

WHAT ABOUT THE RAPTURE?

By Paul O. Nichols

The term “rapture” comes from the Latin word “rapere,” which means “to carry away, snatch away.” Although the term is not found in the Bible, it expresses the essence of the doctrine. It teaches that Jesus is going to come and silently snatch away the righteous.

There are variations among those who hold the theory of “The Rapture.” All do not agree. But in spite of these disagreements, those who subscribe to the basic doctrine do not let denominational lines make much difference. Many have just blindly accepted the theory without serious investigation of the scriptures to see if the doctrine is true.

There are bumper stickers which say, “**IN CASE OF RAPTURE THIS CAR WILL BE DRIVERLESS.**” Driverless cars will collide in the streets. Airplanes will crash, and no pilot will be found. Husbands and fathers will not return home from work. Wives going about their domestic duties will suddenly disappear. Children will come home to empty houses. **That is, if the rapture theory is correct.**

Then will be “the Great Tribulation” which will last for seven years. During this time the wrath of the Lord will be poured out upon the unrighteous, because they rejected Him. Also, the Antichrist will be revealed.

At the end of “The Tribulation” Christ will return to the earth with 10,000 of His saints to fight “The Battle of Armageddon.” The Lord and His army will be victorious and will execute judgment on the ungodly, and Antichrist will be destroyed.

After the great victory, according to the Rapture theory, Christ will set up His kingdom, with headquarters in Jerusalem, and reign with His saints on David’s throne for a thousand years.

At the end of the one thousand years reign of Christ there will be a second resurrection, and all who remain in their graves from Adam on, will then rise from the dead and The Judgment will take place and all will receive their just deserts. The wicked will be raised and punished, and the saints will return to heaven with Jesus where they will live forever.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1. Neither the term “The Rapture” nor the doctrine is found in the Bible.

2. The return of Christ will not be secret. **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God...” (I Thes. 4:16).** “. . . The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” **(II Pet. 3:10).** **“Behold he cometh with clouds: and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” (Rev. 1:7).** The coming of Christ is going to be obvious to all people. It is going to be heralded with loud sounds and conspicuous sights, and everyone in the world will be aware of it.

3. The tribulation of the Rapture theory is based on a misinterpretation of Matthew chapter 24. This tribulation spoken of by Jesus was associated with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and was given in answer to the first question asked him by the disciples **(Matt. 24:1-3).** The tribulation did indeed take place before that generation passed away **(Matt. 24:34).**

4. According to the word of God there is going to be but one resurrection. It will include the righteous and the unrighteous. Jesus said, **“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28,29).** **“.....There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15).**

5. Based upon the Bible, the kingdom of Christ is not to be established in the future, as The Rapture doctrine would have us believe, but has been in existence for nearly 2,000 years. Furthermore, it is a spiritual, not an earthly kingdom. Jesus said, **“My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).** Christ gave to the apostle Peter the keys to the kingdom **(Matt. 16:18, 19).** On the day of Pentecost, AD 33, Peter opened the kingdom to the Jews **(Acts 2),** and to the Gentiles eight years later **(Acts 10).** Then John later stated that he was in the kingdom **(Rev. 1:9).** The Colossians had been translated into the kingdom **(Col. 1:13).** And the apostle Paul taught that the Christians had received a kingdom **(Heb. 12:28).** All of these things were written in the first century, and the kingdom was referred to as being in existence then. And **(Mark 9:1)** definitely puts the beginning of the kingdom in that generation who heard Christ promise its coming. **“And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power”.**

6. The book of Revelation, as recognized by all Bible scholars, is a highly symbolic book, and to literalize a 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth is a gross misinterpretation of the highly figurative context of **Rev. 20:1-7**. It is not an earthly reign, but one that is spiritual with victorious saints (**Rev. 20:4**). In **Rev. 6:9-11** the souls of the martyred saints were under the altar, but in **Rev. 20** they are pictured on thrones reigning with the Lord. This is a prophetic indication that Christianity will be triumphant over its enemies. The 1,000 years apparently symbolizes the completeness of that victory.

CONCLUSION

Scores of passages in God's word are contradicted by the so-called Rapture. It is a theory based on nothing more than misinterpretation of the teaching of the Bible.

Jesus will come "at an hour when ye think not" (**Lk. 12:40**). "For ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (**Matt. 24:42**). "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (**Mk. 13:32**). But when he comes, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God will be heard (**I Thes. 4:16**), "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (**I Cor. 15:52**); "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise" (**II Pet. 3:10**). "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even onto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (**Matt. 24:27**). ". . . Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him. . ." (**Rev. 1:7**). The coming of Christ will be obvious to all.

Right now Jesus is "the blessed Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (**I Tim. 6:15**); (**Rev. 17:14, 19:16**). He is reigning over His people right now, and He will continue to reign "till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (**I Cor. 15:25**). "And when all

things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (**I Cor. 15:28**). The apostle Paul teaches that when Christ comes, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (**I Cor. 15:23, 24**). His last great act of supreme authority will be to "judge the world in righteousness" (**Acts 17:31**). ". . . Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing" (**II Tim. 4:1**). (Not a thousand years later.) "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (**Matt. 25:31-34, 41, 46**). ". . . And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (**I Thes. 4:17**).

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (**John 8:32**).

Paul O. Nichols has served the Church of Christ faithfully for over sixty years.

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