

# THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS

compiled by Rachel Cory, December 25, 2007

## 1. What is meant by the term "rapture?" (The term is not in the Bible.)

Many Bible prophets spoke of a terrible "time of trouble" just before the "end of the age." Many Christians believe that before this last period of "tribulation" begins, Jesus will return for his church. These people will be "caught away" by Christ, to be with Him in heaven. They will simply disappear, every one of them at the same moment. This is called the "rapture." Those who are "left behind" (the Jews and the wicked) will have seven years of testing and trouble before Christ returns in glory (with his saints who were raptured) to rule on earth for a thousand years.

## 2. Let's briefly review the history of this doctrine.

Evangelicals in Great Britain founded a group called The Plymouth Brethren around 1830. One of their most gifted teachers was John Nelson Darby, who developed a new variety of premillennialism (the teaching that Jesus will return before the millenium). This new teaching was called "dispensationalism." Darby taught that God's method of dealing with mankind was different during different eras of human history. His method of dealing with the Israel was different from His way of dealing with the Gentiles. Darby taught that Israel and the church were two distinct and absolutely separate peoples of God.

The prophecies of Daniel 7-9, allotted 70 "sevens" to Israel. Darby reasoned that Jesus was put to death at the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> "week" of years. By that reckoning Jesus should return 7 years later, to set up His kingdom on earth. To explain why Jesus did not return at that time, Darby said that the 70<sup>th</sup> week was delayed. This was called the "postponement theory." When the Jews rejected their Messiah, Jesus suspended the prophetic timetable, and turned to the Gentiles. The "Church Age" had begun, during which Christ would build up His "heavenly people." This long age of Gentile domination Darby called "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

At the end of the "church age" Christ will remove His "heavenly people" from this world, and resume His dealing with Israel. The 70<sup>th</sup> week (7 years) of Daniel's prophecy begins when the church is removed from the world to heaven. After the church is "raptured" to heaven, the Antichrist comes to power. He deceives the Jewish people for the first half of the 7 years, then becomes a dictator who demands worship during the last half of the 7 years - called the "tribulation," or the "time of trouble." God punishes those who have persecuted His people by pouring out great plagues. Finally, at the end of the 7 years, Christ returns to set up His earthly kingdom, when He will reign in peace for 1000 years.

Later C.I. Scofield, an American follower of Darby, published the "Scofield Reference Bible" which contained the dispensational views. Scofield's commentary was printed on the lower half of each page of the Bible. Scofield's views were widely accepted, and to this day, are deeply held belief by many evangelical denominations. ("Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming" by Timothy P. Weber 1979)

## 3. Our belief differs from that of John Nelson Darby and C.I.Scofield?

**First:** I believe that God's method of saving individuals from sin, and Satan's domination, has always been the same. The study at this web site titled "Grace and the Law" explains why I believe this is so.

**Second:** I believe that Gentiles who come to faith in Christ as Messiah, are grafted into Israel (see Romans chapter 11, and Ephesians chapter 2). True Israel and the church (congregation) are one and the same. I'm working on a study covering this topic.

**Third:** I believe that the 70 "sevens" of Daniel chapter 9 will be 70 literal weeks without any interruption, at "the time of the end." This also, will be discussed in another study.

**Fourth:** I believe that Christ returns for all of His people on the same day, following "three and a part years" of terrible persecution.

**Fifth:** I do believe that Christ will remove His people from this earth before the seven last plagues.

## THE RAPTURE: PART TWO

4. **II Peter 3:10, Luke 12:39-40, I Thess 5:2,4, Revelation 16:15: All of these verses say that Christ's coming will be a surprise, very sudden, "like a thief in the night." Doesn't that imply something secret and sudden with no warning signs?**

LUKE 21:34-35 describes those who will be surprised by Christ's coming. Only the wicked will be surprised. To them He will come like a "thief in the night." God's people will be expecting Jesus and will be ready.

REVELATION 3:3 "... if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

II PETER 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

COMMENT: This coming will be sudden and will be a surprise to the majority,  
but it will definitely NOT be secret!

5. **What other Bible verses describe the Second Coming of Jesus?**

MATTHEW 24:27 "For as lightening cometh out the east and shineth even unto the west, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be".

I CORINTHIANS 15:52 "for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised..."

PSALM 50:3 "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence,"

REVELATION 1:7 "... every eye shall see Him..."

MATTHEW 24:31 "...He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other,"

COMMENT: This doesn't sound very secret!!

6. **Those who believe in a "secret rapture" teach that there are two "comings"  
-- the first, a secret coming in presence to rapture true believers,  
-- the second, His coming in glory, when He will save some of those who were "left behind" at the rapture and have since repented, and slay those evil doers who have survived the plagues.**

The Bible uses two Greek words, which are both translated "coming".

The Greek word "**parousia**" is translated: "coming" - 22 times, and "presence" - 2 times.

Those who teach a "secret rapture" say that "parousia" refers to the secret silent coming in "presence."

The Greek word **apokalupsis** is translated:

"revelation" - 11 times, "be revealed" - 2 times, "manifestation" - 1 time.

(None of these are in the context of the Second Coming.)

In the context of the Second Coming "apokalupsis" is translated:

"is revealed" - 1 time, "appearing" - 1 time, and "coming" - 1 time.

Those who believe in a "secret rapture" say that " apokalupsis" refers to the visible, glorious, "coming" in power.

To study the use of these words for yourself, go to a Bible concordance. Notice carefully the use of these words, "parousia" and "apokalupsis", in context.

MATTHEW 24:37 "As in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man be".

