



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone  
who asks you for a reason for your hope"  
1 Peter 3:15

The Rapture: Left Behind  
or Left OUT of Scripture?

# The Rapture

You may have heard the term, “**The Rapture**” from a Protestant friend or relative. Although the word itself doesn’t appear in Scripture, the idea that Christ will come back to rescue the “**elect**” from the coming period of persecutions against the Church is only about 185 years old. It is taken largely from a faulty interpretation of Scripture.

The word “**Rapture**” is taken from the **Latin Vulgate** translation of **1 Thess. 4:16-17**, which says:

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall 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."

The Koine Greek of **1 Thess. 4:17** uses the verb form **ἁρπαγησόμεθα** (*harpagisometha*) and is rendered as *harrazō* (**ἁρπάζω**). The Latin Vulgate translates the Greek as *rapiemur* from the Latin verb **rapio**. It's interesting to note that Protestants, who usually reject the Latin Vulgate as a “perverted” translation, will randomly adopt *some* of its terminologies, such as “**Rapio**”.

The Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Communion, Lutheranism and many Protestant Calvinist denominations do not hold to Rapture Theology.

# Rapture's Roots

Rapture theology finds its origin in the 1830's, when an English Protestant minister named **John Nelson Darby** began teaching this new idea to his followers. Although he studied Law at Westminster School and Trinity College - Darby chose to enter the diaconate of the Church of Ireland instead of practicing law. He was later ordained as a priest in that church.

Over the next several years, his theology developed and changed to the point where he rejected the very idea of a clergy - claiming that it limited the Holy Spirit from speaking through any and all members of the Church. He eventually broke away from the Church of Ireland, found some like-minded believers and formed **The Plymouth Brethren** - a conservative, low church, nonconformist, evangelical Christian movement. It was around this time that he began to formulate and preach a new doctrine: "**The Rapture**".

There was no Scriptural basis for Darby's "**Rapture**" Theology. Neither was there a basis for it in Tradition since it had never been a teaching of the historic Christian Church. Since then, Darby's novel invention has been picked up by many newer Protestant groups, that is, groups which have sprouted up over the last 100 years or so. It has also become the topic of many books and films, such as the "**Left Behind**" series.

The Bible is clear that the Second Coming of Jesus will be preceded by a period of persecution (**Matt. 24:20-31; Mark 13:19-27; 2 Thess. 2:1-4**) commonly referred to as the "**Tribulation**". However, there is no mention of Jesus coming a second time to rescue his believers only to return a *third* time. When we read **1 Thess. 4:17** in context with the other Scripture verses that mention the Tribulation and the Second Coming, it is clear that is speaking about what is going to happen when the Lord returns at the end of time – not before.

It is interesting to note that none of the Protestant Reformers taught about this supposed event.

Before the 1800's, every Protestant denomination agreed with the Catholic Church that this event of being "***caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air***" would occur simultaneously with the Second Coming of Christ. Like many other aberrant pseudo-Christian teachings, belief in the Rapture has become widespread among Evangelical and Fundamentalist groups.

The idea that God's people will be rescued on earth from earthly persecutions is completely **anti-Biblical**. At no time in human history did God ever pull His people out of worldly danger. The early Christians suffered horribly at the hands of their persecutors. They were crucified, fed alive to wild animals, beheaded and set on fire for following Christ. The idea the Christians in the future will be spared persecution is wishful thinking – especially when Jesus called it a ***blessing*** (**Matt. 5:10**).

On the contrary – the Scriptures are full of admonitions that we will indeed **suffer** for Christ (**Matt. 10:38, 16:24, Mark 8:34, John 12:24, Rom. 8:17, 2 Cor. 1:5-7, Eph. 3:13, Phil. 1:29, 2 Tim. 1:8, 1 Peter 2:19-21, 4:1-2**).

Jesus told His disciples that they would be ***hated*** by the world because it hated **Him** first. He stressed the fact that those who wished to be His disciples must pick up their cross **DAILY** and follow Him (**Matt. 10:38; Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; Luke 14:27**). Christ promised His followers everlasting joy in Heaven – but ***not*** here on earth.

Because this has never been a teaching of the Catholic Church, many anti-Catholics use this as fodder to lure Catholics away from their faith. Sadly, they have succeeded in doing just that with this false doctrine of men (**Mark 7:7-8, Col. 2:22**). Jesus warned of false prophets whom he called, ***“wolves in sheep’s clothing”***, that would lead people astray with aberrant teachings and about whom we would recognize by their fruits (**Matt. 7:15-16**).

As Catholics, we must be on our guard - not only as it pertains to our Lord’s glorious return, but also to be wary of false teachings that would lead us away from His mystical Body – the Church.

