

The Rapture Part One

Definition of Rapture:

The word "Rapture" comes from the Latin verb **raptare**, and the Greek word **harpizo**, both meaning "to be caught up" or "to be snatched up." The Rapture is believed by many, perhaps most - born again Protestants. It states that they, alone, will engage in a mass migration in the near future. They believe that prior to the great Tribulation, they will rise to meet Jesus in the heavens. This would be a very interesting event since they believe that pilots would rise from airplanes and people would rise from their moving automobiles. It's too bad if you're a passenger on that particular plane or in that moving automobile.

The history of the Rapture:

The Rapture Doctrine has evolved from historical attempts to interpret the Bible's Book of Revelation, particularly recent attempts that took place in the 19th century following the defeat of the European dictator Napoleon Bonaparte. At that time, some Christians viewed Napoleon as the Anti-Christ. Many felt that at the final defeat and exile of Napoleon Christ would come again.

An American preacher, Mr. William Miller calculated and predicted that the Second Coming of Christ would take place between 1843 and 1844. His calculations were based upon the Book of Daniel:

Daniel 8.13 I heard a holy one speaking, and another said to whichever one it was that spoke, "How long shall the events of this vision last concerning the daily sacrifice, the desolating sin which is placed there, the sanctuary, and the trampled host?" 14 He answered him, "For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be purified."

"For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings" can be interpreted as the six years and almost four months. Oddly enough, this was about the whole time of the Greek ruler of Jerusalem Antiochus (from the beginning of the persecutions until his death during the Jewish revolt found in the Book of Maccabees). However, Mr. Miller did not believe this prophecy had been fulfilled yet. His predictions were widely published and he himself traveled the country speaking of the end of the world. He gathered many followers to himself and they waited patiently for the end. It never came. He would try again, but this second attempt also failed. His followers would, however, form a new Christian denomination called the Seventh Day Adventist.

John Nelson Darby (the father of the Rapture Doctrine)

The idea of the Rapture (or pre-tribulation Rapture) was to take a new shape under the theologian John Nelson Darby around 1830. John Nelson Darby was a minister of the Church of Ireland and founded his own denomination called the Plymouth Brethren. His idea of the Rapture would be based upon the alleged prophetic vision of a 15-year-old

Scottish girl named Margaret MacDonald. There are some interesting points to look at here:

1. The Rapture was not taught by the early Church.
2. No reputable biblical scholars or Christian theologians rely on Miss MacDonald's vision to support any view of the Rapture.
3. Darby was declaring a pre-Tribulation Rapture as early as 1827, three years before Miss MacDonald's prophetic vision upon which he claimed to base his idea of the Rapture upon.

What takes place after the Rapture:

After the Rapture, God will begin executing judgments against unbelievers, during period called the Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation all nations will attack Israel, and Jesus Christ will physically return, leading the armies of heaven. At the battle of Armageddon, they will destroy everyone who is not a believer. Then Satan will be bound, and Jesus will set up the Millennial Kingdom, headquartered in Jerusalem. Jesus and the saints will rule over the nations of the Earth for a thousand years. During this period there will be people born who are not loyal to Christ. This is quite strange, don't you think? These people who are not loyal will not be obvious to spot. Therefore, at the end of the thousand-year period, God will release Satan again and let him tempt those who inhabit the Earth. A large group will take arms against the Lord and they will be defeated. Then, Christ, will judge all who have ever lived, rewarding His followers and punishing Satan's followers. After that, God will destroy heaven and Earth because they have been polluted by sin. He will create a new heaven and a new Earth and put those who were saved in the new Earth where He will rule forever.

Biblical Texts used to Support the Rapture:

1 Thessalonians 4.¹³ We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus, we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore, console one another with these words.

This passage contains the main description of the Rapture. A believer would use this to show how persons would be taken up into the clouds to be with Jesus. Remember this was written around 51 AD. Paul is apparently correcting a false understanding when he wrote this passage. Some speculate that the Thessalonians believed that only those who

were alive at the second coming of Christ would have the possibility of sharing the new Kingdom at Jesus' return. Some might have felt also that their Christian friends who had died in sin would not take part in the Parousia.

Matthew 24.36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone., ³⁷ For as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ In [those] days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. ³⁹ They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be [also] at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be out 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. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

Believers of this passage use it to support this notion of a Rapture or "Christian Abduction". Hopefully, not like an alien abduction.

Counterpoints to using these texts to back up the Rapture:

Sadly, to interpret this passage [Matthew 24.36-42] in this way would literally be at odds with what Christ says in Matthew's gospel only a few verses in front of this.

Matthew 24.29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

These verses tell us that the Son of Man will come after the tribulation, not before. Therefore, a Christian abduction or Rapture could not be applicable to this scenario. For this return will take place in a period of tribulation when the tranquility implied by Matthew 24.40-41 will not exist. According to the Rapture doctrine, the pairs of persons described will each contain one who is faithful, who will be taken, and one who is not, who will be left. However, during this period the faithful and unfaithful will not likely be together as described. The unfaithful, who will be wearing the mark of the Beast [666] are supposed to be persecuting the faithful, putting them to death. Logic would say that the faithful person would not be quietly and peacefully work next to the unfaithful person who is trying to kill him. Also, this return of the Son of Man will be preceded with the darkening of the sun and moon, the mourning of the tribes of the earth, and the trumpets of His angels. Thus, those who will be taken up into the clouds to meet Christ will not be taken by surprise (Christian Abduction) as implied by Matthew 24.40-41. Rather, they will have to wait their turn, since the resurrected faithful dead will rise first according to 1 Thessalonians 4.16.