

What About The Rapture?

by Casey Head

Chances are good that if you tune your radio or television to any religious channel that you will hear about the rapture and the end times. While this doctrine is extremely prevalent in the denominational world today, we must understand that it is completely false. It may be fanciful and frightening, but it does not harmonize with the New Testament teachings of the return of Christ. Let us show the error of the rapture doctrine.

What is the rapture? The word literally means “a catching away,” and while the Bible does clearly teach a “catching away,” the modern usage of the term “rapture” has with it the idea of an invisible, silent return of Jesus where the saints mysteriously vanish from earth, leaving the unrighteous behind for a seven-year period of tribulation. Perhaps you have seen bumper stickers that read, “In case of rapture, this car will be unmanned.” But will this actually take place? Will millions of people suddenly disappear while others are left behind wondering what happened? Will planes fall from the sky as cars and buses crash into one another? What does the Bible say?

Jesus Christ WILL return. Angels told the apostles in Acts 1:11, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” But will His return be secretive and silent? Contrary to what you may have been taught, the return of Christ will be visible, and in fact, it will be the loudest thing you have ever heard. In 1 Corinthians 15:52, Paul says of that last day, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last *trump*: for the *trumpet shall sound*, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed.” We are also told in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a *shout*, with the *voice of the archangel*, and with the *trump of God*: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” Finally, John says in Revelation 1:7, “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and *every eye shall see Him*.” Do these three passages convey a silent, secretive return? No! It will be visible and very noisy! There will be a trumpet, a shout, and the voice of an archangel, and John says that EVERY eye shall see Him. A good part of the rapture doctrine has already been denied.

Another large part of the doctrine involves ALL unrighteous people being left behind on earth to suffer seven years of tribulation. It is vital to realize that the Bible teaches ONE general resurrection of the just and unjust. Jesus tells us first in John 5:28-29, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the 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*.” And in Acts 24:15, “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just *and unjust*.” These two verses show that there will be one resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. Never in the scriptures do we find any silent, secretive catching away of the saints ONLY. Now another part of the rapture doctrine has been denied. The doctrine is falling apart right here before us.

One of the common prooftexts for the rapture doctrine is Matthew 24:36-42. Admittedly, if a person had been taught the rapture their entire life and read this passage, it would appear to confirm their belief, but a close examination of the passage actually says the opposite of what the rapture doctrine teaches. Let us consider the words of Christ, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, by My Father only. But *as the days of Noah* were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For *as in the days that were before the flood* they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered unto the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and *took them all away*; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Let us stop here for just a moment. As you can see, the final return of Christ is compared to the days of Noah when God sent the flood upon the world. Notice, however, that in the flood, the unrighteous were taken and destroyed, while Noah and his family were “left behind,” or spared. The point of the text is that we must be prepared for Christ’s return so that we too can be spared. Now, let us continue

in verse 40, “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.” At first glance, this appears to support the rapture doctrine, for some are taken and some are left. But is this saying that people will be literally taken into heaven while others are literally left behind on earth for seven years? No. The point is that some will be taken in judgement and destroyed because they are unprepared, just as those wicked people were in the days of Noah; others will be left behind or spared because they, like Noah and his family, are prepared to meet God. This is not a literal taking and leaving, but rather Jesus is making the point that we must be ready at all times! The most powerful proof-text for the rapture doctrine has been denied, as it says the exact opposite of what many believe it says!

Before we close, it is necessary that we establish what WILL happen at the return of Christ, just so that no one is confused. While we cannot set forth the exact order of the events, we can show the events as they are described in the scriptures. First of all, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven just as He ascended (Acts 1:11). Does it ever say in the New Testament that He will set foot on this earth again? No. In fact, it says that we will rise to meet Him in the air (1 Thess 4:17). He is not coming back to set up an earthly kingdom, but rather He is coming back to retrieve the kingdom so that He can deliver it to the Father (1 Cor 15:24). When He descends, the trumpet of God will be heard, along with a shout and the voice of an archangel (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16). Then there will be a general resurrection where our bodies are changed. At this time, the dead in Christ will be raised first (those righteous who physically die prior to the return), and then “We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess 4:17). At some point here, the earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-13), which also denies the organization of a millennial, earthly kingdom. Finally, there will be judgement. We are told in Matthew 25:31ff, “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of 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 also in 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must ALL appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

So will the rapture occur as the denominational world says it will? Is there going to be a secretive, silent return of the Lord where the unrighteous are left behind on earth wondering what happened? Will the events of the “Left Behind” series come to pass? We have adequately shown in this article the error of the rapture doctrine. Yes, Christ will return, but not silently and invisibly. It will be a glorious, visible return and there will be a great day of judgement- a day of happiness for the righteous, but a day of sorrow for the wicked. Are you prepared for that day? As the apostle Peter tells us in his second epistle, chapter three, verse eleven, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”