

The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Perhaps you have seen these or similar bumper stickers:
1. "In the event of rapture this car will be without a driver."
 2. "In the event of rapture this car will be empty."
- B. The person having such a bumper sticker believes himself to be among the redeemed of God.
1. He has been led to accept the notion that Christ is going to come at the beginning of a seven-year period of tribulation upon the earth.
 2. And rapture, that is according to their definition of it, Christ will take out of the world both the righteous living the righteous dead and keep them with Him somewhere in the heavens for a period of seven years.
 2. During that seven period of time the wicked will remain upon the earth and undergo a tribulation the likes of which has never been seen before or will ever be seen again.
 3. Following the end of that seven-year period of tribulation. Christ will return to the earth, set up His throne in literal Jerusalem and begin what we know as millennium and will reign there personally for a thousand years.
- C. Now, all of this is supposed to occur in this generation. You will have to have some of them explain to you what is meant by "this generation."
1. According to Hal Lindsey in his book, *The late Great Planet Earth*, this generation started on May 15, 1948.
 2. This is essentially the doctrine of pre-millennialism.
- D. Friends, we are concerned with souls.
1. Truth will make you free. **John 8:32** – "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
 2. Error will condemn your soul in hell. **Matthew 15:8-9** – "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.
But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men."
 3. It is imperative that men know the difference between truth and error. We must make the contrast between truth and error clear and plain enough so all men can understand it properly.
- E. Is the "rapture" true? Is pre-millennialism true?
1. The words "rapture" and "millennium" as such, do not appear in the Scriptures at all.
 2. "Millennium" simply means a thousand.
 3. "Rapture" is but one element or tenet in the overall theory of Pre-millennialism.

F. Pre-millennialism stated in 20 statements:

1. The kingdom is not now in the world, and will not be till Christ returns.
2. It is not the purpose of the gospel age (present age) to convert the world to Christianity, but to preach the gospel as a witness to the nations.
3. Immediately prior to Christ's return there will be a period of general apostasy or falling away.
4. We are now living in the latter stages of the church age, Christ will probably come in our life time.
5. At Christ's coming the righteous dead of all ages will be raised in the "first resurrection."
6. The resurrected dead together with the transfigured living saints are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
7. The judgment of all the righteous will then take place.
8. Before and during the tribulation period, the Jews are to be restored to the land of Palestine.
9. At the mere sight of their Messiah, the Jews are to turn to Him in a national conversion.
10. Christ, at his coming, will destroy the anti-Christ and all his forces in the battle of Armageddon.
11. After this battle, Christ will establish a world wide Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital, in which He and the resurrected and transfigured saints will rule for a literal thousand years in peace.
12. During this Jerusalem reign, the temple, feasts, fasts, priesthood, and sacrificial system are to be reinstated, though performed in a "Christian" spirit and by "Christian" worshippers.
13. During the golden age, nature's curse is to be removed. The desert will bloom as a rose; wild beasts are to be tamed.
14. At this time, great numbers of the Gentiles will turn to God and be in His Kingdom.

15. During the Millennium, Satan will be bound and cast in the abyss.
16. At the close of the Millennium, Satan will be loosed for a short time.
17. The Millennium is to be followed by a short but violent outbreak of wickedness, headed by Satan, which all but overwhelms the Saints and Jerusalem.
18. Forces of wickedness are to be destroyed by fire which is cast down from heaven.
19. The wicked dead of all ages are then to be raised in the "second resurrection," judged, and with the Devil and the wicked angels cast into hell.
20. Heaven and hell are then introduced in their fullness as the future homes eternally.

(The foregoing events are taken from The Millennium, pgs. 142, 143, by Loraine Boettner.)

- G. How do so many people come to believe in the theory of the rapture?
1. People want to hear the unusual, the amazing, the sensational, etc., because it creates wonderment.
 2. **One of the basic principles of Biblical interpretation is that you cannot place a construction upon figurative language that would violate the teaching of Scripture in plain, simple, and non-figurative language.**
 3. Thus, there is not one reference to the rapture at all. It is based upon an assumption rather than upon what the Word of God actually says.
- H. **The rapture theory essentially teaches two resurrections.**
1. 1st resurrection at the beginning of the rapture. The righteous dead and the righteous living will ascend with Jesus to some place in the heavens and there remain with Him throughout the seven-year period of tribulation.
 2. Following the end of the seven year period of tribulation upon the earth, the Lord will return, set up a literal throne in literal Jerusalem, reign there for one thousand years, at the end of which will come the general resurrection and the judgment.
 3. The rapture theory teaches that the first resurrection will take place at the beginning of the seven year period of tribulation (Righteous dead raised. The second resurrection will take place when the thousand-year reign of Christ in Jerusalem is completed.

