

GNITN

The Rapture The Blessed Hope or Blessed Nope

Week 4

The Rapture Ain't No New Thing

Not A New Doctrine

Pretrib Rapture opponents say that the teaching of the Rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation starts wasn't even around until around 1827 by a man named John Darby. In fact one man offered anyone \$500 if anyone could produce written evidence that the teaching existed before 1812. He paid the money and we'll see why he did today. And yes, I will take a deep dive on that Darby theory, but not today. Previously we see that the Rapture was seen in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. Today we're going to see that the teaching of the Rapture goes back to the early church fathers and then throughout history. As you will see, this doctrine is hardly a new teaching whether people accept it today as such at all. The first person we'll reference is Victorinus I who says this in his [commentary](#) on the Book of *Revelation*:

"And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is completed the indignation of God." For the wrath of God always strikes the obstinate people with seven plagues, that is, perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; and these shall be in the last time, when the Church shall have gone out of the midst. (Commentary on the Apocalypse 15.1)

This was written about AD 240. He also wrote this:

"And the heaven withdrew as a scroll that is rolled up." For the heaven to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away. (Commentary on the Apocalypse 6.14)

Two More

While there is some dispute over who actually wrote [this](#) in AD 373, there is no doubt it was written in context of a pre-tribulational Rapture:

"For all the saints and the elect of God are gathered prior to the Tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sin."

The man who it is attributed to is Ephraim. Another man, Shepherd of Hermas back in AD 150. While his writings were popular in the early church they should not be considered Scripture by any means. However he does show in his [writings](#) that many second century Christians believed in a pre-tribulational Rapture:

Go therefore, and declare to the elect of the Lord His mighty works, and tell them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation which is to come. If therefore ye prepare yourselves beforehand, and repent (and turn) unto the Lord with your whole heart, ye shall be able to escape it, if your heart be made pure and without blemish...and the golden part are ye that has escaped from this world...Ye have now the symbolism also of the tribulation which is coming in power. But if ye be willing, it shall be nought.

Cyprian – AD 250

Cyprian was the bishop of Carthage about AD 250. Notice he told his readers that the coming resurrection was the hope of Christians, and pointed out the Rapture "snatching us" should motivate us as we see the last days approaching in these [two quotes](#):

*“we who see that terrible things have begun, and know that still more terrible things are imminent, may regard it as **the greatest advantage to depart** from it as quickly as possible...And do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, that by an **earlier departure you are taken away, and delivered** from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent? We should consider, dearly beloved brethren we should ever and anon reflect that we have renounced the world, and are in the meantime living here as guests and strangers. Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, which **snatches us hence**, and sets us free from the snares of the world, and restores us to paradise and the kingdom.”(Treatise of Cyprian – 21-26)*
*Antichrist is coming, but above him comes Christ also. The enemy goes about and rages, but immediately the Lord follows to avenge our sufferings and our wounds. The adversary is enraged and threatens, but there is One who **can deliver us** from his hands.(Epistle 55, Cyprian AD 250)*

More Recent Evidence

[According](#) to William C. Wilson PhD, Colorado Christian University there have been no less than 24 references to the teaching on the Rapture in the Middle Ages starting in the 1320's through 1748. These include teaching that there will be a separate appearance of Jesus in the clouds before He steps on the Mount of Olives and that the saints will be taken to Heaven for safety escaping troubles. While opponents of a pre-trib Rapture can base their arguments on other things, they should just stop using the argument that it wasn't taught until Darby in 1827. Overall, it should be noted that many of the people mentioned also are quoted as saying that the Rapture occurs 3 ½ years before the Second Coming of Jesus and the start of the Millennium. Ordinarily this would make the proponents of a mid-tribulation rapture, however they also believed that the Great Tribulation was only 3 ½ years long so they are still pre-tribulationist believers in the Rapture.

