

DOCTRINE OF THE RAPTURE

June 1, 1980

I. Definition.

- A. Rapture is derived from the Latin verb "rapere" used to translate "*caught up*" (ἁρπάζω, harpazo) in the Latin version of 1Thess.4:17.
- B. It refers to the physical transfer of believers from earth to heaven, Jn.14:3 "*And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*"; 1Thess.4:13-18.
- C. It involves the instantaneous metamorphosis of the body into a resurrection body like Christ's, 1Cor.15:51,52 "*Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*"
- D. It includes Church Age saints exclusively, 1Thess.4:16 οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ (hoi nekroi en Christo): the dead in Christ.
- E. It concludes this dispensation and ushers in "the day of the Lord", (see the Doctrines of Dispensations and Daniel's 70th Week).

II. Synonyms.

- A. Redemption: ἀπολύτρωσις (apolutrosis), Rom.8:23 "*even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, (that is) the redemption of our body*"; Eph.1:14 "*who (Holy Spirit) is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory*"; Eph.4:30 "*the day of redemption*".
- B. Hope: ἐλπίς (elpis), Ti.2:13 "*looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus*"; 1Jn.3:2,3 "*this hope*".
- C. Day: ἡμέρα (hemera), 1Cor.1:8 "*who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*"; in 1Cor.3:13 Paul says "*the day*" will reveal the divine good versus human good of the believer; 1Cor.5:5 ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου (en te hemera tou kuriou), "*in the day of the Lord*"; 2Cor.1:14; Eph.4:30; Phil.1:6,10.
- D. Upward call: Phil.3:14 τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ (tes ano kleseos tou theou), "*the upward call of God*".
- E. Salvation: σωτηρία (soteria), 1Pet.1:5 "*who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation/deliverance (soteria) ready to be revealed in the last time*"; Rev.13:11; 1Thess.5:8,9.
- F. Coming: παρουσία (parousia), 1Cor.15:23 "*Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming*"; 1Thess.2:19; 4:15; 5:23; Jam.5:7,8 "*Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand*"; cf. Rom.13:11 "*And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.*"
- G. Revelation: ἀποκαλύψις (apokalupsis), 1Cor.1:7 "*awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ*"; 1Pet.1:7,13 "*at the revelation of Jesus Christ*".
- H. Manifestation: ἐπιφάνεια (epiphaneia), 1Tim.6:14 "*until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*"; 2Tim.4:8 "*in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (epiphaneia)*"; Col.3:4 φανερώω (phaneroo), verb: to reveal "*When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in Glory.*"

III. This doctrine is a part of the mystery doctrines for the Church, 1Cor.15:51 "*Behold, I tell you a mystery*".

IV. While on earth, Jesus Himself promised the disciples the Rapture, Jn.14:13.

V. Jesus was translated to heaven, Act.1:9-11.

VI. Enoch, Elijah, and the two witnesses illustrate the doctrine, Gen.5:24, no habeas corpus; Heb.11:5; 2Kgs.2:11,2, Elijah delivered; Rev.11:11,12, Moses and Elijah martyred.

VII. Relationship between "sleeping" and "living" saints at the Rapture, 1Thess.4:13-18 (corrected) *"Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep (rest), that you may not grieve, even as the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again (and we do), even so those who have slept through the agency of Jesus, the God will bring with Him. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord (cf. Jn.14), that we who are alive, (that is) remaining, shall by no means precede those who have fallen asleep. Because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet blast of God; and the dead in Christ shall be caught up together with them in the clouds for the purpose of a royal meeting of the Lord in the air; and so shall we always be with the Lord. Therefore, keep on encouraging one another with these words"; 1Cor.15:51 "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed".*

VIII. False views of the Rapture.

- A. Post Millennial: the Church ushers in the Millennium, at the end of which Christ comes back.
- B. Split Rapture (partial) theory: only the faithful taken (misinterpretation of 1Thess.5).
- C. Mid Tribulation Rapture: the Church goes through one half of the Tribulation.
- D. Post Tribulation Rapture: the Church goes through all of the Tribulation. This view confuses the Rapture and the Second Advent (amillennial).

IX. The Church is specifically promised a pre-Tribulational, pre-Millennial deliverance, Rev.3:10 *"I also will keep you (fut.act.ind. of τερέο, tereo: guard, protect) from the hour of testing (ἐκ, ek, not ἐν, en; the Lord is not promising to protect them "in" it, but to protect them "from" it), that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth"; Similarly, 1Thess.1:10 "and to wait for His Son from (ek) heaven, whom He raised from (ek) the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers/rescues (pres.act.pt. ῥύομαι, ruomai: to rescue from danger) us from (ek) the wrath to come (ὀργή, orge: wrath)"; 1Thess.5:9 "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation/deliverance (σωτηρία, soteria: salvation, deliverance) through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

X. The time of the Rapture is keyed to Israel's reemergence as a nation, Mk.13; Mt.24,25; Lk.21:5-36; Doctrines of the Fig Tree and Daniel's 70th Week.