THE RAPTURE THEORY EXAMINED IN LIGHT OF BIBLICAL TEACHING

- A. The Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, the Bible ruptures the rapture. We need to understand what God says on the subject, and friends, there is NO Scripture that even remotely teaches the rapture.
- B. Where then does this false teaching come from?
1. Those who propagate this theory do so by taking part (or some portion) of a certain Scripture, but not the whole Scripture, and wrest them and make them sound like what they are saying is true.
 2. Listen to Peter in **2 Peter 3:16** – “As also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”
- C. One of their proof texts is **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17** - “We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. “
- For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.
- For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
- For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
- Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”
1. Explain the background of text.
 2. **Verse 16** – “. . . and the dead in Christ will rise first.”
 - a. The rapture theory teaches this is to be the first resurrection at the beginning of the rapture when the righteous dead and living are gathered by the Lord into the heavens.
 - b. But where do they get that from? They get it from human imagination.
 3. But “first” before what?
 - a. When there is a first there is going to be something second or something that follows.
 - b. Remember that a text extracted from its context becomes a pretext. I have heard bro. Guy N. Woods say, “A passage taken out of context becomes a pretext.”
 - c. It enables men to develop their own philosophy around a single word.
 1. You cannot make the Scriptures contradict themselves and be pleasing to God.

2. You cannot lift a word out of a verse or a verse out of a context and make it support some preconceived idea and still be pleasing to God.
4. But “first” before what? Read **verse 17** and you will find the answer. “Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”
 - a. Does verse 17 say, “then we which are alive and remain shall be with the Lord seven years?” NO! It says “. . . And so we shall always be with the Lord.”
 - b. This passage is dealing with the end of time.
 1. Some will disagree by saying that there is to be a thousand or so year difference between the resurrection of the righteous dead and the resurrection of the wicked dead.
 2. Where do you read about that in the Bible? You don’t!
 - c. This passage does not even talk about the wicked dead. Paul is talking about the righteous dead.
- D. In fact, there is no difference between the resurrection of the righteous dead and the wicked dead. **John 5:28-29** – “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”
 1. ALL the dead will come forth when they hear His voice.
 2. The voice in John 5:28-29 is the shout of 1Thessalonians 4:16.
 3. This is the general resurrection of ALL the dead.
- E. Someone may say that those remaining cannot be immediately transferred to heaven because flesh and blood cannot enter heaven. The Bible answers that.
 1. **1 Corinthians 15:50-57** – “Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.
But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, Where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. **James 2:26** – “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”
 - a. We bury dead bodies . . . not live ones. Otherwise that would be both immoral and illegal.
 - b. The body in the cemetery is awaiting the resurrection.
 - c. The spirit (soul) has gone on to the receptacle God has prepared for it.
 - d. The spirit that lived in the body is not there when you bury the body in the cemetery. You don’t bury live people . . . you bury dead people.
 - e. **Genesis 35:18** – “It came about as her soul was departing (for she died) . . .”
 1. The soul of Rachel was leaving her body.
 2. Jacob buried Rachel’s lifeless body, but he never buried Rachel for her soul had departed from the body that he buried.
 - f. The bodies of your loved one that you placed in the cemetery will come forth during the resurrection . . . but you never put your loved one in the cemetery at all.
 3. Death for a Christian is but a temporary separation. “I’ll see you in the morning.”
 - a. Even before we meet the Lord we will be reunited.
 - b. Are you concerned about your loved ones? It is understandable that you are.
 1. There is the period of grief.
 2. The void within the heart.
 3. Emptiness within the life.
 4. The empty chair at the table.
 - c. Do not sorrow as those who have no hope. **1 Thessalonians 4:13** – “So that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.”
 4. No seven year period of tribulation . . . no rapture being taught in 1 Thessalonians 4.
- F. The dead will not be raised until the “last day.” When? On the last day.”
1. **John 6:44** – “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”
 2. The rapture theory would have Jesus raising them on the first day of the rapture period . . . the first day of the seven year period.
 3. If there was truth to such a theory, then Jesus had every opportunity to correct Martha, in **John 11:24**, did He not? “Martha said to Him, ” I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”
 - a. Jesus did not say, “Martha, you have it all wrong, he shall rise again on the first day.”

