingdom of Christ is made carnal.

- a. **Parenthesis doctrine** places a gap between Jesus' rejection and His Kingdom.
b. Gap is placed between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel.
c. Misunderstand God's Messianic Plan in Jesus.

2. What did Jesus actually teach about His Kingdom?

- a. **Mark 9:1** Some of you will not taste of death until you see the kingdom with power.
b. **Matthew 4:17** "at hand"
c. **Mark 1:15** The time is fulfilled
d. **Galatians 4:4** in the fulness of time
e. **Acts 2:30-36** Jesus sat on David's throne at the right hand of the Father in heaven, both
Lord and Christ (Messiah, anointed King on David's throne)

3. Nature of the kingdom

a. Old Covenant was fleshly: earthly temple, animal sacrifices, levitical sinful priests, circumcision, levitical singers and instruments of music. New Covenant is spiritual: temple is the church, **1 Corinthians 3:16-17**; **Ephesians 2:19-22**; Christ is our only sacrifice and we offer the sacrifice of praise of our lips; Christ is our High Priest and all Christians are priests to offer spiritual sacrifices; Physical circumcision is of no profit in Christ (**Galatians 5**) but we rather circumcise our hearts; The authorized worship of Christ has no levitical choirs nor orchestras of mechanical instruments of music. We sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord (**Ephesians 5:19**).

b. **John 3:3-5** Jesus told Nicodemus how to enter His Kingdom: must be born again, of the water and of the Spirit.

c. **John 18:36** Jesus told Pilate, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

d. **Romans 14:17** The kingdom is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

e. Therefore the kingdom is spoken of as a present reality: **Colossians 1:12-14**; Hebrews 12:28

f. **Jesus' Kingdom Parables consistently advocate a Spiritual Kingdom and not a political kingdom.**

-- The Sower and Four Soils, Matthew 13:11 "mysteries of the kingdom", v. 18-23 "the word of the Kingdom"

-- The Wheat and the Tares, Matthew 13:24-30 "the kingdom of heaven is likened un a man which sowed good seed in his field..."

-- The Mustard Seed, Matthew 13:31-32 "the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed..."

-- The Leaven, Matthew 13:33

-- The Treasure hid in the field, Matthew 13:44

-- The Pearl of Great Price, Matthew 13:45

-- The Net, Matthew 13:47-50 How do you fit these parables into a political and fleshly kingdom?

g. Jesus taught that the greatest in the Kingdom, Matthew 18:1-5, would be converted and become as a little child to enter the kingdom.

h. Parable of Forgiveness, Matthew 18:21-35, was about the nature of the Kingdom of heaven, v. 23 and the king demanding accounts of how we treat each other.

i. Jesus said that a rich man could hardly enter into the kingdom of God. Matthew 19:23

j. Matthew 22:2, kingdom of heaven is like a marriage feast. What is that about?