

7/25/19, 12/7/14

What About The Rapture?

There is a new mind-set in the latest movement about the church and doctrine, called the Emergent church.

1. The new Post-modern Christianity is redefining the church and the Christian.

2. The new Post-Modern church does not believe any objective truth can be learned from Scripture, so they interpret the word of God subjectively and culturally, under the guise of being like Jesus to live like sinners.

3. The new Post-modern Christianity takes great liberties to drink, curse without any attempt to hide it, being no different from sinners in the world.

4. The new Post-modern Christianity is more interested in social issues to help and making people comfortable, rather than to preach and teach the object truth of the gospel through repentance and be looking for the return of Jesus for His church at the Rapture.

* So there are those from within the church that oppose and teach against the doctrine of the Rapture!

So we want to examine the Scriptures regarding the doctrine of the Rapture through a three-fold lens:

- I. The early church fathers on the rapture.
- II. The four different views on the rapture.
- III. The overwhelming evidence for pre-millennial, pre-tribulation Rapture.

I. The early church fathers on the rapture.

A. The usual arguments against the teaching of the Rapture of the church are two.

1. First that the doctrine of the Rapture was invented by James Darby.
 - a. A Plymouth Brethren Pastor 1800-1882, which is false.
 - b. Though it is true he brought it back and made it popular again.
2. Second that the teaching of the Rapture is a recent doctrine.
 - a. This is also false, being historically and Scripturally inaccurate.
 - b. Jesus taught the rapture. Jn. 14:1-3
 - c. Paul taught the rapture. 1Thess. 4:16-17
 - d. John taught the rapture. Rev. 3:10; 4:1

B. The credentials of the early church fathers.

1. The first century church fathers were the disciples of the apostles.
2. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus studied under Polycarp.
3. Polycarp worked with the apostle John for over twenty years in ministry.
4. Irenaeus also testifies he occasionally saw the apostle John himself.
5. From Papias in 70 A.D. to Lactanius about 285 A. D. , including Tertullian and Origen, the doctrine of the church fathers was Pre-Millennialism, till the fourth century, when they began to teach Amillennialism, named "Schism of Nepos". (Dr. Johnson:24-25)

- C. The early church fathers taught the Rapture.
1. Irenaeus 130-202 A. D. on the subject of the Rapture, wrote: “Those nations however, who did not of themselves raise up their eyes unto heaven, nor returned thanks to their Maker, nor wished to behold the light of truth, but who were like blind mice concealed in the depths of ignorance, the word justly reckons “as waste water from a sink, and as the turning-weight of a balance — in fact, as nothing;”....**And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this**, it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.”(2) For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.”
Against Heresies 5.29
 2. Victorinus A. D. 240 in his commentary on the book of Revelation clearly shows he believed the Rapture, “And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is completed the Wrath of God. Rev. 15:1 and these shall be in the last time, when the *Church shall have gone out of the midst.*”
2Thess. 2:7
 3. Cyprian A. D. 220-258 wrote in The Treaties of Cyprian describing the end times of Great Tribulation: “We who see that

terrible things have begun, and know that still more terrible things are imminent, may regard it as the greatest advantage to depart from it as quickly as possible. Do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, **that by an early departure you are taken away, and delivered from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent?** Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, **which snatches us hence**, and sets us free from the snares of the world and restores us to paradise and the kingdom.”

- a. We see use of language commonly found in reference to the Rapture as Cyprian describes the judgments of the end times as “imminent.” And he makes his belief on the timing of the Rapture when he wrote that Christians will have an “early departure” and be “delivered” from the devastating global judgments that come during the Day of The Lord.
- b. Cyprian is in line with the Apostle Paul who wrote that “*God has not appointed us to wrath, but salvation.*” Cyprian expressed joy and encourages the believing reader to rejoice that the Church will be “taken away” before the disastrous Great Tribulation. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:40, 41

used the same language of one “*taken*” and the other “*left*.”

* The context is the Second Coming, taken refers to enter the Kingdom, the other is left for judgment!

