

The Doctrine of the Rapture

I. Introduction and Summary Description

- A) The Translation of the Church is one of the major considerations of NT eschatology. Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 1:8, 15:51-52; 2Cor 5:1-9; Phi 3:20-21; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Th 2:1 *et al.*
- B) The term “rapture” is derived from the Latin verb “rapturo”, which is used to translate the Greek verb ἄρπάζω – *harpadzō* of 1Th 4:17.
- C) Although the word itself does not appear in Scripture, this does not mean that it is wrong or doctrinally incorrect, as it communicates a Biblical premise and concept.
- D) It was first taught by Jesus during the 1st Advent. Jn 5:25 “*Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is* (CP 4:23; THIS IS A REFERENCE TO THE CHURCH AGE), *when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live.*”
- E) It refers to the instantaneous metamorphosis of our finite body to an eternal physical body like that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the physical transfer of the believers of the Church Age from earth to heaven. Jn 14:3; 1Cor 15:51-52; 1Th 4:13-17; 1Jn 3:2
- F) It includes Church Age saints exclusively. 1Th 4:16-17 “*...the dead in Christ...*”
 - a) the Church Age (CA) was a mystery dispensation, not fully understood by even the most advanced of OT believers. Rom 16:25
 - b) certain doctrines of the CA are also mysteries, such as the Rapture. 1Cor 15:51
 - c) as with many doctrines, what Jesus taught briefly was explained more fully by the Holy Spirit to the communicators of the first century. Jn 16:12-15 cp 1Cor 2:9-13
- G) The Rapture concludes our current dispensation, which began on the day of Pentecost, and ushers in Daniel’s 70th Week (DSW), or “The Wrath”.
- H) While the vast majority of CA believers will be dead, one generation of believers (obviously) will be alive at His coming. 1Cor 15:51; 1Th 4:15-17

II. Synonyms

- A) As this was a new “mystery” doctrine revealed to the Church, there is no Hebrew vocabulary reference.
- B) Since there is not a unique word for the Rapture, many Greek words are used to describe the event; each one provides a different nuance that gives us insight into what this one event actually entails.
 - a) ἀπάντησις – *apantēsis* (n) = “a meeting/encounter”; a personal rendezvous – the Church Universal will meet with the Lord Himself, in an intimate and individual manner; a face to face assembly. 1Th 4:17
 - b) ἀποκαλύψις – *apokalupsis* (n) = “revelation”; an uncovering or disclosure – indicates that, for the first time in history, Jesus Christ will be publicly revealed to all the Church. 1Cor 1:7; 1Pet 1:7, 13
 - c) ἄρπαζω – *harpadzō* (v) = “catch up”; to seize by force, to snatch out or away from something; emphasizes the power involved and focuses on the aspect of the Deity of the Son that is the behind resurrection (Jn 5:25) – we are dependent upon God for this event to occur, and no believer in the CA has a choice of exclusion. 1Th 4:17
 - d) ἀπολυτρώσις – *apolutrōsis* (n) = “redemption”; a release that is secured by the payment of a ransom – the sacrifice of Christ for sins also secured the ultimate freedom for the body. Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14, 4:30
 - e) ἐλπις – *elpis* (n) = “hope”; confident expectation – expresses our anticipation of the event as well as our confidence that it will occur. Tit 2:13; 1Pet 1:3; 1Jn 3:2, 3
 - f) ἐπιφανεία – *epiphaneia* (n) = “appearing”; a sudden manifestation – emphasizes both the suddenness of the appearance and the overt evidence that He is Deity. 1Tim 6:14; 2Tim 4:8; Tit 2:13

- g) ἡμέρα – *hēmera* (n) = “day”; a unit of time – indicates that the Rapture will occur on a literal day, at a particular point in time. Mat 24:50; 1Cor 1:8, 3:13, 5:5; 2Cor 1:14; Eph 4:30 (COMBINED WITH “REDEMPTION”); Phi 1:6, 10; 2Tim 4:8
- h) παρουσία – *parousia* (n) = “coming”; a personal presence, arrival, or advent – stresses that Jesus will return bodily to do all that He has promised and that believers will individually encounter Him face-to-face. 1Cor 15:23; 1Th 2:19, 4:15, 5:23; Js 5:7, 8; 1Pet 3:4; 1Jn 2:28
- i) σωτηρία – *sotēria* (n) = “salvation”; a deliverance that provides or procures safety from harm or loss – emphasizes that this event delivers the Church from the events of the Wrath. Rom 13:11; 1Th 5:9; Heb 9:28; 1Pet 1:5
- j) ἄνω κλησεως – *anō klēseōs* (adj + n) = “upward call”; an invitation or calling that is of heavenly origin – emphasizes that the Rapture and accompanying resurrection is all part of the Plan of God. Phi 3:14