LUKE 17:26,30 "As it was in the days of Noah ... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed (apokalupsis)

**COMMENT: These two texts describe the same event - Noah's flood, but one uses "parousia" the other uses "apokalupsis".**

II PETER 3:12 "looking for and hastening the coming (parousia) of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat"?

COMMENT: If the "parousia" is the "day of God" and on that day "the heavens will be dissolved" "and the elements will melt with fervent heat," then this cannot be the "secret coming" "in presence."

2 THESSALONIANS 2:2-8 "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. . . . then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming (parousia): Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."

COMMENT: The Lord will destroy this lawless one (the Antichrist) "by the brightness of His "coming" ("parousia"). Those who teach the secret rapture also teach that the anti-Christ will come to power during the tribulation period, *after* the secret rapture ("parousia"). But the verse above says that the Antichrist will come to power before the "parousia."

#### **7. Aren't there verses that speak of one being taken and another left behind.?**

MATTHEW 24:40-42 "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." ( also Luke 17:26-37)

#### **8. Rapture versus "translation."**

I personally don't like the word "rapture," because it is not in the Bible. The word describes the way that the people will feel who are caught up to be with Jesus - rapturous. I prefer the word "translation." (Hebrews 11:5). "Enoch was translated without seeing death." He was a "type" or representative of those living people who will be caught up to the clouds when Jesus returns. Moses is a type of those who have died and will be raised to life by Jesus when he returns.

**9. Those who teach a pre-tribulation rapture say that those who are left behind on earth will have another chance to repent and be saved.**

MATTHEW 13:36-42, 47-50 Read this passage carefully.

Notice: (A) "Let both grow together until the harvest" v.30 ...

(B) "The harvest is the end of the age." v.39

One harvest is described - not two.

LUKE 17:26-37. Study carefully the entire context of this passage.

Notice: (A) It will be like the days of Noah.

No one was "left" for a second chance after it started to rain.

(B) It will be like the days of Lot.. "The same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all". (v.29)

(C) "The other left"? Yes. But where are they left?

They are left where "vultures gather." (v.34-37)

MATTHEW 25:1-13. Study the parable of the 10 virgins.

Notice: There was no second chance. Those who did not go in with the Bridegroom were left in darkness. We must go with the Bridegroom (Jesus) when he comes. (also Luke 13:24-25)

JEREMIAH 8:20 "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved".

REVELATION 14:14-16 and 17-20.

These verses describe the final "harvest of the earth." First God's harvest (v.14-16); Second those who are left. The "vine of the earth" are left to destruction. No second chance is described.

**10. Didn't Jesus say that He would keep us "from the hour of temptation" that would come upon the whole world?"**

REVELATION 3:10 "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."

All parties agree that Jesus promised preservation. The question that divides us has to do with the nature of that protection. Yes. Jesus promised to keep us. But He keeps us by the power of His Spirit, not by removing us physically from the trial.

JOHN 17:15 Read Jesus prayer. "**I do NOT pray that You should take them out of the world,** but that You should keep them from the evil one." The Bible is full of stories of God's people who were sustained through times of trouble. Great believers like Daniel and his three friends, Queen Esther, Joseph, Job, Elijah, and Jeremiah. God did not remove them from the trial. They are examples for us in the last days to come.

**11. Doesn't Paul say that some will go first and others follow?**

**I THESSALONIANS 4:16-17** " For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God, And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

So the answer is yes!! But everything happens on the same day - the day that Christ returns.

**12. Three and a half years, forty-two months, 1260 days. The last period of terrible persecution before the return of Christ. Yes, God's people will be on the earth during that awful time.**

DANIEL 7:25-27 "He (the little horn antichrist power shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints will be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. But the court will be seated, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

REVELATION 13:4-5 (The deadly wound was healed and after that ...) "So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months." v. 7-8 "And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

REVELATION 11:3-7 "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. ... When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them."

**13. Will God's people remain on this earth during the trumpet judgments of Revelation and during the last plagues, called the seven vials?**

REVELATION 9:4 (during the 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment) "They (the demons) were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Revelation 7:1-8 tells of the judgments held until the servants of God are sealed. The fact that the demons are commanded not to harm anyone with this seal, implies their presence during the trumpet judgments. Revelation 11:15 As the very last trumpet sounds, "the kingdoms of this world, have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." I believe that this is the day when Christ will come for His own. Following this - the 7 last plagues, called vials, are poured out.

REVELATION Chapter 16 describes the vial judgments. These plagues are called "the great winepress of the wrath of God (Rev 14:20). "In them, the wrath of God is complete (Rev 15:1). There is no mention of any servant of God on earth during these last plagues. In fact, just before the last plagues are poured out, John the revelator sees those who have gotten the victory over the Beast and over his image, now standing on the sea of glass, which is before the throne of God in heaven. (Rev. 15:2, Rev. 4:6).

**GOD'S SERVANTS WILL BE SPARED THE "WRATH" TO COME**

I THESSALONIANS 1:10 "... wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

I THESSALONIANS 5:9 "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The fire did not fall on Sodom and Gomorrah until the angels had rescued Lot. The rain did not fall until Noah and his family were safe in the ark. The destroying angel did not pass through Egypt until God's children were safe behind the doors painted with the blood of the Lamb. The stubble of last year's fields is not burned until the harvest has been safely gathered in. God cannot completely withdraw His spirit from this world, so long as His servants are here. He cannot then pour out His final wrath, which results from the withdrawing of His spirit, until those servants are safe in the "Father's house." The Church is to expect trial, but not the "wrath of God."

We invite you to read the study titled "The Wrath of God" at this web site.

**GOD BLESS YOU, AS YOU CONTINUE TO SEARCH HIS WORD.**