

## The Rapture

- Problematic Foundation
  - Invented in the 1830's by John Danby in Ireland and later taken by him to the US.
  - Many proponents have tried to push the origin of the doctrine back in time by looking for the word, "rapture," in early Christian writings (third through sixth centuries). However, the meaning of the word, in English and in Greek, is "to express extreme pleasure or enthusiasm." Upon finding that word, the claim is made the Rapture doctrine has been around since the beginning of the church. However, proponents re-define the word to mean "snatched away" without any linguistic support.
  - Every passage cited in support of the Rapture doctrine has been taken out of context or misses the verb tense (past, present, future).
  - Often, the idea of "double fulfillment" is used. Although the concept is foreign to the Scriptures, this doctrine is used to be able to acknowledge the application given by an inspired writer while, at the same time offering an uninspired second application.
  - Of course, many claim inspiration for themselves with the assertion that "the Lord told me." However, they have no evidence that they speak for God and overlook that prophets were predicted to end with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD (Daniel 9:24, Zechariah 13:2).
- The doctrine has many variations and is always confusing to the listener. However, Moses (Deuteronomy 30:11 – 14), Paul (Romans 10:8), and John (1 John 2:27) wrote that all such explanations should be simple enough for the common person without the aid of a specialist.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:16 commonly is applied to the Rapture:
  - The context is 4:13 – 5:11, which Paul says he wrote for their comfort, so it does not mention the disposition of the unbelievers. The "thief in the night" image is in 5:2, indicating that there will be no signs.
  - 1 Corinthians 15:50 – 53 – Death is swallowed up in victory.
  - Revelation 20:11 – 15 – In the final Judgment, all are resurrected together.
- In many of the various Rapture doctrines, the Antichrist, the "man of lawlessness, the false prophet, and the beasts in Revelation are made equivalent. But, each appears in its own context and has its own applications:
  - Antichrist is mentioned only in 1 John 2:18 – 22, 4:3, and 2 John 7. Antichrists were present in John's day. Their characteristics were that they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, that they did not follow Jesus, and they taught that Jesus did not come in the flesh.
  - The man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:3 – 10) existed in Paul's day and the Thessalonian Christians knew who he was.
  - The false prophet in Revelation is also called the second beast, but is never compared with the antichrist or the man of lawlessness.
- Passages about the tribulation that, according to most Rapture doctrines, precedes the Rapture:
  - Matthew 24:21, 29 – The section from verse 4 to 34 is in response to the question posed by the disciples in verse 3 concerning the timing of the predicted destruction of the Temple. Verse 34 set that destruction within the lifetimes of some alive at that time. Of course, proponents of the Rapture doctrine re-define the word, "generation,"

- to mean the period until people no longer exist, which defeats their own argument, putting the “great tribulation” at Judgment. Plus, there is no linguistic support for the definition.
- Mark 13:24 – Some make a distinction between “tribulation” and “great tribulation.” The parallel to Matthew’s description of a “great tribulation” is given by Mark as a “tribulations,” and by Luke as “distresses.”
  - John considered himself to be in the tribulation (Revelation 1:9). A group in one of John’s visions had come out of the great tribulation, so it was prior to the timing of that vision. But that description precedes the final Judgment because it is in the sixth of seven seals. The end had not yet come.
  - Revelation 11:2 mentions 42 months which is commonly attributed to the duration of the supposed great tribulation. But, reading the context, this is the period over which the two witnesses preach, and the location is “where their Lord was crucified.”
  - John identified in eight places that the applications of his visions, except from 20:7 – 22:5, would happen shortly to his time.
  - The Rapture doctrine often is connected with “one-world government” theories. The only world-wide government mentioned in the Scriptures is that headed by the Messiah, which has been in place since shortly after Jesus’ return to heaven (His ascension).
  - The number of the beast (Revelation 13:11 – 18), 666, is often applied to current events. However, John’s point was to let the people know that this second beast, later called the false prophet, had the number of a man – that this beast, despite his miraculous abilities, was just a man. The purpose of the paragraph was to comfort the Christians of that era who were undergoing tremendous problems, to assure them that they had not chosen badly, but that all this was part of the plan and that the eternal kingdom was secure.
  - The seven churches of Asia in chapters are seven real places in western Turkey. No hint is given in the Scriptures that these congregations were to represent sequential eras in the history of the church. Rather, they are seven short letters to congregations that were geographically close to John.
  - In the Bible, the “coming” of the Lord has been used to describe the invasions by Assyria and Babylon, John the Baptist, the earthly ministry of Jesus, and the end of time. The context reveals which one the inspired writer intended.