

A Future Journey with Christ

Caught Up Together

I Thess. 4:13-18

INTRODUCTION:

We are continuing a voyage through the End Times of the Bible. This morning we are going to look at the rapture. This would be the next major end time event for those who believe that the church is going to be raptured into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air before the great tribulation.

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NASB)

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be **caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Prayer

Our understanding of the rapture will not change God's plan for Christ's return nor should it affect our salvation. It is our job to try to understand the scriptures and what God is trying to tell us through them.

It is important that we let the scriptures talk to us. We must be careful not to force the scriptures to meet our preconceived belief.

I don't know if you will be surprised by this or not, but the word "rapture" does not appear in the Bible. We adopted it from the words "caught up" in I Thess. 4:17. The Latin word for "caught up" is "rapturio" which was translated into English as "rapture".

The fact that the word rapture cannot be found in the Bible does not necessarily suggest that it is not scriptural. The word "trinity" also does not occur in the Bible, but there are many passages that indicate that the trinity is real. What this does require, though, is a burden of proof that the concept is found within the scriptures as I believe we can substantiate with the trinity.

There are three different views on the rapture:

1. The Good are taken and the Bad are left behind.
2. Some Christians are taken and other Christians are left behind.
3. The Bad are taken and the Good are left behind.

The view taken by those who believe that the church will be taken out of this world and the evil left behind to face God's wrath. This is often referred to as prewrath rapture.

The purpose of my message this morning is to give the history of the popular view of prewrath rapture and point out scripture that appears to contradict that view.

There are three major passages concerning the rapture. Also a fourth passage according to the rapturists.

1. Rev. 4:1 (Rapturists)
2. Matt. 24:36-41
3. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 49-50
4. I Thess. 4:13-17

BODY:

I. THE DEFINITION AND HISTORY OF "RAPTURE"

A. Definition of Rapture:

It is important to define what we are calling the rapture. I could tell you my definition, but I do not believe in the current view of the rapture, so my definition would not be valid. I will let people who do believe in the rapture define it for us.

- Oral Roberts believes in the rapture. He says concerning it, "Jesus' appearance in the clouds will be veiled to the human eye and no one will see Him." "He will slip in and slip out." (Secret) "Like a thief, He will slip in and slip out".
- G. S. Bishop also believes in the rapture. "It will be a secret rapture, quiet, noiseless, sudden, as the step of the thief in the night. All that the world will know is that multitudes at once have gone".

This would be their definition of the rapture.

"The rapture is the secret coming of Christ to take His church (the righteous) out of this world which will initiate the beginning of the seven year tribulation before the 1000 year millennial Kingdom. After the seven years, Jesus will come again to begin the 1000 year reign."

B. History of the Rapture:

First, let's look at the history of the current concept of the rapture.

The "rapture theology" did not come into the church until 1830. That should be a major red flag. That meant that the apostles nor early Christians were aware of it or teach it.

Margaret McDonald had a self-induced "Fever" (as she called it) or trance to receive a prophetic vision. The whole transcript is available for reading. One of her "prophesies" was that no one will see Him because there needs to be a second outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (As if Pentecost in the book of Acts was not enough). Then the Christians that get that outpouring (because some Christians won't) will be the ones who will be able to see Christ at the second coming (or the rapture). They will be taken away and the other half of Christians will be left behind to deal with the wicked.

John Nelson Darby, a contemporary with McDonald, cleaned up the theological issues of her prophetic vision and brought it to America from England.

Darby's writings influenced Cyrus Scofield of the Scofield Reference Bible, the first study Bible of its kind. It was published in the early 1900's. It pushed the rapture theology.

Dwight L. Moody, founder of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, also taught the rapture. He was THE evangelist of the day, much like Billy Graham might be considered the evangelist of our day.

This is significant because one of his graduates was Billy Graham. Graham actually wrote a book entitled *"Approaching Hoofbeats"*. In fairness to him, he has since changed his mind on the rapture.

You can see how over the last 185 years, how it would be possible for this rapture theology to explode considering many of the major supporters of it.

The teaching exploded in the 1970's when Hal Lindsey, wrote the *"Late Great Planet Earth"*. It actually outsold the Bible.

In 1990 Tim LeHay hooked up with Jerry Jenkins with their fictional *"Left Behind"* series. It sold 63 million copies.

We should not base our beliefs upon what is popular, but based upon the scripture.

II. A RAPTURIST'S EXPLANATION OF THE "RAPTURE"

Where do the rapturists say that we will clearly hear the rapture in the scriptures?

Revelation 4:1 (NASB)

4 After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing open* in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "**Come up here**, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

Did you catch the rapture? According to the rapturists, the words "**Come up here**" was spoken to the church.

