

The Rapture – Answering the Critics

This generation is full of scoffers, mocking the prophesied return of Jesus Christ to Planet Earth. This is as the great Apostle Peter foretold it would be at the end of the age of grace (Church Age): “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

God’s prophecies are 100 percent accurate, so it doesn’t surprise in the least that there is the scoffing and mocking today, exactly as one of God’s prophets said there will be as time nears the Lord’s return. Many signals are occurring simultaneously, and with phenomenal frequency and intensity, pointing to where we are on God’s prophetic timeline. Chief among these are all of the geopolitical dynamic intrigues surrounding the nation Israel –God’s prophetic timepiece. The sneering at the thought that there could possibly be a rapture just throws fuel on the fire of the end-of-days deluge –the end that is coming in with a flood of last-days indicators as foretold by Daniel the prophet: “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof [shall be] with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined” (Dan 9:26).

Daniel was foretelling what would happen from the time the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would die for the sins of mankind until the very end of human history at Armageddon. Great, convulsing, prophesied issues and events would, near the very end of the age, he forecast, gush through the generation alive at the time like a flood.

Daniel’s End-Time Flood

One of those predicted events of the end-time flood is the level of anger that will be against believers who proclaim that one of the most stupendous events of all human history will one day –perhaps very soon—take millions upon millions from the earth’s surface in a fraction of a second.

We receive in our e-mail each week any number of messages declaring that the truth we champion regarding Bible doctrine and prophecies –particularly the pre-trib rapture of the Church-- are everything from ludicrous to heretical. This criticism gets especially intense whenever the raptureready.com website is written or spoken about in a major media outlet. That is to be expected, because there can be no spiritual discernment among those of the lost world. Believers in Jesus Christ can understand, while those who do not belong to God’s family through belief in His only begotten Son cannot understand:

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:11-14).

Defense of Rapture to Lost and Saved

Trying to explain or defend the rapture to the world of the lost is, therefore, fruitless. There is just no way they can come to understand or believe this doctrine, unless and until they repent, ask for--and accept--God’s grace gift offer of salvation through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross at Calvary nearly two millennia ago. We can go through the vast body of scriptural text, laying out the Bible facts as we are confident God’s Word presents truth about the rapture. But, unless and until one is capable of spiritual discernment from the Holy Spirit, a person, no matter how intellectually brilliant, can never come to believe those facts. They might even come to understand the facts in a purely cerebral sense, but never truly comprehend them to the point of knowing that the rapture is a cataclysmic event in the future of one particular generation of earth’s inhabitants.

So, our efforts to explain the rapture will meet with quite limited results, seeing as how there is a great spiritual discernment disconnect, when explaining to those who don’t know Christ for salvation. This we accept, thus can move ahead with limited frustration in putting the truth about prophecy and the rapture before these as best we can.

Dealing with the Body of Christ--all born-again believers--is quite another thing, when it comes to our frustration meter. It becomes a bit more disconcerting when our efforts to put out truth about prophecy, and the rapture in particular, is met with the same arguments, no matter how thoroughly and how cogently we organize and present what God’s Word has to tell His children about these matters.

Hard-Shell Rapture Detractors

There are, of course, the die-hard preterists (believing that most all prophecy has been completed or should be spiritualized) and the reform replacement theological enclaves (those who declare God’s promises have been taken from Israel and given to the church). These make their livings throwing mudballs --usually with stones at the centers--at those of us who proclaim the truth that Jesus will come for His Church --all born-again believers--BEFORE the tribulation era --the last seven years of human history that culminates at Armageddon. These, who refuse to see two programs of God’s dealing with mankind, Israel , and the Church --these two dovetailing into one magnificent prophetic culmination-- castigate us who believe that God deals with His creation called man dispensationally (the ages of Adam, Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, the Church, Tribulation, Millennium, etc.). Sometimes, it seems fruitless to try to break through the thick spiritual iron wills of these, in trying to present truth about the rapture. But, these are not the most troubling that seem to fit the 2 Peter 3: 3-4 description, so far as scoffing is concerned. The more concerning, to me, at least, are those who, despite being given, time after time, the same tremendously in-depth explanation from God’s Word about the rapture and the truth that it will be a pre-trib one, continue to come to us with the same arguments to the contrary. This, despite the fact that they visit the Rapture Ready website, and can read more than 15,000 articles on matters of God’s truth, many dealing specifically with eschatology.

These are Christians who just seem to have it in their determination that they must go through – endure—the tribulation, the time about which Jesus foretold the following: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).

The Tribulation, if we can imagine, will be worse than the concentration camps, torture chambers, crematoriums of Hitler, or the most terrible days of the inquisitions with all of the devilish methods of torture. Yet, there seems to be a need –they deludedly think—for some Christians to go through that time, during which Antichrist will do his dead-level best to kill every person who refuses to worship him.