III. Precedents for the Rapture

- A) While this doctrine was not taught in the Old Testament, there are OT believers who illustrate that God is capable of removing a person from the earth, apart from death.
 - 1) Enoch – Gen 5:24 “*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*”
 - 2) Elijah – 2Kin 2:1-12
- B) Jesus Christ was translated bodily into Heaven after His resurrection. Ac 1:9-11
- C) The Two Witnesses (Moses and Elijah) will be bodily removed from the earth to Heaven. Rev 11:11-12
- D) While these examples certainly demonstrate that it is not inconsistent for God to do such a thing, one could not arrive at the doctrine of the Rapture of the Church from them.

IV. Categories of Humanity at the Rapture

- A) Unbelievers, said to be asleep and drunk. 1Th 5:6-7
 - 1) sleeping refers to their spiritual insensibility to the spiritual realities of the Rapture, Tribulation, and Second Advent.
 - 2) drunk refers to their intoxicated spiritual state, based on various false doctrines and ideologies respecting the supposed future of mankind.
- B) Maladjusted believers, who are sleeping. 1Th 5:10
 - 1) this includes believers who are insensitive to, or unaware of, prophetic realities
 - 2) it also includes those who are maladjusted to the doctrine and are not living their lives in light of the impending arrival of their Lord Mk 13:35-36; 1Th 5:8
 - 3) these believers will also participate in the resurrection (1Th 5:10), but their “house” will be found in disorder – they will be unprepared for their unexpected Guest
 - 4) Rev 3:15-18 openly declares that the Church Universal of the Last Days will be maladjusted to the importance of BD
- C) Adjusted believers. 1Th 5:10
 - 1) they are cognizant of the spiritual realities of their period in history – awake
 - 2) they are alert and sober, indicating that they are paying attention to their spiritual walk, taking in and applying the necessary BD in order to be prepared and excel

V. False Views of the Rapture

- A) Post Millennial – the Church ushers in the Millennium, at the end of which Christ returns.
 - 1) these interpreters are forced to allegorize the clear statements of Scripture when it describes eschatological events, such as Mk 13:14 and 1Th 4:13-17
 - 2) their rejection of the WoG as inerrant and literal demands rejection of their position

- B) Partial Rapture – only those Christians who are awake and alert will be taken, the rest will endure DSW.
 - 1) this view denigrates the work of Christ on the cross as only partially sufficient, with the balance of redemptive work maintained by the believer – cp Gal 2:21
 - 2) it denies the clear teaching of the unity of the Body of Christ – 1Cor 12:12-13
 - 3) it must deny the completeness of the resurrection of believers at the Translation (LOGICALLY, IF ONLY THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL ARE TRANSFORMED, THEN ONLY THOSE WHO WERE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH COULD BE RESURRECTED)
- C) Mid-Tribulational Rapture – the Church is removed at the midpoint of DSW, after the signing of the covenant between Israel and Antichrist.
 - 1) this view denies the distinction in dispensations, between the Church and Israel
 - 2) the 144,000 witnesses are seen at both the beginning and the end of DSW (Rev 7:1-8, 14:1), and if they were saved in the first part of the Week, they would be members of the Church; if they were then present on earth at the 2nd Advent, the entire Church could not have been translated (or the Body is incomplete) – cp Eph 5:30
 - 3) if the Translation occurs at the point of the false covenant, the Church would know the day of the Rapture (1240 days after the appearance of Antichrist) – Dan 9:27
- D) Post-Tribulational Rapture – the Church endures all of DSW, and is Raptured immediately before the 2nd Advent.
 - 1) this also denies dispensations, and the distinctions between Israel and the Church
 - 2) it ignores the differences in the Scriptural descriptions of the Rapture and 2nd Advent – Mt 24:36 & 24:27
- E) The Church Universal is specifically promised a pre-Tribulational, pre-Millennial Rapture – 1Th 1:10 “*and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.*”; Rev 3:10