Darby’s Rapture theology gave rise to what became known as **“Dispensationalism”**. Dispensationalism is a timeline, dividing history into about 6 "dispensations". They represent various ages in which God interacted with humans in distinct ways. Darby taught that we were currently in the Dispensation of the Church, which was started during St. Paul’s ministry.

His “**Premillennialist**” position was adopted by another 19<sup>th</sup> century man named **C.I. Scofield**. He picked up on Darby’s teachings and taught this view in the footnotes of his ***Scofield Reference Bible*** – although who had no formal training in theology. It was widely distributed in England and America – and many Protestants accepted this view ***without question*** - as completely authoritative.

Scofield, who later abandoned his wife and 2 daughters and married another woman, added the title “**D.D.**” (**Doctor of Divinity**) to his name – even though there is no record of his having earned a doctorate in Divinity.

Consequently, **Premillennialist Rapture Theology** spread like wildfire – which is evidenced by the fact that it has become a cottage industry. Along with the millions of adherents who blindly follow this false teaching, it has spawned countless books, songs, movies and websites – all dedicated to something that was invented by a guy in England less than 200 years ago and promoted by another guy who had no formal theological education.

# The Millennium

The “**Millennium**” refers to **Rev. 20:1-3, 7-8**:

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a **thousand years**, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the **thousand years** were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while . . . . And when the **thousand years** are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth."

The period of a thousand years, is the reign of Christ, and the thousand-year period is popularly called the “**millennium**”. Millennialists usually fall into 3 camps: **Pre-Millennialists**, **Post-Millennialists** and **Amillennialists**.

# Pre-Millennialism

This is currently the most popular view among Fundamentalists and Evangelicals – even though just a little over a century ago – they held to the *Amillennialist* view. Most “End Times” books, like **Hal Lindsey’s “Late Great Planet Earth”** and the **“Left Behind”** series by **Tim LaHaye** and **Jerry Jenkins** take the premillennial point of view.

Like postmillennialists, premillennialists believe that the thousand years is an earthly golden age during which the world will be thoroughly Christianized. However - premillennialists believe that it will occur after the Second Coming and not before. They believe that Christ will reign **physically** on earth during the millennium. The Final Judgment will occur after the millennium is over – which they interpret to be an exactly **one-thousand-year** period.

# Post-Millennialism

Postmillennialism is *"that view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the millennium."*

**(\*\*Lorraine Boettner, *The Millennium*)**

Postmillennialists believe the Second Coming will occur after the Millennium, although they believe the thousand-year period in **Rev. 20** to be a symbolic period of time rather than literal. It was a popular view of nineteenth century Protestants.

\*\*Incidentally, Lorraine Boettner also authored the deeply-flawed book, ***"Roman Catholicism"*** which became known as the **"Anti-Catholic Bible"**.

# Amillennialism

The amillennial view interprets **Rev. 20** symbolically and sees the millennium not as an earthly golden age in which the world will be totally Christianized, but as the present period of Christ's rule in heaven and on the earth through his Church. The Protestant Reformers held to this view. This has always been the View of the Catholic Church.

Amillennialists show that the thrones of the saints who reign with Christ during the millennium are not set on earth – but instead, appear to be set in heaven (**Rev. 20:4; cf. 4:4, 11:16**) and that Christ is **NOT** mentioned as being on earth during this reign with the saints.

# Three Camps

Just like **Millennialism** – Rapture believers are also divided into 3 camps:

## **Pre-Tribulation**

The belief that the Rapture will occur before the coming Tribulations.

## **Mid-Tribulation**

This view claims that the Rapture will occur during the middle of the Tribulation.

## **Post-Tribulation**

This is the belief that the Rapture will occur after the coming Tribulation.

Eventually, a fourth view developed that claims that there won't be a single rapture - but a series of smaller, “**mini-raptures**” that will occur at different times before, during and after the Tribulation.

# “Rapture” Verses

As with **1 Thess. 4:16-17**, there are a few other verses that have been taken out of context to promote the false idea of a “Rapture”.

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For example - the “*Left Behind*” series of books and movies get their name from the following passage of Scripture:

## **Matt. 24:40-42**

Then two men will be in the field; *one is taken and one is left*. Two women will be grinding at the mill; *one is taken and one is left*. Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

The problem with this is, that when we read these verses in their full context – we see that those who are “**left behind**” are the ones who are **SAVED** – not the ones who are *taken*.

Let's examine the 3 verses *prior* to this passage:

**Matt. 24:37-39**

As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when **Noah entered the ark**, and they did not know until the flood came and ***swept them all away***, **so will be the coming of the Son of man.**

We see here that the ones being “**taken away**” are being taken away to **judgment** - *not* Heaven.