Anti-Rapture Example

I’ve chosen one letter from such a Christian. It is a simple and mild letter; no mud-ball throwing. But, it represents the most troubling of all of the critics of the rapture of the Church, in my view. It is most troubling that these types think as they do, because it shows an almost willfulness against accepting God’s promises, summed by this passage: “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9).

Here is what she wrote, in part:

“I know that the Tribulation is going to be extremely bad and even worse than I can imagine but I sincerely believe I along with you and other Christians that are living at the time, will be going thru the bad. I am prepared mentally and will do whatever comes my way to either get thru or stand up and say no when needed. If I am one that is to [be] beheaded then so be it. I know GOD will be holding my hand and whatever comes my way, HE will see me thru. If I can be of any use to GOD to help save people then I am prepared to do as HE wants. I have many family members that are not believers now and pray daily that will change. I do believe that many souls will be saved. I know that I am a sinner and do not like verses of the Bible taken out of context. The whole book or at least the chapter needs to [be] read and understood not just a verse here and now to prove a theory that did not even come into being until a couple of hundred years ago. How is every eye going to see JESUS return if HE comes back in secret. Just don't believe any are going to be "raptured away". The Bible states that HEAVEN will be coming down here not us going up there.”

Tragic Misconceptions Unscriptural

The Christian sister makes a number of statements of misconception that are dealt with through hundreds of the thousands of articles on the RR website. This is my problem. Many criticisms of us who hold to the pre-trib rapture are issued forth by those who obviously have never mined the rich resources available to them, before making their criticisms/argumentations.

She writes that she is sure that she will be going through the tribulation, in order to stand for Christ and help God save people out of that horrendous time. She charges that she has disdain for those who twist Scripture out of context, with those (like us, I presume) using scattered and sporadic Scripture passages to make our points.

She, at the same time, provides no Scripture for any of her criticisms of the rapture “theory,” as she puts it. However, most who make this charge do so, using Scripture from Revelation that they declare shows saints in the middle of that time of Tribulation. Thus, they conclude, the Church is right there, taking the brunt of Antichrist’s rage and God’s wrath.

Dispensational Discernment Required

Indeed, believers will populate that era by the millions. It will, many who study that period believe, be a time of the greatest coming to Christ in the history of man. What the writer of this letter—and others—fail to recognize, or even consider, is that God deals with man, including His children, in dispensations. There are saints of the Church Age at present, and there will be saints during the tribulation. Neither will be together in the same dispensation.

Jesus told us that He would build His church upon the gospel message the apostle Peter had just given, telling Jesus that he believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God: “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:17-18).

Do you see that? The gates of hell –Satan—will not prevail against the Church. That’s all about the Church Age saints.

The Revelation tells quite another story for God’s saints. The following Scripture is speaking, of course, about Satan’s great tyrant, Antichrist, during the Tribulation era: “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (Rev. 13:7). The Church will not be “overcome” by Satan, because it won’t be here. The tribulation saints (those who accept Christ after the rapture) will be overcome to a large extent –lose their physical lives for the cause of Christ.

Myth-Making Against Rapture

Our Christian critic-friend proves that she has at least done some study, but not from God’s Word. She has read the books and literature of those who incessantly and speciously claim that we who believe in the pre-trib rapture have learned our “false” doctrine from a 19th-century witch, who somehow influenced John Darby to later perpetrate the hated rapture theory.

The most ludicrous of the criticisms is that we base our view that there will be a rapture upon Margaret MacDonald’s vision in the 1800s. It makes me almost nauseous to have to even address this –for the thousandth time, when, if the critics would just read what is already written on the subject on the site, it should quell their proclivity to make such ridiculous claims. But, I will briefly answer again, those who are so intellectually and spiritually lazy.

The rapture, the "catching up" (harpazo) was revealed by Paul the apostle. It is a mystery he gave us through Holy Spirit inspiration, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The Rapture was not the concoction of John Darby, who picked up this teaching, and

gave it improved order of presentation centuries after the doctrine was believed and taught by the early church fathers (first two centuries AD).

The rapture isn't built on one or two verses, but on the entire body of Scripture. When viewed in totality, and in context, the doctrine flows with prophetic signals we observe occurring in the world today--i.e., the world isn't getting better and better as the "kingdom-now" people believe (that the Church will make the world better until Christ can return to set up His throne). The pre-trib rapture view puts forward that the world will grow worse and worse. The Church will be removed from earth, then God's judgment will begin to fall on rebellious earth-dwellers.

Which do we see happening today? The world getting better and better --or- are things looking worse and worse for Planet Earth? Read the daily headlines, or watch the hourly news, and you will have your answer.

Two Phases of Second Coming

Again, Paul shows us the mystery --i.e., he reveals the mystery of the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55. The mystery he is expanding upon is the wonderful promise Jesus made as shown in John 14: 1-3. Jesus is coming for us --before God's wrath must fall.