VI. Order of Events – 1Th 4:16-17

- A) Jesus Christ will arise from the right hand of God the Father, and travel through the reaches of stellar space to the atmosphere of planet earth.
- B) At His descent, He will utter a great shout (with the intensity of an archangel’s voice), and there will be an accompanying trumpet blast.
 - 1) the shout seems to be a command of resurrection – cp Jn 11:43 “*And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’*”
 - 2) the trumpet seems to be the command to the newly resurrected group to assemble in the air – cp Ex 19:13 “*...When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.*” (EVEN THOSE WHO FAILED TO ASSEMBLE IN THE CA, AS THEY WERE COMMANDED TO DO, WILL BE FORCED TO ASSEMBLE FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE CHIEF SHEPHERD)
- C) The dead “in Christ” (technical for Positional Truth, the CA only) will be resurrected from their graves and their souls will be reunited with their newly resurrected body.
- D) In the smallest amount of time possible, those still alive at this time will be transformed instantaneously into their resurrection bodies. cp 1Cor 15:52 “*in a moment, (THE GREEK WORD ἄτομος – atomos IS USED OF SOMETHING SO SMALL AS TO BE INDIVISIBLE) 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.*”
- E) Both groups will be caught up simultaneously to a meeting of the Lord in the air.
- F) The first order of business will be the administration of the Bema Seat, the distribution of rewards and disposal of human good. cp 2Cor 5:10; 1Pet 1:7; Rev 22:12 “*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.*”
- G) The Church will travel back to the 3rd Heaven with Christ and remain with Him during DSW. cp Jn 14:3

- H) At the end of seven years, the Church militant will return with Christ to take possession of the planet. Rev 19:14 *“And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.”*
- I) During the Millennium, the wedding supper will be held. Rev 19:9 cp Mt 22:2-14

VII. The True Doctrine of Imminence

- A) A question that has often been asked is whether or not Paul believed and taught that the Rapture was an event which could or could not occur in his own lifetime.
- B) The false Doctrine of Imminence states that the Rapture could occur at any time and that the Rapture Generation (RGen) will not know that they are in the final era of the CA.
- C) One (supposed) advantage of this position is that believers of any period of history would be looking for His coming and would, theoretically, tend to remain alert and ready.
- D) However, the very fact that there are commands to alertness indicates that one must be able to identify some signs of His return, or it robs the exhortation of its force. Mt 24:42, 25:13; Mk 13:33-37; Lk 12:37; 1Th 5:6
- E) Evidence that the RGen may know that it is indeed the generation:
 - 1) historical precedent
 - a) the Flood generation – Gen 6:13
 - b) the Exodus generation – Gen 15:16
 - c) the Conquest generation – Num 14:28-35
 - d) the Post-exilic generation – Jer 25:11; Dan 9:2
 - e) the 1st Advent generation – Dan 9:25; cp Lk 2:26
 - (1) the date of the decree from Artaxerxes to Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem was Mar 5, 444 BC – Neh 2:1-8
 - (2) 69 wks x 7 years per wk x 360 days = 173,880 days (444 BC TO 33AD = 476 YRS X 365.242 DAYS PER YEAR = 173,855 DAYS + 25 DAYS FROM MAR 5 TO MAR 30 = 173,880)
 - (3) Mar 30, 33AD was the date of the Triumphant Entry, exactly 173,880 days after the decree – Mt 21:1-16
 - f) is the Rapture generation the only one in all God’s Plan to be left in the dark?
 - g) even the 2nd Advent generation will be able to know the time of the 2nd Advent, since DSW begins with the Rapture and lasts exactly 7 years. cp Dan 9:27
 - 2) direct statement of Scripture
 - a) God does not hide His activities from those who are positive – cp Amos 3:7 *“Surely the Lord God does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.”*
 - b) Christ will appear to those who are eagerly await His return – Heb 9:28
 - c) Heb 10:25 implies that it is possible to see the day of the Lord approaching
 - 3) the presence of the two classes of believers – 1Th 5:1-11
 - a) vs 2 states that the day of the Lord is a surprise event, catching most unaware
 - b) in vs 4 we see that the adjusted believer is not taken off guard by this event
 - 4) the explicit teaching of Christ regarding the Second Advent – Mt 24:3f
 - a) the proliferation of false christs – vs 5
 - b) the proliferation of wars – vs 6-7a
 - c) the proliferation of natural disasters – vs 7b
 - d) the sign of the Millennium – vs 32-35
 - e) the warning against date setters – vs 36
 - 5) the maturation of prophecy – 2Pet 1:19 *“And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”*
 - a) the prophecy to Nebuchadnezzar – Dan 2:31-45
 - b) the regathering of Israel – Eze 37:1-14; Hos 6:13, 11