In **Luke 17:34-37** we see a similar comparison:

**Luke 17:34-37**

I tell you, on that night there will be two people in one bed; ***one will be taken, the other left.***

And there will be two women grinding meal together; ***one will be taken, the other left.***” They said to him in reply, “**Where, Lord?**”

A Dispensationalist might answer this question by saying that the ones being “**taken away**” here are being “**Raptured**”. **HOWEVER** – Jesus tells the Apostles:

**Luke 17:37**

He said to them, “Where the body is, there also *the vultures will gather.*”

Does *that* sound like Heaven to you?

Throughout the history of the world, man has never been satisfied with what God has taught and has instead tried to find his own way.

The myths and fairy tales started by John Nelson Darby and proliferated by his adherents has catapulted the world into complete confusion regarding the End Times. ALL along, the answers have been right there in Scripture and taught by the guardian of the Holy Deposit of Faith – the Catholic Church.

# Early Church Fathers on the Resurrection of the Body

## **Pope Clement I**

"Let us consider, beloved, how the Master is continually proving to us that there will be a future resurrection, of which he has made the Lord Jesus Christ the firstling, by raising him from the dead. Let us look, beloved, at the resurrection which is taking place seasonally. Day and night make known the resurrection to us. The night sleeps, the day arises. Consider the plants that grow. How and in what manner does the sowing take place? The sower went forth and cast each of the seeds onto the ground; and they fall to the ground, parched and bare, where they decay. Then from their decay the greatness of the master's providence raises them up, and from the one grain more grow and bring forth fruit" (*Letter to the Corinthians* 24:1–6 [A.D. 80]).

## **The Apostles' Creed**

"I believe in . . . the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh. Amen" (*Old Roman Symbol* [A.D. 125]).

## **Polycarp of Smyrna**

"[W]hoever perverts the sayings of the Lord for his own desires, and says that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, such a one is the firstborn of Satan. Let us, therefore, leave the foolishness and the false-teaching of the crowd and turn back to the word which was delivered to us in the beginning" (*Letter to the Philippians* 7:1–2 [A.D. 135]).

## **Aristides**

"[Christians] have the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ himself impressed upon their hearts, and they observe them, awaiting the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come" (*Apology* 15 [A.D. 140]).

## **Second Clement**

"Let none of you say that this flesh is not judged and does not rise again. Just think: In what state were you saved, and in what state did you recover your [spiritual] sight, if not in the flesh? In the same manner, as you were called in the flesh, so you shall come in the flesh. If Christ, the Lord who saved us, though he was originally spirit, became flesh and in this state called us, so also shall we receive our reward in the flesh. Let us, therefore, love one another, so that we may all come into the kingdom of God" (*Second Clement* 9:1–6 [A.D. 150]).

## **Justin Martyr**

"The prophets have proclaimed his [Christ's] two comings. One, indeed, which has already taken place, was that of a dishonored and suffering man. The second will take place when, in accord with prophecy, he shall come from the heavens in glory with his angelic host, when he shall raise the bodies of all the men who ever lived. Then he will clothe the worthy in immortality, but the wicked, clothed in eternal sensibility, he will commit to the eternal fire along with the evil demons" (*First Apology* 52 [A.D. 151]).

"Indeed, God calls even the body to resurrection and promises it everlasting life. When he promises to save the man, he thereby makes his promise to the flesh. What is man but a rational living being composed of soul and body? Is the soul by itself a man? No, it is but the soul of a man. Can the body be called a man? No, it can but be called the body of a man. If, then, neither of these is by itself a man, but that which is composed of the two together is called a man, and if God has called man to life and resurrection, he has called not a part, but the whole, which is the soul and the body" (*The Resurrection* 8 [A.D. 153]).

### **Tatian the Syrian**

"We believe that there will be a resurrection of bodies after the consummation of all things" (*Address to the Greeks* 155 [A.D. 170]).

### **Theophilus of Antioch**

"God will raise up your flesh immortal with your soul; and then, having become immortal, you shall see the immortal, if you will believe in him now; and then you will realize that you have spoken against him unjustly. But you do not believe that the dead will be raised. When it happens, then you will believe, whether you want to or not; but unless you believe now, your faith then will be reckoned as unbelief" (*To Autolytus* 1:7–8 [A.D. 181]).

### **Irenaeus**

"For the Church, although dispersed throughout the whole world even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and from their disciples the faith in . . . the raising up again of all flesh of all humanity, in order that to Jesus Christ our Lord and God and Savior and King, in accord with the approval of the invisible Father, every knee shall bend of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue shall confess him, and that he may make just judgment of them all" (*Against Heresies* 1:10:1–4 [A.D. 189]).