A foreshadowing of that principle is seen in Genesis, chapter 19, when God said that He could do nothing in the way of sending judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah until Lot was first removed. Lot represented the only righteousness God recognized. It was Lot 's faith --as puny as it was-- that kept him and the other few believers of his family from the time of God's wrath-- again, Revelation 3:10.

Our critic asks how all eyes can see Christ return, if He comes secretly in some rapture. She declares she just doesn't believe anyone is going to be raptured away, and she states Christ will be coming down to earth, not Christians going up to Him. Again, she, and those who fill her head with anti-rapture rhetoric fail to, or willfully refuse to, see God's dispensations in dealing with man. In the case of the return of Christ, Scripture makes it clear there are two separate returns. These are at least seven years apart, one from the other.

Jesus will return at some unknown time in the rapture. Jesus, himself, likens that coming to a thief-in-the-night experience for those on earth. They won't know what has happened, and certainly won't see Christ. Paul says it is a moment in time when all believers (the Church) will meet Jesus in the air: "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: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Jesus will come the second time, following at least seven earth years, at the close of the tribulation era, known also as "Daniel's seventieth week." This time He will come all the way to the planet, and every eye will behold Him. There will be absolutely no doubt about this re-entry and landing: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a

flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:11-15).

Scriptural Proof Required

As stated before, each of these things intended to deny the validity and credence of pre-trib rapture are dealt with at great length, and in tremendous depth throughout the RR website. All opposing views are carefully dissected, and with Scripture given at every point along the way in addressing any and every question. But, it DOES take determined research to seek out truth found in the articles –truth that is God’s Word, not merely ours.

And, here is the main crux of this dear lady’s problem in not discerning truth about Christ’s coming for the Church –for her. She presents not one Scripture to back up any of her assertions, declarations, or suppositions/postulations. She simply parrots things critical of the rapture doctrine she has read or heard from those who mock, without anything of spiritual substance to back her/their criticisms.

My intention is not to pick on her. I want only to used her method of criticism –a method used in almost every instance by those who listen to the anti-rapture crowd-- as an example to show there is no foundation to her/their argument/denial that the rapture is a doctrine taught in God’s Word. This is our answer to such critics. Study the Word of God. Make your criticisms from His Word –as the dear woman says—not from just a Scripture here or there, but from the whole context of the matter, whatever the matter happens to be.

I have studied most all of the positions and variations thereof involved in these arguments for decades --which gives away my age, I guess. The pre-trib view of prophecy yet future is absolutely the only one that makes sense in the totality of scriptural context, and in terms of what we see unfolding today in things of geopolitics, global socio-economics, and religion.

Salvation – Rapture Inseparable

The Rapture is an issue incontrovertibly linked to salvation --something Jesus did on the cross, which puts us in God's family when we truly believe. That faith keeps us from the time of God's wrath --both in the coming tribulation, and in eternity. Wrath and judgment must fall upon rebellious mankind, because of sin. Jesus paid the price for that sin. He said on the cross "It is finished." Sin was forever paid for at that moment, for those who would accept his sacrifice --the only sacrifice that God will accept --the precious blood of His Blessed Son.

We are told we as Christians, while in the flesh, will have tribulations (troubles). Certainly Christians have had troubles down through the years. Persecutions --genocide, martyrdom, etc. These horrors are still happening in some places around the world. But, this was not, and is not,

God's wrath and judgment, but was, and is, satanic rage against God's people. The tribulation will include satanic rage, but it will be within the horrific storm of God's wrath and judgment.

Christians (those who have been --as our critic says-- saved following the rapture-- will certainly suffer satanic rage, but not God's wrath. Many will be martyred, as in the times of the early persecutions --like Christians are being martyred in some nations today. But, we are told that we (Paul denotes the difference between Christians of the Church Age and those who aren't in God's family by the use of pronouns) we aren't appointed to wrath, but to salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are told by Paul to "comfort one another with these words"--not look to fear, but to comfort (read 1 Thess. 4:18, and 5:9-11). We will be kept out of "the time of testing (the apocalypse or tribulation), John was told by Jesus (Rev. 3:10).

Rapture Ready or Not...

Now, you might not agree, and that's fine. If you know Christ you are going instantly to Him anyway, when Jesus says "Come up hither," as He did to John in Revelation 4:1-2. You will have no other choice, if you are in God's family. But, please don't ever think --or claim--that there is only scattered verses here and there, or that there is no tremendously deep body of scriptural evidence and proofs beneath the truth of the pre-trib rapture.

Again, you can disagree, but, please don't accuse us of not knowing about the other views, and, don't just blindly accept what opponents falsely say when they lie, proclaiming that we just believe in something a 19th-century Englishman said, or that we follow some woman who dabbled in the occult. That isn't true, and you should look more deeply into the evidence upon which we base these understandings, than just to take the word of those who make such shallow and deceptive accusations.

Put this Scripture in a place you can memorize it --and make it your model truth for avoiding the pitfalls of intellectual and scriptural laziness: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).