- c. Also Cyprian references the mansions which the Lord Jesus Christ promises to come back and take His believers to himself, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Jn. 14:1-3 (Treaty of Cyprian)

D. The early church fathers saw and taught the age of Grace distinct from the time of Tribulation and Great-Tribulation.

1. The seven year tribulation starts at the rapture of the church till the Second Coming of Jesus to establish His Kingdom.
2. The period is divided into two halves by three increments so that there can not be any mistake as to the literalness of it. Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 11:2, 3; 13:5
 - a. 1260 days. Rev. 11:3
 - b. 42 months. Rev. 11:2; 13:5
 - c. 3 1/2 years. Dan. 9:27; Rev. 12:4

3. The period is also divided by the phrases Tribulation and Great-Tribulation.
 - a. Tribulation refers to the first 3 1/2 years of false peace and deception by the Anti-Christ.
 - b. Great-Tribulation refers to the last 3 1/2 years of the absolute rule of the Anti-Christ as a tyrant from hell with the authority from Satan.
4. The period is called the Day of God’s Wrath, the Day of the LORD. Rev. 6-19
 - a. The seven seals will be opened.
 - b. The seven trumpets will be sounded.
 - c. The seven bowls will be poured out.
5. The Lord will return with His church to wage war against those who are gathered at Armageddon and then judge the nations and set up the Kingdom.
 - a. The one-thousand years of Christ on the earth. Rev. 20:1, 3, 5, 7
 - b. Satan will be bound for a thousand years. Rev. 20:1-3, 7
 - c. The rule will be characterized by a “rode of iron”. Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:5
 - d. The church will return to earth with Jesus to rule and reign with Him for a thousand years over the people who did not take the mark of the Beast. Rev. 1:6-7
 - e. The Jewish remnant will be regathered to occupy all the land promised in the Old Testament, in the Kingdom and Jesus

will judge the nations for their treatment of the Jews during the 7 year Tribulation. Is. , Jer., Ezk. , Matt. 25:31-34

- f. The White Throne judgment will take place at the end of the thousand years for the non-believer. Rev. 20:11-15
- 6. The early church fathers believed and taught the church would be raptured prior the Tribulation and Millennium!
* Pre-tribulation and pre-Millennialist!

These are the early church fathers on the rapture!

II. The four different views on the rapture.

- A. The mid-tribulation view teaches the church will be removed from the earth 3 ½ years after the seven year tribulation begins.
 - 1. The first problem is that it interprets the last week of Daniel's prophecy literal, while spiritualizing the first half of the week in order to put the church in the tribulation.
* You either interpret the entire time literal or symbolic, but you must be consistent in your interpretation!
 - 2. The second problem is that the three and a half year mark given for the removal of the church tells you it is wrong, for Jesus gave signs for His Second Coming, **not** the Rapture for it is imminent. Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 11:2; 13:5

- B. The Post-Tribulation view teaches the church will be removed from the earth at the end of the seven years of the tribulation and great tribulation.
 - 1. These individuals interpret the book of Revelations as historically fulfilled, called "preterist", which is spiritualizing or they treat it as yet future and spiritualize the literalness of the events in order to harmonize with their interpretation.
 - 2. Again they set a time of the removal which is inconsistent with the words of Jesus.
 - 3. The removal of the church at the end of seven years would remove from the earth all believers, then who would occupy the thousand year reign besides Israel?
 - 4. The removal would also not allow time for the judgment of the believers, the presentation of the bride to Christ and the marriage of the Lamb.
 - 5. The removal would make no sense, raptured only to return immediately with Christ.
- C. The Pre-wrath rapture view added to the confusion in the nineties, interpreting that the church will be removed three quarters through the seven years of tribulation.
 - 1. The set time for removable would once again refute it, no one knows the day or hour.

2. The understanding of “The Day Of The Lord” is wrong as to when it begins.
3. The teaching is inconsistent with the 70th week of Daniel. (Marvin Rosenthal)

D. The Pre-Tribulation view teaches the church will be removed from the earth prior to the seven years of the tribulation.

