

What is the Rapture?

Our modern concept of *rapture* seems to have little or no connection with an eschatological or end-times event. But the word is used properly of that event.

Rapture is a state or experience of being carried away. We are enraptured by the beauty of a sunset. Or we say that it is sheer rapture to hear a certain piece of music. We mean we are carried away by the experience.

The English word comes from a Latin word, *rapio*, which means to seize or snatch in relation to an ecstasy of spirit or the actual removal from one place to another. In other words, it means to be carried away either in spirit or body. Thus the rapture of the church means the removal of the church from earth to heaven.

Almost daily, some pundit will make some absurd proclamation to the effect that there is no Pre-Tribulation Rapture. They are not Bible scholars, but they may believe they are and they certainly want you to believe they are. I am here to tell you they are not much more than a Biblical fool. In almost all cases, they are merely parroting someone else and want to impress others as being somebody when they really are nobody! Quite often they are former Catholics, with no theological or formal Biblical education or training. These fake pseudo-scholars definitely lack the Biblical language skills or they would not be so dogmatic in their use of Matthew 24:36.

The Roman and Orthodox Catholic institutions have never believed or taught anything close to resembling the Rapture! It goes against their need to control their faithful! This is why their doctrine of Purgatory is as very essential as a means of control. With the growing scandal of the Vatican's involvement in Pederasty, Pedophilia, and sex trafficking, it is quite obvious that Rome is not "the" voice of moral authority! **The "Secret Doctrine"** of the Roman Catholic Institution is the same as the **"Royal Secret"** of Masonry (taught in the 30th through the 33rd degrees): **"The Masonic path to eternal life is in the sexual violation of little children."** As P.D. Stuart's book *'Codeword Barbelon'* relates on pg. 500, Rome is the Seat of Satan!

The aim here is not to expose Rome as Mystery Babylon, but to merely point out the reason for their attack on the Pre-Tribulation doctrine and why so. This will be the first of several short articles to address questions raised by folks on the Rapture.

But is this a biblical term? Yes. The Greek word from which we take this term *rapture* appears in 1st Thessalonians 4:17 and is translated "caught up." The Latin translation of this verse uses the word *rapturo*, from which we derive our English word *rapture*. So it is a biblical term that has come to us through the Latin translation of 1st Thessalonians 4:17.

The original Greek word in that verse is "*harpazo*". Like the Latin word it also means to snatch or take away, and it occurs fourteen times in the New Testament. It describes how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea -(Acts 8:39). Paul used it to describe his experience of being caught up to the third heaven -(2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Thus there can be no doubt that it is describing an actual removal of people from earth to heaven when used in 1st Thessalonians 4:17 of the rapture of the church.

What will this event be like? Paul answers in detail in 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 by focusing on five aspects of the rapture.

Return of Christ

There will be a *return* of Christ -(vs. 16). The Lord Himself will come for His people, accompanied by all the grandeur His presence deserves. There will be a shout, a command such as an officer gives his troops. The text does not say whether the Lord or an archangel will utter the shout, though the voice of an archangel will be heard. Michael is the only archangel so named in the Bible -(Jude 9), but it is possible that there are other archangels -(see Daniel 10:13, and notice that Paul wrote *an* archangel, not *the* archangel, in 1st Thessalonians 4:16). The trumpet of God will summon the dead in Christ to their resurrection and at the same time sound a warning to those who have rejected Christ that it is now too late to participate in the rapture. Clearly the rapture will not be a silent event.

Resurrection

There will be a *resurrection* -(vs. 16). At this point in history only the dead in Christ will be raised; that is, only Christians. Although there have been many believers since Adam, no believer was placed "in Christ" until the day of Pentecost when the baptism of the Holy Spirit first occurred -(Acts 2). So those raised at the rapture include all believers from the day of Pentecost until the rapture.

Priority will be given to the dead, who will be raised just before the living are changed. And yet both groups will experience their respective changes "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" -(1st Corinthians 15:52). The entire procedure will be instantaneous, not gradual. The Greek word for "moment" is the word from which the word *atom* comes. Because when the atom was discovered it was thought to be indivisible, it was named "atom." Even though subsequently the atom was split, the word still means "indivisible." The rapture will occur in an indivisible instant of time, like the twinkling of the eye.

Rapture

There will be a *rapture* -(vs. 17). Living believers will be caught up into the Lord's presence without experiencing physical death. Only two others have had that experience, Enoch and Elijah, but at the rapture all living believers will bypass death. That is why Paul called this translation from life on earth to life in heaven without dying a mystery -(1st Corinthians 15:51). Paul's use of the word *mystery* is like waving a red flag to let us know that he is about to tell us something that had not been revealed before. Resurrection was not unknown, for the Old Testament spoke of the resurrection of the dead -(Job 19:25; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2). So did

Christ -(John 5:26-29). But nowhere had God revealed that a large group of people would not have to die but would go directly from this life into God's presence. While Enoch's and Elijah's experiences illustrated it, they did not promise that experience to anyone until Paul revealed this mystery.

In 1st Corinthians 15:51-54 Paul tells us how it will happen. The bodies of those who have died before the Lord comes will have experienced corruption; therefore, they will need to put on incorruption at this time of resurrection. But the bodies of living believers will not have experienced the corruption of death; they will be mortal. So they will put on immortality by some unexplained process of replacing bodies subject to death (mortal) with bodies that will never die (immortal).

Strictly speaking, the word *rapture* relates only to the experience of living believers who are caught up into the Lord's presence. However, theologically speaking, rapture is used to label this entire event, including the resurrection of believers who have died as well as the translation of believers who are alive.

Reunion

There will be a *reunion* (vs. 17), first with loved ones and second with the Lord. In that instant of resurrection and translation, there will be countless reunions with loved ones. But the excitement of those reunions will pale in the light of what it will mean to see the Lord.

Where will He take us then? To the heavenly abodes He is now preparing for His own -(John 14:1-3). According to the Pre-Tribulation view, the church will be judged and rewarded in heaven while the seven years of Tribulation are being experienced on earth; then Christ and His church will return in great glory to the earth at the end of the Tribulation to execute other judgments and to establish His millennial kingdom.

Reassurance

There is *reassurance* from this doctrine -(vs. 18). "Therefore," Paul wrote, "comfort one another with these words." The word *comfort* also means "encourage." The doctrine of the rapture comforts all who have lost loved ones, with the reassurance that believers do not have to sorrow as others who have no hope. The truth of the rapture encourages us with a certain knowledge about the future and a firm hope that loved ones will be raised and living ones will be changed when the Lord comes.

The comforting and encouraging aspects of the truth of the rapture have validity whether one holds to the pre-, mid-, or post-tribulation view. But does not the partial rapture concept diminish the comforting and encouraging aspects of this doctrine? In that view there are several raptures, and all of them are rewards for overcomers. Thus the Tribulation will serve as a kind of purgatory, and the raptures become times of release from that purgatory.

Furthermore, Paul's descriptions of the rapture in both 1st Corinthians 15 and 1st Thessalonians 4 hardly agree with the partial rapture view. Paul said that in that single moment of the

rapture, not throughout seven or more years of raptures, "we shall all be changed," not just the spiritual ones -(1 Corinthians 15:51). And he wrote those reassuring words to the Corinthians, many of whom could hardly be called overcomers as defined by partial rapturists!

Keep looking up!

Pastor Bob,
EvanTeachr@aol.com