

PROBLEMS WITH THE RAPTURE

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Intro.

1. The events of this past election in Alabama have led some to shout that what is taking place is just another sign that the Lord is coming soon.
2. Listening to Birmingham talk radio has brought this to light.
3. The reasoning is, because Alabama elected a pro-abortion senator the end must be soon because the moral collapse of America can be clearly seen in this.
4. Therefore, the Lord is coming soon to bring about the rapture.
5. I've heard this on the radio this week, and we have heard similar statements because of other perceived signs of the times pointing to the entire world's moral collapse.
6. This is nothing peculiar to our generation but has been happening for a couple of hundred years.
7. The idea of a rapture is relatively new religiously speaking.
8. The idea of a rapture is found as early as 1590 but it didn't gain any traction until the early 1800's in a book by a Catholic Priest.
9. Then, in 1827, a man named John Darby, part of the Plymouth Brethren religious group popularized it in his preaching.
10. In 1830, a Ms. Margaret MacDonald of Port Glasgow, Scotland, claimed to be given a vision by the Holy Spirit of the second coming of Christ in the form of a rapture.
11. However, it really took off in 1909 because of the Scofield Reference Bible and the footnotes in it that promoted Dispensational Premillennialism.
12. It has been promoted through the years by many in the religious world.
13. Is it true?
14. What we want to do is describe the doctrine, define some terms that are used in teaching this doctrine and then see how the doctrine stands up to a scriptural exam.

I. The doctrine described.

- a. Part of the total doctrine of premillennialism is the belief that Jesus will, within just a short time period, return to earth in a silent, invisible way to "rapture" the living and dead saints.
 - i. Then, a seven-year tribulation period will begin that will end in the battle of Armageddon.
 - ii. Once the Lord wins this battle, His thousand-year reign in Jerusalem on the throne of David will begin.
- b. What is believed to take place at the rapture will be the instant vanishing of all living Christians.
 - i. Cars, planes, trains, boats, all will be unmanned instantly if they were being controlled by Christians.
 - ii. There will be mass chaos and destruction because of this.
- c. All of these people, along with the righteous dead, will have been snatched up instantly, quietly, and invisibly.

II. Terms defined.

- a. The word "rapture" is not found anywhere in the New Testament.
- b. It is derived from a Latin word which means "to seize or snatch".
- c. Though nowhere used in the New Testament, the idea is believed to be found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
 - i. This passage is a comfort-bringing passage about the second coming of the Christ.

- ii. In verse 17, Paul, by inspiration, declares that those saints who are living when the Lord returns will be caught up in the clouds to meet Jesus.

III. The doctrine destroyed.

- a. There are numerous reasons why this doctrine is false.
- b. One is that 1 Thessalonians 4:13f does not address non-Christians at all.
 - i. There was a problem in Thessalonica about what happens to Christians who die before the Lord's return.
 - ii. Apparently some believed that those who died before that event had nothing to look forward to at death, much like atheists think today.
 - iii. Paul, by inspiration, addressed that false idea by giving hope that when the Lord returns, those that are dead in Christ will be raised and those who are alive will be called to the clouds to meet them.
 - iv. Nowhere in the passage does Paul address the unrighteous dead or living.
- c. Another reason is that when Jesus returns it will be visible.
 - i. When Jesus comes back, the whole world and universe will see Him, not just a few.
 - ii. Matthew 24:15-22 tells of the destruction of Jerusalem and that some would say Lo here or lo there is the Christ, but they were not to be believed because... (Matthew 24:27).
 - iii. Acts 1:11 says they beheld Jesus leave and that He would return in the same way.
 - iv. 1 John 2:28 – manifested means to reveal or show oneself.
 - v. Hebrews 9:28 – shall appear means to become visible.
 - vi. The doctrine of the rapture has Jesus not appearing until His 3rd coming.
- d. Another reason is that when Jesus returns it will be audible.
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
 - ii. 2 Peter 3:10.
- e. A final reason is that both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected when the Lord returns.
 - i. Acts 24:15 – one resurrection.
 - ii. John 5:28-29 – the resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous will be at the same hour.
 - iii. Both the good and the bad will be rewarded at the time of the Lord's return (Matthew 25:31ff; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Conclusion

1. The doctrine is truly a fiction of the active imagination of some.
2. The New Testament does not even use the word rapture.
3. This doctrine is destroyed for these reasons mentioned.
4. Br. Wayne Jackson, from whom a lot of this material came sad that the rapture theory is a ruptured theory.
5. What it has done is give hope to those who don't obey the Lord in that they will get another chance if the Lord returns during their lifetime.
6. It also has caused confusion about the return of the Lord.
7. The Lord is returning at a time none of us know so we all need to be ready for it.
8. Are you ready?

Much of this material came from an article by Wayne Jackson