1. The teaching is consistent with the 70 weeks of Daniel’s prophecy for the Jews, Israel.
2. The teaching treats the book of Revelation as literal, historical and symbolic as the context dictates.
3. The imminent return of Christ for His church recognizes He can come back any minute, no man knows the day or the hour, therefore we are to, “watch and pray to be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.” Lk. 21:36
* This is what we believe and teach!

These are the four different views on the rapture!

III. The overwhelming evidence for pre-millennial, pre-tribulation.

- A. The nature of the church in contrast to Israel.
 1. The church is comprised of Jew and Gentile who except Jesus as Lord and Savior, Israel is made up of Jews and some proselytes. Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 3:11

2. The church was a mystery concealed in the Old Testament, not that Gentiles would not be blessed in salvation, but that Jew and Gentile would make up the body of Christ. Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:1-7; Col. 1:26-29
3. The church is called the **bride** of Christ, a **virgin**, Israel is called the **wife** of God having been put away by **divorce**. Jer. 3:1
 - a. Those who attempt to make the woman in the book of Revelation the church have a bigger problem, she is pregnant and the church is a virgin. Rev. 12:4
 - b. Replacement theology, teaches the church is Israel and that God is through with Israel, unbiblical, resulting in anti-Semitism. Rom. 9-11
4. The church is being built by Jesus until the church age is closed, just as Jesus rejected Israel until the church age is closed.
 - a. Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matt. 16:18
 - b. The Gentiles were grafted in like a wild olive tree and Israel was rejected because of unbelief. Rom. 11:11-24
 - c. The Lord in His triumphal entry drew near and wept over Jerusalem saying, “If you had known, even you, especially **in this your day**, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden

from your eyes”, and He pronounced judgment over her. Lk. 19:42-44

* Fulfilling it to the day, 483 years, 173, 880, from March 14, 445 B.C. , to April 6, 32 A.D., based on a 360 day Biblical calendar year, which by the way if the Genesis year. Gen. 7:1; 8:14; Dan. 9:24-2; Zech. 9:9 (Sir Robert Anderson, The Coming Prince)

- d. The Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem and rejected the Jew, “Your house is left to you desolate, you shall see Me no more till you say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”. Matt. 23:38-39
- e. The first church counsel recognized this basic and simple truth by the mouth of James. Acts 15:13-17
 - 1) “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written. After this **I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.**”

2) “The contrast and distinctions between Israel and the church are many from the type of covenant to the promises of their inheritance!” (Chafer has listed twenty-four!)

3) Israel is looking for a physical earthly kingdom, the church as spiritual and heavenly kingdom.

- B. The nature of the church age in contrast to the nature of the tribulation time.
 - 1. The church age is characterized by grace through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross for the sins of all the world, the tribulation period is characterized by God’s wrath from His throne. Jn. 3:16; 2Cor. 5:21; 1Jn. 2:2; Rev. 11:18; 14:8, 10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19
 - * The Old Testament calls it a the time distress, indignation, affliction, gloom and the time of Jacob’s trouble. Jer. 30:7
 - 2. The wrath of God fell on Christ in our place, therefore we are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 5:9; 1Thess. 5:9
 - 3. The church is to pray for their enemies and forgive them, yet those martyred under the fifth seal pray, “How long oh Lord, till You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth.” Matt. 5:44; Rev. 6:10

4. The promise to the church is that in the world she would have tribulations, but this is distinct from the specific hour that will try all earth dwellers, which the church is promised to be kept from. Rev. 3:10;
1Thess. 1:10

- a. The word from “ek” means to guard and cause one to escape in safety out of whatever is the subject, if the word “en” had been used it would have meant to cause to persevere or stand firm in a thing. (Thayers)
- b. Our hope is Jesus not heaven or anything else, we are longing to be with him where ever He be and be just like Him. Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 2:3; 1Thess. 4:13;
1Tim. 1:1; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 4:1; 1Pet. 1:3-4; 1Jn. 3:1-4