- b. Jesus did not have to correct her because she was right . . . the resurrection will be on the last day as taught in the Bible, not on the first day of a seven year period of tribulation as taught by the premillennialists.
- c. Resurrection when? “LAST DAY” John 11:24
- d. Resurrection who?
 - 1. Good and the bad. John 5:28-29
 - 2. No time difference at all between the resurrection of the righteous dead and the wicked dead.
 - 3. The Bible makes this clear.
- 4. The Lord will come back, yes! But the Lord will not come back to this earth but in the air, and He will not be coming back to reign a thousand years.

G. The rapturists describe the tribulation as the likes of which the world has never seen nor will ever see again. Friends, this is the death knell of the whole false theory and doctrine right there!

- 1. **Matthew 24:21** – “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.”
- 2. Rapturists go to Matthew 24:21 for their tribulation doctrine.
 - a. However, in this passage, Jesus is referring to the destruction of the Jewish state . . . more specifically, to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.
 - b. This was done in 70 A.D.
- 3. Jesus said the days would be shortened for the elect’s sake. **Matthew 24:22** – “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”
 - a. Christians are God’s elect. **Colossians 3:12** – “So, as those who have been chosen of God . . .” (NASB). “Therefore, as the elect of God . . .” (NKJV).
 - b. The church had been in existence for approximately 40 years in 70 A.D.
 - c. Christians fled into Perea when the Romans came to lay siege to Jerusalem.
 - e. Not one Christian died . . . not one! On the other hand, historical records note that some 1,130,000 Jews died and another 97,000 captives were taken to Egypt . . . but not one Christian perished.
 - f. Those days were shortened wherein the Romans did not go after the Christians into Perea after the horrible destruction of the Jews . . . Jewish state . . . and Jerusalem.
- 4. Pre-millennialists want to take Matthew 24 and apply it to the end of the world. Jesus didn’t!
 - a. **Matthew 24:19** – “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!” Matthew 25:19 would make no difference if the end of time was meant . . . but holding a day old infant

as you climbed down through the rocks in order to escape through the rugged Jordan valley, would.

1. Wilderness of Judea on the way to the wilderness of Perea.
2. Difficult time as they were exposed to the elements.
- b. **Matthew 24:20** would make no difference if the end of time was meant because your body would be changed. “Pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.”
 1. But escaping the Romans during winter and without proper clothing would create a tremendous hardship.
 2. **ILLUSTRATION:** Describe Christmas Even in Jerusalem after preaching in Jerusalem – December 24, 1972.
- c. Verse 20 would make no difference if the end of time was meant, but on the Sabbath Day the gates of the city would be closed and you would not be able to escape.
- d. Verse 18 would make no difference if the end of time was meant – but otherwise you would not have time to go back and get your coat and other clothes.
 1. Exposed to the elements.
 2. **ILLUSTRATION:** Jews taking Arab homes in Jerusalem in 1948.

H. **Premillennialists say that Christ is going to come back to the earth to be with us.** No Scripture so teaches!

1. **John 14:1-3** does not read, “Where YOU ARE there will I be also.” But rather it reads, “That where I AM, there you may be also.”
2. **1 Thessalonians 4:17** teaches that we won’t meet Him on the earth, but rather we will be “Caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”
3. **1 Peter 1:4** – “To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”
4. **2 Peter 3:10** – “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” NOTE: Since the earth will be burned up, there will be no earth to set foot on.
5. Instantaneously:
 - The 2nd coming of Christ
 - The general resurrection
 - The end of time
 - The dissolution of all matter
 - Heaven will begin
 - Hell will set in
 - a. You can’t blink your eyes fast enough to observe it all.
 - b. It is all over when Christ comes again.

