

INTRODUCTION

There are many views today surrounding the End Time Message of Bible Prophecy. Most are totally incorrect and are not based on scripture at all. They are the stories and fables of man in his attempt to tell give light to the end of the age. We as humans can't stand the feelings of helplessness nor not knowing how or when the end of the age will come. As a result many secular and uninformed religious leaders have taken it upon themselves to enlighten us to the future events that will shortly come to pass. But as stated earlier many of them are miss-informed.

One such event is that of the Rapture of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This one event alone has been the cause of great debate and controversy among the church and bible scholars along with non-religious leaders alike. There are many views of the rapture and how and when it will take place. To that end I am writing this paper in the hope that I might be able to dispel some of the foolishness and false teaching surrounding this subject.

Let me make it perfectly clear from the outset, there will be a Rapture and only those who are born again will be air lifted to meet the Lord in the air as prescribed in I Thess.4:16-17. The real question is will you be one of them? Are you watching and are you ready? Or will you be caught with your work undone? The promised for all who don't watch is that He would come in an hour and time that you think not.

What is the Rapture

Hal Lindsey in his book *Vanished into Thin Air* writes “All who interpret the Bible in a literal sense believe in the fact of the Rapture and that it is distinct from the Second Coming of Christ. The dispute is over exactly when the Rapture occurs in relation to the Tribulation period¹”.

The rapture is the catching away of the church as seen in I Thessalonians 4:16-17 and I Cor. 15:51-52. Those are the two main scriptures used when talking about the rapture. The word rapture doesn't appear in the bible. The word itself comes from the Greek word *harpazo*, which means “snatched up” or “caught away”. When translated from Greek to Latin the translators chose to use the word “Rapture”. Dr. Tim LaHaye in his book *Charting the End Times* says “Those who translated the Greek New Testament into Latin used Rapture to describe “snatched up” or “caught away” because it suggests a joyous exaltation-which is not the case when a person is snatched away by a kidnapper or someone who plans to harm him²”.

In Matt 24:40-41 many people take this to mean the same thing that is being spoken of in verses 39 which is the second coming, but Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum in his book *Foot Steps of the Messiah* says “the word “but” which in the Greek is *peri de*. The *peri de* construction in the Greek is a contrastive introduction of a new subject and, hence is often translated as: But concerning(I Thess.4:16-17 and I Cor.15:51-52) He points out that Jesus was talking about His second coming but when He introduced the word “But” into the sentence He began to refer to the rapture³”.

1. Hal Lindsey, “Interpretation Debate,” in *the hope of every Believer* (N.P.: western Front LTD., 1999).

2. Tim LaHaye, “The Rapture of the Church,” in *Charting the End Times* (n.p.: Harvest House Publishers, 2001).

3. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, “The rapture of the Church,” in *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (n.p.: Ariel Press, 2004).

There is another reference to this event called the blessed hope as described in Titus 2:13 “looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The rapture is a glorious meeting of the saints meeting Jesus in the air. I Thess. 4. Tells us that the dead in Christ shall rise first and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet the lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the lord. Paul Benware in an article written for the Tim LaHaye Prophecy Bible says “The rapture is a marvelous meeting in the air when the Lord Jesus Christ returns from heaven and removes the true Church from the world.⁴” This time spoken of in Matt.13:30 when the Lord shall remove the wheat from the tares and the counterfeit from the real. He alone knows who is truly in Christ. The lord will send forth His angels to gather the wheat into His barns, to reap the harvest of souls that are ready and waiting for His appearing.

When Will it Occur

There are three basic views that address when the rapture will occur, they are: pre-tribulation, post-tribulation, and mid-tribulation view. The first view is the pre-tribulation view which places the rapture before the seven year tribulation of revelation chapter 6-19. This means that the church will not go through the tribulation period. This view is seen clearly when one understands the dealings of God with the church and Israel which we will look at later on in this brief. This is also the view that most pre-millennia list hold.

The second view is the post-tribulation view which places the rapture at the end of the tribulation. This means that according to the post-trib view the church will go through and experience the full seven years of the tribulation. Those that hold to this view make no difference between the rapture and the second coming. To them they are both seen as the same event.

4. Paul Benware, “The Timing of the Rapture.”

Those that hold this view also don't make any difference between Israel and the church which we will look at later helping to draw a clear line between Gods dealings with both even though many Jews are saved and will be saved during the tribulation.