C. The nature of the removal of the church in contrast to the return of the Second Coming.

- 1. The removal of the church is to deal with Israel once again.
 - a. “Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the *fullness of the gentile* has come in”, the complete number of people to be saved which comprises the church. Rom. 11:25
 - b. “Jerusalem will be trampled by the gentiles till the *time of the gentiles* are fulfilled”, which is not the same, this

began with Babylon the head of gold and will end with the ten toes of the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, a confederacy of ten nations to rule the world with the Anti-Christ. Lk. 21:24; Dan. 2; 7

- c. The removal of the church is to judge Israel and to prepare her for her Messiah, as the prophet Zechariah declared that in that day the Jews will ask Jesus, “Where did You receive these wounds? Then He will say in the house of My friends”, God will cause 2/3 of Jews to perish, 1/3 to be refined through the fire. Zach. 13:6, 8-9
- 2. The Second Coming is to judge the ungodly and set up the Kingdom.
 - a. Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the vengeance of God at His Second Coming with His church in flaming fire. 2Thess. 1:7-10
 - b. Jude says Enoch prophesied of the Lord coming to execute judgment on the ungodly with ten thousand of His saints. Jude 14
 - c. Jesus said He would judge the nations as sheep from goats. Matt. 25:31-34
 - d. The Psalmist and John gives a sneak preview of the battle of Armageddon, as Jesus returns with His Bride to strike the nations with the sword from His mouth. Ps. 2; Rev. 19:11-16

- D.** The nature of the language for the removal of the church is unmistakable.
1. The privilege of the Rapture is to escape physical death and be caught up with the bodies of the departed saints in the clouds as Paul explained to the believers that their dead love ones were not going to miss out in any way when the Lord returned for His church. 1Thess. 4:13-18
 - * Paul spent in Thessalonica only three weeks, yet taught the rapture and the Anti-Christ! Acts 17:1-9; 2Thess. 2
 - a. The word caught up “harpazo” means to seize violently, carry off by force, claim for one’s self eagerly. vs. 17a
 - b. Of the 13 times it appears in the New Testament, the consistent meaning is that of a sudden and violent jolting removal.
 - * The Latin counterpart is “rapare” where we get our word rapture, but “harpazo” means the same.
 - 1) Philip was “harpazo” by the Holy Spirit after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch and was transported to Azotus. Acts 8:39
 - 2) Paul was “harpazo” to the third heaven. 2Cor. 12:2
 - 3) Satan “harpazo” the word of God from men’s hearts. Matt. 13:19

- 4) The woman’s child (Jesus” is “harpazo” to God, the woman is Israel, the child Jesus. Rev. 12:5
 - 5) In the clouds refer to theophanies of Divine glory. Ex. 16:10; 19:16; 1Kings 8; Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:9
2. The purpose of the Rapture is to meet “apanteesis” the Lord in the air, meaning to encounter and is used of a formal reception for royal magistrates by going out to meet them and accompanying them back on the final part of the journey. 1Thess. 4:17a
 - * Appearing only three other times.
 - a. Once of believers meeting Paul at his port of entry at Rome, accompanying him the rest of the way. Acts 28:15
 - b. Two other times for those who went out to meet the bridegroom to attend the wedding in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins that some use to teach the imminent return of Christ for His bride in the Rapture, but it refers to Israel at the Second Coming. Matt. 25:1-13
 - 1) Jesus said, “Like the days of Noah and the days of Lot”, chapter 25 is a continuation of the Olivet Discourse that began in chapter 24.
 - 2) Jesus had been giving signs of His Second Coming and the end of the

- age, culminating in His physical return to the earth.
- 3) Jesus just mentioned His dealing with the faithful and evil servant at His return. Matt. 24:45-51
 - 4) Jesus continues speaking, “Then” a time word, the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins. Matt. 25:1
 - 5) The context of chapter 25 is the Second Coming, it is still Jewish ground, those involved are the Jews who will accept Jesus in the tribulation and Great-Tribulation, not the church.
- c. Enoch and Elijah are parallels to the raptured believers to meet the Lord in the air. Gen. 5:24; 2Kings 2:11
- 1) We ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Rom. 8:23
 - 2) “I heard a voice like a trumpet, “Come up here and I will show you the things that must take place after this, the church age.” Rev. 4:1
 - 3) After the church is removed to heaven the first seal is opened and the man of sin is revealed on a white horse with a bow, but no arrows, conquering through diplomacy, false peace the first three and a half years. Rev. 6:1-2