I. Pre-millennialism has a strong hold on many souls.

1. Bro. Foy E. Wallace's definition of pre-millennialism.
 - a. **PRE** means before.
 - b. **MILLENNIAL** means a thousand.
 - c. **ISM** means it isn't so.
 2. There is not a word of truth in pre-millennialism from the center to the circumference.
 3. **Further, in his monumental work, God's Prophetic Word, bro. Foy E. Wallace compiled a listing of seven things NOT mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6 that are absolutely essential to a millennial theory.** Revelation 20:1-6 does not mention any of the following:
 - a. It does **NOT** mention the **SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**.
 - b. It does **NOT** mention a **BODILY RESURRECTION**.
 - c. It does **NOT** mention a **REIGN ON EARTH**.
 - d. It does **NOT** mention the **LITERAL THRONE (OF DAVID)**.
 - e. It does **NOT** mention **JERUSALEM OR PALESTINE**.
 - g. It does **NOT** mention **US**.
 - h. It does **NOT** mention **CHRIST ON EARTH**.
- J. **Premillennialists teach that Christ has not begun His reign, and won't until after the seven year period of rapture and tribulation.**
1. **1 Corinthians 15:22-26** – "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.
 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,
 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.
 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.
 The last enemy that will be abolished is death."
 - a. Note verse 25.
 - b. Compare the following:
 1. **PRE-MILLENNIALISM** teaches that Christ is NOT now reigning.
 - **THE BIBLE** teaches that Christ IS NOW reigning and will continue to do so until all enemies have been placed under His feet.
 2. **PRE-MILLENNIALISM** teaches that Christ will begin his reign when He comes the third time.
 - **THE BIBLE** teaches that the second coming of Christ will end His reign.
 3. **PRE-MILLENNIALISM** teaches that when Christ comes the third time God will give Him the kingdom.
 - **THE BIBLE** teaches that when Christ comes the second time he will deliver the kingdom to God. **1 Corinthians 15:24-25** – "Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the

God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet”

2. Now, my listening friends, WHO are you going to believe?
 - a. **Theory . . . or the Bible?**
 - b. **Man . . . or the Lord?**
 - c. **Philosophy . . . or inspiration?**
3. A split second following the resurrection there won't be a dead man in all of time or eternity. Death will have been conquered in the general resurrection.
4. **WHEN** is it going to occur?
 - a. At the last trumpet. 1 Thessalonians 4
 - b. At the last day. John 6:44
5. **WHO** is going to be raised? Everybody . . . both the good and the bad. John 5:28-29
5. **WHEN** is it going to happen? At the shout of the Son of God. John 5:28-29 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16
7. Christ will have been victorious in His reign.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Friends, here is no rapture . . . but there is:
 1. A Gospel to be preached.
 2. Truth to be obeyed.
 3. Souls to be saved.
 4. A Heaven to be gained.
 5. A hell to be shunned.
 6. An invitation to be accepted.
- B. When it all ends, you and I will be there.
 1. **Romans 14:12** – “So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”
 2. There **WILL BE** a second coming of Christ.
 3. There **WILL BE** an end of time.
 4. There **WILL BE** a general resurrection.
 5. There **WILL BE** a judgment.
- C. Are you ready for that time to come? This is the all-important question of this hour.
- D. **ILLUSTRATION:** Dean Farrar was a privileged personal friend of Queen Victoria, though he seldom referred to the distinction. But on the first anniversary of the accession of Edward VII to the throne of England, during the service in Canterbury Cathedral in England, he told of how the Queen, after hearing one of her chaplains preach at Windsor on the second coming of Christ, spoke to the Dean about it and said, “Oh how I wish that the Lord

would come during my lifetime.” Why does your majesty feel this very earnest desire?” asked the great preacher. With her queenly charm, she said, “Because I should so love to lay my crown at His feet.

• **WHAT DO YOU NEED TO LAY AT JESUS FEET?**

E. **ILLUSTRATION:** She was a little six-year old, golden haired girl, with a simple, trusting faith. One morning a guest in her home found the little girl busily working in her bedroom, carefully putting things right for the day. The guest commented on how neat the little girl’s room was, “Oh how nice and neat your room looks, with everything put in order.” The little girl replied sweetly and softly, and simply: “Yes, I am putting it in order, for Jesus might come today.”

• **WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PUT IN ORDER TODAY?**

F. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**

G. I know where your loved ones are going to put your body (in the cemetery), but where are you going to put your soul?