- c) the presence of the major prophetic entities (Eze 38:1-6):
 - (1) Gog = the ruler of Russia
 - (2) Magog = the land/people of Russia
 - (3) Persia = Iran
 - (4) Ethiopia
 - (5) Put = Libya
 - (6) Gomer = Germany
 - (7) Beth-togarmah = Turkey
- d) other entities, now in place, include:
 - (1) lion = England – Dan 7:4; Jer 50:12
 - (2) eagle’s wings plucked = the USA – Dan 7:4; Rev 18
 - (3) leopard = the oriental block – Dan 7:6; Rev 16:12
 - (4) 4th beast = the RRE, the European Common Market – Dan 7:7
 - (5) spiritual harlot = the RCC, the final form of the mother/son cult – Rev 17
- e) prophecies for the CA:
 - (1) Peter’s death – Jn 21:18-19
 - (2) destruction of Jerusalem – Lk 21:20
 - (3) rise of monasticism – 1Tim 4:1
 - (4) end time characteristics of mankind – 2Tim 3:1-9
- F) Therefore, the true Doctrine of Imminence is that Christ could come at any time once all the necessary prophetic items are in place – not at any time previous in the Church Age.
 - 1) Paul recognized that certain eras and events would have to unfold before the end times – 1Th 5:1
 - 2) his use of “we” in 1Th 4:15, 17 and Gal 5:5 is an oratorical use of public address, and refers to the members of the CA as a whole
- G) The time of the RGen is keyed to Israel’s reemergence as a nation, with Jerusalem as her capital. Mt 24:32-34; Mk 13:28-31; Lk 21:29-33
 - 1) the disciples had asked two specific questions, “When will these things occur, and what is the sign of Your coming?” Mt 24:3; Mk 13:3-4; Lk 21:7
 - 2) the reestablishment of Jerusalem is the answer to the second question
 - 3) a dictum (AN AUTHORITATIVE, FORMAL PRONOUNCEMENT): no Jerusalem, no 2nd Advent
- H) The time lapse between the “Fig Tree” and all the events, including the Rapture, DSW, and 2nd Advent, is one generation.
 - 1) the view that the word γενεά – *genea* refers to the race of the Hebrews is not supported by grammatical usage: γενός means stock, kindred, or family; γενέα means generation – Mk 7:26 & Mt 1:17
 - 2) the view that He was referring to the generation that was present with Him contradicts the fact that the Abomination of Desolation had to occur (which demands a Temple be in place – was Jesus inconsistent?) – Mt 24:15
 - 3) the only interpretation that is sound, theologically and grammatically, is the generation that sees the budding of the Fig Tree will be represented at the 2nd Advent
- I) Based on our understanding of the prophetic word, coupled with the correct chronology, we now know that the Mystery Age is approximately 2000 years in length.
 - 1) the prophecy to Israel – Hos 6:1-3
 - 2) the statement of 2Pet 3:8 – “*But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*”
 - a) from Adam to Abraham was ~2000 yrs
 - b) from Abraham to Christ was ~ 2000 yrs
 - c) the Millennium is 1000 yrs
 - d) therefore, the missing 2 days are the ~2000 yrs of the CA
 - e) this provides for 7000 yrs of human history, or one 7 day week