- A. Israel back in the land is the sign of the parousia, Mk.13:4 *"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"; Mk.13:28 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near."*
- B. One generation lies between the "fig tree" and the parousia (coming), Mk.13:29,30 *"Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, (that is) right at the door. Truly/Dogmatically I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."*
- C. Unknown in our Lord's day was the time elapse until that generation, Mk.13:32 *"But of that day or hour no one knows, (no one knew the length of the Church Age) not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, (Doctrine of Kenosis) but the Father alone."*
- D. True imminency recognizes an unspecified time elapse until the Rapture generation, Mk.13:33 *"Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time (καιρός, kairos) is."*
- E. False imminency denies the Church the ability to identify the Rapture generation (Darby and most pre-Millennialists).
- F. Yet Paul enjoins the Church to alertness lest that day overtake them like a thief, 1Thess.5:4 *"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief."*
- G. No Israel, no Rapture.

XI. General characteristics of the end of this age.

- A. An unprecedented peace movement, 1Thess.5:13 *"Now as to the times and the epochs (events and periods of history), brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you (so well versed). For you yourselves know full well (with complete accuracy) that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape";*

cf Rev.6:2 "And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him; and he went out conquering, and to conquer (next horse is red. War!)."

- B. Proliferation of wars, earthquakes, famines, false prophets, and false christs, Mk.13:6-8.
- C. Paul prophesies personal degeneracy in the Rapture generation, 2Tim.3:1 "And realize/know this, that in the last days (ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, en eschatais hemerias: technical for the Rapture generation) difficult/perilous (χαλεπός, chalepos: full of trouble, violent) times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers / blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful / unthankful, unholy, unloving / without natural affection, irreconcilable / implacable, malicious gossips / slanderers, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous / traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God", etc.
- D. Paul calls this entire age evil and says the mystery of iniquity is at work in his day, Gal.1:4 τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ (tou aionos tou enestotos ponerou), *this present evil age*"; 2Thess.2:7 "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work".
- E. But in the Rapture generation, this lawlessness approaches maturation, Ps.2:1ff.
- F. And in the antichrist it reaches maturation, 2Thess.2:8-12.

XII. This apostasy demands divine wrath as seen in the thief, pregnant woman, and drunk motifs.

- A. That day comes as a thief in the night to the reversionist, Joel.2:9; cf. 1Thess.5:2 "the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night".
- B. As surely as a pregnant woman suffers, so they will see temporal judgment, Isa.13:8 "Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame"; cf. 1Thess.5:3 "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."
- C. Like a drunk, they reel under divine judgment, being under the influence of evil, Isa.24:20; Jer.51:38,57; 1Thess.5:7; Jer.51:7; cf. Rev.18.

XIII. Categories of men at the parousia.

- A. Unbelievers, asleep and drunk in the night, enter the Tribulation, 1Thess.5:17.
- B. Reversionistic believers, asleep to prophetic realities, are Raptured but lose reward, 1Thess.5:10 "Whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him"; cf. Mk.13:36 "lest He come suddenly/unexpectedly and find you asleep."
- C. The adjusted believer, who is alert and sober, is Raptured, 1Thess.5:8 "But since we are of the day, let us be sober"; 1Thess.5:6b "...but let us be alert and sober".

XIV. The communicator of doctrine is a "porter" to the parousia, Mk.13:33-37 "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is. It is like a man, away on a journey (Christ at the right hand), who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves/servants in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper (porter) to stay on the alert (via study). Therefore, be on the alert (imperative of γρηγορέω, gregoreo) for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening (first watch, or early in the Church Age), at midnight (middle of the Age), at cock-crowing, or in the morning lest he come suddenly/unexpectedly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"

XV. Paul's prayer for the model church, 1Thess.3:11-13 "Now may (optative) our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish (optative) your hearts unblamable/irreprehensible in holiness / sanctification (experiential) before our God and Father at the coming (παρουσία, parousia) of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."

XVI. The Rapture generation is commanded to intensify its intake of doctrine, Heb.10:25 "not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging/exhorting (pt. παρακαλέω, parakaleo) one another; and all the more, as you see (βλέπω, blepo) the day drawing near/approaching" (GAP, i.e., the grace apparatus for perception, enables one to see, which should lead to an intensification of GAP).