Immanency And Its Importance

Many people have said that the Rapture can't happen in any fashion until certain things happen first. They maintain that things like Israel becoming a nation had to happen or that the events listed in Matthew 24 have to occur before the Rapture is even thought about. However, the Bible doesn't give us that teaching. No, the Rapture is said to happen at any time. How do we reconcile these beliefs? Here are four things that help us on this point:

There are four criteria that could be used any of which may indicate immanency:

- 1) The Rapture can occur “at any moment,” so we should live ready for Christ's sudden return.
[Titus 2:13](#) — Believers are “*looking for the blessed hope... the appearing.*”
- 2) The Rapture is given as hope/encouragement, with no warning that believers must endure the Tribulation first.
[1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#) — The catching up ends with “*comfort one another.*”
[John 14:1-3](#) — “*Let not your heart be troubled... I will come again and receive you.*”
[1 Corinthians 15:51-58](#) — Our transformation is presented as victory and steadfast hope.
- 3) The Rapture gives hope to believers and is not presented as God's judgment on them; believers are promised deliverance from wrath.
[1 Thessalonians 1:10](#) — Jesus “*delivers us from the wrath to come.*”

[1 Thessalonians 5:9-11](#) — Not appointed to wrath; therefore “*comfort one another.*”

[Romans 5:9](#) — Saved from wrath through Christ.

- 4) The Rapture is described as “near,” with watchfulness emphasized rather than a required list of signs first.

[Philippians 4:5](#) — “*The Lord is at hand.*”

[Hebrews 10:37](#) — “*He who is coming will come and will not delay.*”

[Mark 13:32-37](#) — You don’t know when; therefore watch, lest He come suddenly.

What Did Jesus Say About Immanency?

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”
([John 14:1-4](#), NIV)

Most scholars interpret Jesus’ statement as referring to the same event described by the apostle Paul in [1 Thessalonians 4](#), which today is known as the Rapture. And He was speaking metaphorically when He said “I go” and “if I go.” He wasn’t speaking metaphorically about His coming death or resurrection, but rather to a literal departure in which He would bodily ascend into Heaven. This occurred in [Acts 1:11](#). And when He said “*I will come again to receive you unto myself*” also means a bodily and literal coming back in the Rapture. And Jesus will take us up to be with Him. Jesus made it clear the reason He was coming back and that was to be with Him where He had gone. The place? Heaven where He went to begin preparing places for us. This isn’t rocket science, you know. The context is clear. Then going back to the verses in **John 14** Jesus told His disciples that they knew the way. When Thomas asked how Jesus told Him it was going to be through Him. So, Jesus said that He would go to Heaven (at His ascension), later return to earth (bodily and literally) for His people, and then (at the Rapture) take them (literally) to Heaven to be with Him. Also, Jesus made no mention of trial or tribulation in the preceding chapter and in **John 14** there is not any mention of things that have to happen before He returns for them. No signs are referred to that signal this event. They just have to be ready for it to happen at any time. And John mentions this doctrine of coming at any time in **Revelation 22**:

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” ...

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” ... He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” ([Rev 22:7, 12, 20](#), NKJV)

The Value Of Being Prepared

Many people have taught that the Rapture cannot happen until something happens first, like the rise of the Antichrist or Israel becoming a nation again. We must remember that these are signs that will happen before His Second Coming and not the Rapture. Paul in his writings mentions that “*denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*” ([Titus 2:12-14](#), NKJV)

And there is a difference between knowing and not knowing. That statement is kind of hard to follow, but it's not what you think. What I'm getting at is knowing that there are things that will happen after the Rapture and many times we use those things to say that the Rapture won't happen before them. There are things that definitely will happen once the Rapture occurs since it starts in motion the revealing of the Antichrist and so many other things, but the Bible teaches us that we should be looking for Jesus, not the Antichrist. And in living prepared as we look to Jesus.

Rapture Distractions

These points are not necessarily making big points, but they do need to be broached. I believe that Satan doesn't know when the Rapture of the church will occur, so he has had a man prepared to become the Antichrist at all times. Hitler could very well have been one of those men as well as any number of malevolent persons throughout history. This is why looking for the Antichrist is futile since Satan is always preparing people to fill that role so there will be logical and viable men at all times. Thinking the Rapture is closer just because an Antichrist candidate is alive is a distraction. Also, could there be a time interval between the rapture and the tribulation? I'm going to rock your world now. The answer is "yes." Thinking that the War of Gog and Magog needs to happen before the Tribulation starts and the 7 years of burning weapons and burning bodies as well is another distraction. There are a whole host of things that could happen between the Rapture and the Great Tribulation. What event triggers the Tribulation? The Antichrist signs a covenant with Israel. From that point on the 7 year period begins. A lot must happen before that occurs and the Rapture of the church does indeed precipitate this rise of the man of iniquity, but we as believers must not keep looking for the Antichrist for our hope. Again, we must live our lives looking for Jesus and His hope!