

The Rapture # 1

by Danny Brown

Perhaps you have seen bumper stickers on cars that said, "In case of the Rapture, this car will be driverless." or "Will I see you in the Rapture?" No doubt you have heard songs about the Rapture or have seen references to it in articles or books. Have you ever wondered just what the Rapture is? Is it a Bible doctrine? We will attempt to explain briefly what the Rapture is and show clearly and forcefully that the doctrine of the Rapture is false to the core.

A Part of Dispensational Premillennialism

Premillennial theories can be quite complex, and all premillennialist do not agree on all points. Here are the general major tenets of the dispensational view:

1. Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom, but due to being rejected by the Jews he set up the church as a substitute.
2. The kingdom prophecies were postponed with sort of a parenthesis in time and will be fulfilled when he comes again.
3. In order for prophecy to be fulfilled (such as Dan 2:44) the Roman Empire must be rebuilt.
4. Jesus will come "for" his saints at the beginning of the Rapture (the dead in Christ will be raised and the righteous who are alive will be changed and caught away to be with the Lord in the air or in heaven).
5. While the saints are in the Rapture there will be tribulation for the people on earth, the last 3 ½ years will be the Great Tribulation or the "time of Jacob's trouble."
6. Jesus will come "with" his saints at the end of the seven-year Rapture raising those who have been converted and have died during the period of the tribulations.
7. When Jesus returns at the end of the seven-year Rapture he will defeat his enemies at the battle of Armageddon.
8. After the Rapture and defeat of his enemies, Jesus will set up his earthly millennial kingdom and will sit and reign on David's throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years.
9. At the end of his thousand year reign the wicked dead will be raised.

The Rapture Described

Millions vanish. Their clothes are left draped on the seat in which they had been sitting or laid out on the bed on which they had been sleeping or in a pile on the floor where they had been standing. The people are gone in a heart beat without a sound or warning and without a trace. Many among the older are gone, but not all. Many among the middle aged, but not all. Many among the teens and young folk, but not all.

Yet all the children are gone. Many are the graves that are without bodies. This is the basic premise that the popular novel, "Left Behind," about the Rapture is based upon.

"By the rapture is meant the sudden and possibly secret coming of Christ in the air to snatch away from the earth the resurrected bodies of those who have died in faith, and with them the living saints" (Robert Strong, The Presbyterian Guardian).

"His appearance in the clouds will be veiled to the human eye. He will slip in, slip out: move in to get his jewels, and slip out as under the cover of night" (Oral Roberts, How To Be Personally Prepared For The Second Coming, p. 34).

"Some day, a day that only God knows, Jesus Christ is coming to take away all those who believe in Him. He is coming to meet all true believers in the air . . . These believers will be removed from the earth before the Great Tribulation -- before that period of the most ghastly pestilence, bloodshed, and starvation the world has ever known" (Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, pp. 137-138).

This theory of the Rapture is not only not plainly taught in the Bible, it is not taught at all in the Word of God.

The Tares (Unrighteous) are Gathered First

In the parable of the Tares when the servants discovered that tares had been sown among the wheat they inquired of the householder whether they should pull up the tares. He said no; lest ye root up also the wheat with them. He then said:

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (Matt. 13:30).

In Jesus' explanation of the parable he further expands what he has already said about the tares:

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire (Matt 13:38-42).

It is the tares, the children of the wicked one, not the redeemed, the children of the kingdom, who are said to be the first that shall be taken out of this world. Strange, isn't it that the doctrine of the Rapture has it the exact opposite from what the Lord taught and therefore false.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

This is the primary passage used to support the idea of the Rapture. However, this passage was not given to teach such an idea. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you be the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

It does teach:

(1) That those who died in Christ would be able to share in the blessings of the Lord's return.

(2) That those brethren who are still living when Christ returns will have no precedence or advantage over those who have already died.

(3) That those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Jesus will bring the spirits of those who have died in Christ from the hades world to be united with their resurrected bodies. He is coming with and for his saints at the same time.

(4) That the return of the Lord will be a noisy event. He will come with a shout, the voice of an archangel and the trump of God. (vs 16). No secret or silent Rapture of the church taught here.

(5) That Christians, both the resurrected dead and the living that have been changed will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

(6) Those who have been resurrected and changed who meet the Lord in the air will be with him forevermore.

What the passage does not teach:

(1) It says nothing about the wicked, only the righteous are under consideration.

(2) It says nothing about anyone remaining in their graves,

(3) Nor does it state that the wicked dead will not be raised at the same time as the righteous.

(4) Nothing is said about a seven-year rendezvous in the air.

(5) It does not say that the unsaved will be left behind wondering where a lot of people have gone.

(6) It says nothing about the Lord returning to the earth.

The passage does not teach the doctrine of the Rapture.