M. R. DeHawn says, "This brief passage is one of the clearest pictures in scripture of the rapture of the church".

When I read this verse, I see, "**After these things I looked**" and "**I had heard**". Who is the "I"? John. So who was asked to "**Come up here**"? John, not the church.

They also claim that the church is mentioned in Rev. 2 & 3, but the church does not occur again until all has been fulfilled in Rev. 19:11-21.

This would be Christ's 3rd coming. Where in the scriptures does it say that there is a 3rd coming? So the church, according to them, is not on earth in chapters 4-18 of Revelation.

Revelation 19:14,19 (NASB)

¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses.

¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

They are correct that the WORD "church" is NOT in chapters 4-18, but it is not in this passage either. They are correct that the "Armies" of God is the church, but the word "church" is not in Rev. 19:11-21 either. In fact, the word is not found again until Rev. 22:16.

Not only that, but the word "Saints" (which is the church) IS found 12 times in Revelation.

Revelation 19:6-8 (NASB)

⁶ Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Who is the Bride? The church! Who are the saints? The church!

The other scriptures in Revelation mentioning the "Saints" are: Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4, 11:18, 13:7, 13:10, 14:12, 16:6, 17:6, 18:20, 18:24, 19:8, and 20:9.

Just because the word "church" is not used, does NOT mean the church is not there!

III. A CLOSER LOOK AT SCRIPTURE

According to the Rapturists, who is left behind? The GOOD are taken, the BAD are left behind.

Matthew 24:36-41 (NASB)

³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷ For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not

understand until the flood came and **took them all away**; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

Who were the ones eating and drinking? THE EVIL! They are referred to by the plural word "they". Noah is singular. So who are the "they" who were eating and drinking? THE EVIL!

So WHO were taken away by the flood? THE EVIL!

If the coming of the Son of Man is like Noah's flood, when two men are in the field and two women are at the mill and one is taken and one is left, who would be the one taken? THE EVIL!

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 49-50 (NASB)

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸ "An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹ "No,' he answered, 'because **while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.** ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: **First collect the weeds** and tie them in bundles to be burned; **then gather the wheat** and bring it into my barn.'"

What does Jesus say in verse 30? FIRST collect the weeds, THEN gather the wheat.

Fortunately, the disciples asked Jesus to give an explanation of the parable of the tares.

³⁶ Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." ³⁷ And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸ and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and **the tares are the sons of the evil one;** ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and **the harvest is the end of the age;** and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send forth His angels, **and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,** ⁴² **and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** ⁴³ **Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN** in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Jesus sows the good seed.

The good seed are the sons of the Kingdom (the Righteous ones).

The field is the world.

The tares are the sons of the evil one (the Evil).

Satan sowed the weeds.

The harvest is the end of the world (the second coming).

The reapers are the angels.

So what are the order of things? FIRST, in verse 41, **The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness.**

THEN, in verse 43, **THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father.**

Who went FIRST? THE EVIL!

Who were left behind? THE GOOD!

⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

At the end of the age, the angels are taking the wicked from among the righteous. So who is taken? THE EVIL!

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (NASB)

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.**

If you read this passage out of context, you might think that the dead in Christ will rise first and then the Christians who are still alive, all before the evil. But let's look at this passage in context.

We can make the Bible say anything if we don't use context.

Judas went away and hanged himself. Matt. 27:5

What you have seen me do, hurry and do likewise. Judges 9:48

The "asleep" are the righteous who are physically dead. Paul is saying that we have hope because Christ rose again from the dead. We should not grieve when a Christian dies like the unsaved, who have no hope. In fact, Paul says, they will rise before you, if you are still alive when I return. There is no mention of the wicked being taken here.

John 5:28-29 suggests that when the dead rise at judgment, it is all over.

John 5:28-29 (NASB)

²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

Why would the wicked be taken and the righteous left behind? Because the earth is going to be cleaned up from all of its wickedness and sin and made NEW. A new Heaven and a new Earth. The saints will be living there.

The word NEW can have different meanings in English.

A new 1957 car in 1957 would be a vehicle that was just made.

A new 1957 car in 2017 would be a vehicle that had been restored back to new condition.

Fortunately, the Greek language has two different words for NEW. The New Heaven and New Earth indicate that they will be restored. The Greek word is Kinos (restored).

Revelation 21:1 talks about a restored heavens and earth.

Revelation 21:1 (NASB)

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.

We are going to use this place, the wicked are already gone.

CONCLUSION:

Just remember. Despite how confusing the end times may seem to you, trust Jesus when He says that those who endure to the end WILL WIN! Whether we clearly envision the end times or not, the end result of seeing Jesus face to face in Heaven will be worth every ounce of effort that we put forth while living on this earth.

If Christ should come Saturday would you be ready!

He is Lord!