## **Tertullian**

"After the present age is ended he will judge his worshipers. . . . All who have died since the beginning of time will be raised up again and shaped again and remanded to whichever destiny they deserve" (*Apology* 18:3 [A.D. 197]).

"Therefore, the flesh shall rise again: certainly of every man, certainly the same flesh, and certainly in its entirety. Wherever it is, in the safekeeping with God through that most faithful agent between God and man, Jesus Christ, who shall reconcile both God to man and man to God, [and] the spirit to the flesh and the flesh to the spirit" (*The Resurrection of the Dead* 63:1 [A.D. 210]).

"In regard to that which is called the resurrection of the dead, it is necessary to defend the proper meaning of the terms 'of the dead' and 'resurrection.' The word 'dead' signifies merely that something has lost the soul, by the faculty of which it formerly lived. The term 'dead' then applies to a body. Moreover, if resurrection is of the dead, and 'dead' applies only to a body, the resurrection will be of a body. . . . 'To rise' may be said of that which never in any way fell, but which was always lying down. But 'to rise again' can only be said of that which has fallen; for by 'rising again' that which fell is said to 're-surrect.' The syllable 're-' always implies iteration [happening again]. We say, therefore, that a body falls to the ground in death . . . and that which falls, rises again" (*Against Marcion* 5:9:3–4 [A.D. 210]).

## **Minucius Felix**

"See, too, how for our consolation all nature suggests the future resurrection. The sun sinks down, but is reborn. The stars go out, but return again. Flowers die, but come to life again. After their decay shrubs put forth leaves again; not unless seeds decay does their strength return. A body in the grave is like the trees in winter: They hide their sap under a deceptive dryness. Why are you in haste for it to revive and return, while yet the winter is raw? We must await even the spring of the body. I am not ignorant of the fact that many, in the consciousness of what they deserve, would rather hope than actually believe that there is nothing for them after death. They would prefer to be annihilated rather than be restored for punishment" (*Octavius* 34:11–12 [A.D. 226]).

## **Aphraahat the Persian Sage**

"Therefore be instructed by this, you fool, that each and every one of the seeds is clothed in its own body. Never do you sow wheat and reap barley, and never did you plant a vine and have it produce figs. But everything grows in accord with its own nature. So also the body which has been laid in the ground is the same which will rise again" (*Treatises* 8:3 [A.D. 340]).

## **Cyril of Jerusalem**

"This body shall be raised, not remaining weak as it is now, but this same body shall be raised. By putting on incorruption, it shall be altered, as iron blending with fire becomes fire—or rather, in a manner the Lord who raises us knows. However it will be, this body shall be raised, but it shall not remain such as it is. Rather, it shall abide as an eternal body. It shall no longer require for its life such nourishment as now, nor shall it require a ladder for its ascent; for it shall be made a spiritual body, a marvelous thing, such as we have not the ability to describe" (*Catechetical Lectures* 18:18 [A.D. 350]).

## **Epiphanius of Salamis**

"As for those who profess to be Christians . . . and who confess the resurrection of the dead, of our body and of the body of the Lord . . . but who at the same time say that the same flesh does not rise, but other flesh is given in its place by God, are we not to say that this opinion exceeds all others in impiety" (*The Man Well-Anchored* 87 [A.D. 374]).

## **The Nicene Creed**

"We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; we look for a resurrection of the dead and life in the age to come. Amen" (*Nicene Creed* [A.D. 381]).

## **The Athanasian Creed**

"[Jesus Christ] sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead; at his coming all men have to rise again with their bodies and will render an account of their own deeds; and those who have done good will go into life everlasting, but those who have done evil, into eternal fire [Rom. 2:6–11]. This is the Catholic faith, unless everyone believes this faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved" (*Athanasian Creed* [A.D. 400]).

## **Augustine**

"Perish the thought that the omnipotence of the Creator is unable, for the raising of our bodies and for the restoring of them to life, to recall all [their] parts, which were consumed by beasts or by fire, or which disintegrated into dust or ashes, or were melted away into a fluid, or were evaporated away in vapors" (*The City of God* 22:20:1 [A.D. 419]).

"God, the wonderful and inexpressible Artisan, will, with a wonderful and inexpressible speed, restore our flesh from the whole of the material of which it was constituted, and it will make no difference to its reconstruction whether hairs go back to hairs and nails go back to nails, or whatever of these had perished be changed to flesh and be assigned to other parts of the body, while the providence of the Artisan will take care that nothing unseemly result" (*Handbook of Faith, Hope, and Charity* 23:89 [A.D. 421]).