The third view of the rapture is the mid-tribulation view. As suggested this view asserts that the church will go through half of the tribulation. Those who hold this view believe that the church will go through only half of the tribulation that is the first half. This puts the church 3 and ½ years into the tribulation. If you hold this view you still believe in the second coming of Christ but now we know when He is coming for the church which doesn't match up with scripture. The rapture according to the scripture states that He will come as a thief in the night which is very hard to do when everyone knows when you are coming. This view clearly states at the 3 and ½ year mark of the tribulation Jesus will return for to rapture the church. Dr. J Dwight Pentecost in his book *Things to come* writing about the mid-tribulation states "In the study of the mid-tribulation position it is well to observe that many of its essential bases are those of the post-tribulation position". In addition to that he goes on to say that "Mid-tribulation position must either deny or at least weaken the dispensational interpretation of the Scriptures, and deny the strict distinctions between Israel and the church⁵."

That is only one reason way we will hold to the pre-tribulation view of the rapture. Another reason is that Jesus will come as a thief in the night and that no one knows the day or the hour of His coming Matt. 24:36, while we know for sure that the second coming will occur at the end of the seven year tribulation period. Another reason is that in the rapture Jesus is coming to receive the Saint John 14:3 whereas in the second coming He comes back with the saint to make war at the battle of Armageddon Rev.19:11.

5. Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, "The Mid- Tribulation Rapture Position," in *Things To Come* (n.p.: Zondervan, 1964).

Now the biggest reason for believing in the pre tribulation rapture of the church is how God will deal with Israel in the End Time as compared to the church. In Daniel 9:24-27 we read that God brought judgment upon Israel for as a nation for the rebellion and idolatry. The punishment as recorded in Daniel 9. And as seen in Jeremiah was to be 70 weeks or 490 years. But Israel only served 62 of those weeks or 434 years in captivity. Then Nehemiah received the decree to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that numbered seven more weeks or 49 years to make 483 years or 69 weeks. That leaves one week or 7 years for them to still fulfill in the judgment. This week is determined upon Israel and not the church. Christ has cleans the believer and anyone including the Jews if they have come to Christ and been born again Rom.10:9-10. This last judgment (7 year tribulation period) is against rebellious Israel and the unsaved gentiles of the world that have repeatedly rejected Christ. Of those that will go through the tribulation a remint of the Jews will be save along with a multitude of gentiles to appear before the throne of God mid-tribulation as stated in Rev.7:9 Dr. Edward Hindson in his book *The Book of Revelations* says about the rapture that “we can only assume that this great enthronement ceremony takes place in heaven after the Rapture of the Church and before the judgments of the Tribulation. The elders that are expressing these words of praise are representative of the whole Church because they are described as having been redeemed from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Such a host can’t be limited to Old Testament saints alone⁶”.

These fact alone seems to be more than an ought proof that the church will not go through the tribulation and there are a host of other reason besides these. Another is Gods unwillingness to punish the righteous with the unrighteous as seen in Gen.18:23 and Exodus when some of the children of Israel rebelled against Moses.

6. Dr. Edward Hindson, “Worthy is the Lamb,” in *The book of Revelations* (n.p.: AMG. publishing, 2002).

How Can We be Sure There Will Be a Rapture

Dr. John F. Walvood in his book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* comments that the “invitation to John to “Come up hither” is so similar to that which the church anticipates at the rapture that many have connected the two expressions. This passage seems to show an order of events⁷”.

We are assured that there will be a Rapture of the church through the scriptures. In the book of Matt.24:27 We are told that as the lighting flashes out of the east and shineth unto the west so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. This does not refer to the second coming because we know how and when He will come at that time. But it does refer to “in a moment in the twinkling of an eye” I Cor. 15:52. Jesus promised He would come as a thief in the night Luke 12:46. Dr. Clarence Larkin’s in his book *The Great dispensational Truth in the World* states concerning the rapture that “the thief always leaves more behind than he take. The thief is only looking for a specific items or goods, and leaves the rest. So it is that Jesus Christ is only coming for those that are truly His⁸”. Also in Matt.25:1-8 He warns us to keep oil in our lamps because He is coming as a bridegroom for his bride. This reference could not be the second coming because it makes no sense to pick up your bride so you can take her to war(Armageddon). Also he is coming back for the dead in Christ I Thess.4:16-17 and then we that are alive and remain will be caught up to be with Him in the air. In addition to those facts the marriage supper of the lamb and the Bema seat of Christ will take place before the tribulation is finished. These things can’t happen if the Church is not in heaven.

7. Dr Walvood, “The church in Heaven,” in *The revelation of Jesus Christ* (n.p.: moody Press, 1989).

8. dr. Clarence Larkins, “The prophetic Word,” in *The great book of dispensational Truth* (n.p.: Clarence Larkins, 1920).

This is our blessed hope and the hope of every believer that Jesus Christ will come back in his or her life time that we will receive the fulfillment of the promised possession and that this mortal shall put on immortality.

When you look at these things and study the scriptures in light of them the rapture is and will remain a solid scriptural occurrence and its time is imminent.

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