- J) General characteristics of that time
- 1) unprecedented proliferation of wars and natural catastrophes – Mk 13:6-8
 - 2) an unprecedented peace movement – 1Th 5:1-3; Rev 6:2
 - 3) unprecedented personal degeneracy – 2Tim 3:1-9
 - 4) unprecedented religious apostasy – 2Pet 2:1-3
 - 5) uniformitarian evolutionists – 2Pet 3:3-4
 - 6) the evil characteristics of this time demand judgment, as seen in the following motifs:
 - a) like drunks, under the influence of evil, they stagger and fall under Divine judgment – Isa 24:20; Jer 51:7, 57
 - b) just as surely as a pregnant woman will endure labor pains, even so the inhabitants of earth will suffer under God’s judgment – Isa 13:8; 1Th 5:3
- K) It is plainly stated that no one, not even the humanity of Messiah, is privy to the exact time of the Rapture – therefore, any attempt to name the date or time is to be rejected, and date setters are to be avoided. Mt 24:36; Mk 13:32

VIII. Correct Applications of the Doctrine

A) Mental attitude:

- 1) the Greek verbs for anticipation document the fact that a mental attitude of eager anticipation is desirable and spiritually healthy
 - a) ἀπεκδέχομαι – *apekdechomai* : to expect anxiously, to await eagerly (THIS STRENGTHENED FORM OF “WAIT” IS USED IN THE NT ONLY OF THE RAPTURE) – Rom 8:19, 23, 25; 1Cor 1:7; Gal 5:5; Phi 3:20 “*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*”; Heb 9:28
 - b) προσδέχομαι – *prosdechomai* : to look or wait for something – Heb 11:35 “*...and others were tortured, not accepting their release...*” cp Tit 2:13; Jud 21
 - c) προσδοκάω – *prosdokaō* : to expect or look for something – Lk 1:21 “*And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.*” cp 2Pet 3:14
 - d) στενάζω – *stenadzō* : to groan or complain; Divinely inspired dissatisfaction with this life – Js 5:9 “*Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged...*” cp Rom 8:23
- 2) a mental attitude of love/affection/application towards others, leading to blamelessness at the Rapture, is the object of Paul’s prayer for the model church – 1Th 3:11-13

B) Overt applications:

- 1) reject STA actions – Rom 13:11-14
- 2) remain alert, don’t fall asleep – 1Th 5:6, 10
- 3) be sober, calm and controlled – 1Th 5:6, 8; 1Pet 1:13, 4:7 “*The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*”
- 4) be patient in your niche, don’t react to the suffering and testing – Rom 8:25 “*But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.*”
- 5) be patient with people, don’t react to the mass of negative volition – Js 5:7-8
- 6) be diligent – 2Pet 3:14 “*Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless*”
- 7) the communicator is likened to a porter or doorkeeper who is to be especially alert so as to be able to notify the other slaves of the Master’s return, via study and observation – Mk 13:33-37
- 8) intensify our intake of BD – Heb 10:25 “*not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*”

- C) Verbal responsibilities:
- 1) encourage one another – 1Th 4:18 *“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*; Heb 10:25
 - 2) the PT is to emphasize the importance of the Doctrine – Mt 24:44-51
- IX. Misapplications of This Doctrine
- A) Although believers who are immature or spiritually unstable have used this doctrine as their excuse for indefensible activities, Scripture does not support:
- 1) failure to plan for the future – Pr 6:6-11
 - 2) counting ourselves as exempt from obedience to the government or other authorities – Rom 13:1-7
 - 3) incurring excessive debt, or failing to use financial common sense – 1Th 4:11-12
 - 4) quitting our jobs – 2Th 3:6f
- B) Because some believers have distorted or misapplied the doctrine, those who are positive are not encouraged or allowed to disregard the information, as well as its implications.
- 1) the human viewpoint that rejects prophetic information is at variance with the emphasis laid upon it by the Word of God, and ultimately claims that all Scripture is not profitable – 2Pet 1:19a *“And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention...”*
 - 2) following the command to not turn aside to the left (liberal distortion) or to the right (unnecessary restriction), and seeking Divine wisdom (Js 1:5) will lead to proper understanding and avoidance of error
- C) We are to conduct ourselves in the same decorous fashion as if we did not live in the Rapture Generation, seeking to glorify God in the time we have been given.
- 1) on the other hand, we should be still more keenly aware that finances, details, etc. are even more limited in their duration for us than believers of previous generations
 - 2) we should also recognize that applications of BD must be made quickly
- D) It is equally a misapplication of the doctrine to continue to live with no regard for the fact that you live in the final days of the CA – cp Eph 5:16 *“making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”*

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.” – Jn 14:3

Doctrine of the Rapture
 Hope Bible Church
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