- d. The restrainer holding back the full manifestation of evil through the appearance of the Anti-Christ is the church not the Holy Spirit, the world is not ruled by the Holy Spirit and those saved during the tribulation are so by the Holy Spirit. 2Thess. 2:1-12
 - e. The man of sin will sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God in the middle of the seven years. Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15
 - * The word falling away can mean from the faith or removal of the church! 2Thess. 2:3
3. The promise is that we shall always be with the Lord. vs. 17b
- a. The believer will return to heaven with Jesus for 7 years and then return with Christ to set up the Kingdom.
 - b. Jesus promised this distinguishing His coming for His saints from His coming with His saints. Jn. 14:1-3
 - 1) At the rapture, all go to heaven.
 - 2) At the Second Coming, all come to earth.
 - 3) At the rapture, Jesus receives us to Himself.
 - 4) At the Second Coming Jesus receives those saved into the Kingdom.
 - * That is why it was so difficult for His disciples to except the concept of

Jesus going to heaven, they were looking for God to come to earth to set up the Kingdom!

c. Paul declared, “For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Col. 3:3-4

d. John says, “beloved, now are we children of God; though it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in them purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1Jn 2:2-3

* The hope of His coming for us in the Rapture is the greatest incentive for holy living!

E. The nature of His Coming for the church is imminence.

1. Jesus gave many parables of the evil steward who did not know the time of his masters return and was found drinking and mistreating the servants.
2. The words of Jesus were, “pray and watch that you be ready to escape all these things and be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.” Lk. 21:36

3. Our bodies will be changed in a moment in a twinkling of the eye, at the last trump, no to be confuse with the 7th trump of Revelation. 1Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4

* The last trump in Corinthians and Thessalonians is not the last trump in the book of Revelations!

5. Every chapter of FirstThessalonians mentions the Lord’s imminent return. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:17; 5:9
7. John clearly shows that after the church age is over in Revelations 2-3, then the church is present in heaven chapters 4-5 singing the song which only the church can sing, right before the tribulation begins and the man of sin is revealed. Rev. 5:9-10
8. The day of the Second Coming is given to us by Daniel, 1,290 days from the abomination that causes desolation. Dan. 12:11; Matt. 24:15
9. The day of the rapture no man knows, therefore we are to watch and pray always that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Lk. 21:36
 - a. Only Luke’s gospel tells us the fact of being worthy to escape all the things to come in the tribulation!

* Have you ever asked why?
 - b. Matthew’s was written to the Jews, who will go through the Tribulation.

- c. Mark wrote to the Romans, who condemned and crucified Jesus.
 - d. Luke wrote to the Greeks or Gentiles, who God would call out as His bride.
 - e. The disciples could not comprehend Jesus leaving to heaven and returning for His church in the air, they were expecting an earthly Kingdom, so Jesus had to remind them again. Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:6-8
- 10.** The rapture of the church is called the blessed hope of the believer based on the promise of Jesus! Tit. 2:13
- a. The promise to the church Thyatira was, “And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. Rev. 2:21-22
* This church that will go through the Tribulation!
 - b. The promise to the church of Philadelphia is, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” Rev. 3:10
* This is the part of the church that will not go through the Tribulation!
 - c. The promise to the church of Laodicea was, “I know your works, that you are

neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth”. Rev. 3:15-16

* This is the warning to all who are lukewarm!

- d. I hope you aren't looking for Anti-Christ but Jesus Christ, for Jesus said, “Watch and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Lk. 21:36

This is the overwhelming evidence for pre-millennial, pre-tribulation!

Conclusion

So we have examined the Scriptures regarding the doctrine of the Rapture through a three-fold lens:

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