1. Because time is limited.

2. The days are very evil.
3. The challenge to appear irreprehensible.

XVII. The events for the Church following the Rapture.

- A. The judgment seat of Christ. Lk.14:14 associates the resurrection with rewards. In 1Thess.2:19,20, Paul anticipates a reward with the Rapture. 1Thess.4:17 mentions a meeting with the Lord in the air. 2Cor.5:10 says "*we must all appear before the judgment seat (βῆμα, Bema: raised platform where contestants in Olympic games were rewarded) of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*"; Rom.14:10; 1Cor.3:11-16.
- B. Marriage of Christ to the Church in the third heaven, Rev.19:7,8 (groom takes bride to his father's house according to Jewish custom).
- C. We return with Christ at Armageddon, Rev.19:14.
- D. 1,000year wedding supper, Rev.19:9; 20:2ff.
- E. Church lives with Christ in the New Jerusalem, Rev.22.

XVIII. Evidence demonstrating that the Rapture generation may know they are the Rapture generation. (False doctrine of imminency says the Rapture generation will not know one way or another that they are the Rapture generation, but keep looking for His return.)

- A. Argument from historical precedent.
 1. Flood generation. Noah warned 120 years before the flood, Gen.6:3.
 2. Exodus generation. Gen.15:16, four generations, then come hell or high water, Israel was leaving.
 3. Conquest generation. After 40 years in the desert, or one generation, Num.14:33.
 4. Post-exilic generation. Exactly 70 years, then Israel would return to the land, Jer.25:11,12; 29:10.
 5. First Advent generation. Dan.9:25, Israel could have known the exact day when the Messiah would make His triumphal entry.
 6. Rapture generation. Doctrine of Rapture, Fig Tree, Daniel's 70th Week. Are we the only generation in the dark?
- B. Argument from the two classes of believers at the Rapture, Mk.13:33 "*Take heed, keep on the alert*"; Mk.13:35,36 "*Therefore, be on the alert lest He come suddenly/unexpectedly and find you asleep*"; 1Thess.5:4 "*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief*"; 1Thess.5:10 "*that whether we are awake (alert) or asleep*".
 1. καθύδω (katheudo), used in vss.1-11.
 2. But κοιμάω (koimao), used in 1Thess.4:13-18.
 3. καθύδω (katheudo), always used by Paul to represent reversionism, cf. Eph.5:14.
 4. While κοιμάω (koimao) is used exclusively to represent dead believers. Paul confined its use to 1 Corinthians and 1Thess.4.
- C. Argument from direct statement, Heb.9:28 "*so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation (soteria indicates they expect a divine deliverance) without reference to (not to bear) sin, to those who eagerly await Him*"; Heb.10:25 tells us "*not forsaking our own assembling together...and all the more, as you see the day drawing near/approaching (impossible to do under the false doctrine of imminency)*"; Rom.8:25 "*But if we hope for (anticipate) what we do not see, with perseverance/patience we wait eagerly for it (pres.act.ind. ἀπεκδέχομαι, apekdechomai: to expect, wait for; this verb is used exclusively in Pauline writings for waiting for the Rapture)*"; Rom.8:19,23,25; 1Cor.1:7; Gal.5:5; Phil.3:20; Heb.9:28.
- D. Argument from the maturation of prophecy, 2Pet.1:19. Peter says in 2Pet.1:16 "*we did not follow cleverly devised tales/fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty (at the transfiguration) but better than that we have the prophetic word (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, ton prophetikon logon, which is technical*

for the portion of scripture [Old Testament and New Testament] declaring the second parousia"); Peter says in vs.19 "*And we have the prophetic word (beats empiricism) made more sure/reliable (acc.sing. comparative, βέβαιος, bebaios: sure, reliable, dependable) to which you (would) do well to pay attention*".

XIX. There is a special curse on reversionists until the Rapture, 1Cor.16:22 "*If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha.*"

Marana = Our Lord (Μαρινα), tha = come (θα), A Prayer: "Our Lord Come"

XX. The Greek verbs of anticipation and texts document the fact that a mental attitude of keen anticipation of the Lord's return is spiritually healthy.

A. Προσδέχομαι (prosdechomai): Tit.2:13; Jd.21.

B. Ἀπεκδέχομαι (apekdechomai): Rom.8:19,23,25; 1Cor.1:7; Gal.5:5; Phil.3:20; Heb.9:28.

C. Προσδοκάω (prosdokao): Lk.12:46; 2Pet.3:12,14.

D. Ἐλπίζω (elpizo): Rom.8:24,25; 1Cor.15:19; 2Cor.1:10; 1Pet.1:13.

XXI. Activities of the believer awaiting the Rapture.

A. Be alert (γρηγορέω, gregoreo), 1Thess.5:6,10.

B. Be sober (νήφω, nephos), 1Thess.5:6,8.

C. Keep on watching, Heb.10:25 (βλέπω, blepo); 2Pet.3:12,14 (προσδοκάω, prosdokao).

D. Groan (στενάζω, stenazo), Rom.8:23.

E. Be patient (ὑπομένω, hupomeno), Rom.8:25.

F. Be diligent (σπουδάζω, spoudazo), 2Pet.3:14.

G. Comfort (παρακαλέω, parakaleo) one another with this doctrine, 1Thess.4:18.

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