

47 “THE RAPTURE” IS NOT BIBLICAL

INTRODUCTION: Being snatched out of the world with all its problems has a certain carnal appeal, but it is not Biblical. Rapture theology was innovated by John Nelson Darby in the 1800s and has been popularized by writers such as Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and Thomas Ice over the last 50 years. The violence to the Biblical text required to maintain such a view is extensive. We highly recommend Don Preston’s seminal and very readable books on this topic and others.

1. KEY “RAPTURE” PASSAGE: MATTHEW 24

"As the days of Noah were, so will be the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ship, 39 and they didn't know until the flood came, and took them all away, so will be the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man. 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and one will be left; 41 two women grinding at the mill, one will be taken and one will be left." Mt.24:37-41

Misinterpretation occurs when readers ignore the analogy. It was the godless who were “taken” away in death and Noah was “left,” safe from death judgment. Those “left behind,” that is left alive, were the righteous.

“And they [godless] didn't know until the flood came, and took them [godless] all away [destroyed in flood judgment], so will be the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man.” Mt. 24:39

2. KEY “RAPTURE” PASSAGE: I THESSALONIANS 4-5

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together...in the clouds, to meet [apantesin] the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever.” I Thessalonians 4:16-17

A. Paul, writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, let his readers know some of them would be alive at the coming of the Lord. Therefore, it was a first century occurrence.

“For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming [parousia] of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Th 4:15

B. Paul used the word, “apantesis” for “meeting” in verse 17 which conveyed a well-known ancient practice of going out to meet the returning conquering king, proudly ushering him back to the city. There was no place in the “apantesis” conception for the people to go elsewhere with the king.

C. The word “parousia” is the word used for the second coming of the Son of Man throughout the New Testament, indicating judgment and the reign of Christ on earth.

“For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming [parousia] of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep.” I Thess 4:15. (PP #24 for all parousia references in N.T.)

D. The comparable passage in Mt 24, uses “gather” instead of “caught up” to mean the same thing.

“He will send out his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” Mt. 24:30-31 (See. P.P. #16 “Compare Mt 24 & I Thess. 4-5)

E. “Gathering” is not about relocation in space, but rather reconciliation and communion with God through Christ—coming together in one Spirit.

- “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her! How often I would have gathered your children together, ... and you would not!” Mt. 23:37
- Jesus would “die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.” John 11:51-52
- “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink into one Spirit.” I Cor. 12:13. (See P.P. #15 “Who are God’s People?”)

F. Similar to I Thessalonians 4:17, Paul speaks of being caught up to heaven and paradise, but he was still present on earth fourteen years later.

“I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I don't know, or whether out of the body, I don't know; God knows), such a one caught up into the third heaven. I know such a man (whether in the body, or outside of the body, I don't know; God knows), how he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” 2 Cor. 12:2-4

3. IN ORDER TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE FICTION OF “THE RAPTURE,” one must go along with a whole constellation of errors that takes one far afield from the message of the Bible. To avoid error, we must let scripture interpret scripture and be aware when purported doctrines contradict the Bible.

A. ERROR: Ethnic Israel remains the chosen people of God.

BIBLE: “There is no distinction between Jew and Greek.” Rom. 10:12

BIBLE: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.” Rom 8:14

B. ERROR: Jesus came to establish an earthly, national kingdom of Israel, but it had to be postponed due to Jewish unbelief.

BIBLE: Jesus said, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” John 18:26

BIBLE: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” Mt 3:2

BIBLE: Jesus said, “Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation.” Mk 16:15

C. ERROR: The Jewish rejection of Jesus made it impossible to establish the Kingdom.

BIBLE: The church was founded on Jewish apostles. The core of the early church was Jewish believers.

BIBLE: There were added that day about three thousand souls [Jews].” Acts 2:41

BIBLE: “Many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men [of Jerusalem] came to be about five thousand.” Acts. 4:4

BIBLE: “Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly. Great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Act 6:7

BIBLE: “[Berean Jews] received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” Acts 17:11

D. ERROR: The kingdom of God was postponed until the right time comes for the 1,000 year earthly kingdom to be established. The Christian Age is a “parenthesis” or a “stop-gap” measure.

BIBLE: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” Mt. 16:18

BIBLE: “Most certainly I tell you that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering into the Kingdom of God before you.” Mt. 21:31

BIBLE: For you [Christians] are a temple of the living God even as God said, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” 2 Cor. 6:16

BIBLE: “He [Paul] explained to them, testifying about the Kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning until evening.” Acts. 28:23.

BIBLE: Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” John 18:26

E. ERROR: Like all futurists, rapture believers must explain away the numerous time statements prophesying the imminent coming of the Lord throughout the New Testament. They believe Jesus did not return in the first century as he said he would.

BIBLE: “...The things which must happen soon.” Rev. 1:1 “The time is at hand.” Rev. 1:3 “Behold, I come quickly.” Rev 3:11

“There will no longer be delay.” Rev.10:6. “The things which must happen soon.” Rev. 22:6

“Behold, I come quickly.” Rev. 22:7 “The time is at hand.” Rev. 22:10 “Behold, I come quickly.” Rev. 22:12 “Yes, I come

quickly.” Rev. 22:20, “It is the final hour.” 1 Jn 2:18, “The end of all things is at hand.” 1 Pe 4:7, “The coming of the Lord is at

hand.” James 5:8, “The Judge is standing right at the door.” James 5:9 “The time is short.” 1 Cor. 7:29, “In just a very little

while, He who is coming will come and will not delay.” Heb. 10:37. (See P.P. #1 “Time Statements of the Second Coming Demand First Century Fulfillment”)

Conclusion: Perhaps, instead of waiting to be spirited away out of the world, our purpose is to live knowingly with the King of Kings becoming refined through our endeavors, “He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does Yahweh require of you, but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8.

Notes:

Meaning of apantesis [529]: the meeting, to meet—a phrase seemingly almost technical for the reception of a newly arrived official.

Meaning of parousia: [3952]: “arrival” “coming” or being present.

Recommended: We Shall Meet Him in the Air, the Wedding of the King of Kings, Don K. Preston, (448 pages)

Recommended: Leaving the Rapture Behind by Don K. Preston, (31 pages)