

Beginning Apologetics – The End Times

The Rapture I

September 27, 2009

“Learn to explain our faith *clearly*, to defend it *charitably*, and to share it *confidently*.”

I. The Rapture – Introduction

A. Eschatological Formulations and their problems(?)

1. There are four main approaches to eschatology prominent among Christian denominations today:

- a) *Post-tribulation Premillennialism*
- b) *Pre-tribulation (or Dispensational) Premillennialism*
- c) *Post-millennialism*
- d) *Amillennialism (The Catholic Church’s formulation)*

B. What is the “Rapture”?

1. The Rapture is a term taken from 1 Thessalonians 4:17:

a) *“Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

b) *From the Latin verb here used, rapiemur, has come the idea of “the rapture,”*

c) *This construction combines this verse with Matthew 24:40-41 (see the note there) // Luke 17:34-35 and passages from Revelation in a scheme of millennial dispensationalism.*

2. The “Left Behind” series has done much to advance this view

C. The “Fundamentalist” View of the Rapture

1. Really should be termed the “Dispensationalist” view of the Rapture (not all Fundamentalists buy into it)

2. This interpretation of 1 Thess 4:17 was popularized by John Nelson Darby, a former Anglican priest, in the 1830's. (picture [here](#))
3. Divides history into seven distinct "Dispensations", periods of time with their own role and purpose in God's plan (see chart [here](#))
4. WE will focus on two specific aspects of Dispensationalism and their problems:
 - a) *The view of Christ's coming;*
 - b) *The view of The Church*

D. Darby's Teachings

1. At Christ's first coming, Israel rejected Him, so Christ turned to the Gentiles
 2. He temporarily turned away from the Jews to punish them for rejecting Christ (Israel's prophetic clock stops ticking).
 3. When the Dispensation of the Church/Gentiles is fulfilled, Christ returns IN SECRET to get his people and return to Heaven.
 4. A seven-year period of Tribulation and destruction on Earth will follow; the Anti-Christ reigns
 5. After the Tribulation, Christ returns *publicly* and defeats the Anti-Christ
 6. The Jews will then accept Jesus as their Messiah (cf. Rom 11:25-26) and will become the kingdom people
 7. Christ reigns on Earth for a thousand years (cf. Rev 20:4)
 8. All Old Testament prophecies about Israel will be fulfilled during this time
- After the thousand-year reign, Satan will be unleashed and quickly conquered, and THEN the world will end.
9. THIS is why Dispensationalists focus on the State of Israel's creation in 1948 (Israel's prophetic clock restarted!)

II. Problems with the Dispensationalist View of the Rapture

A. A Faulty View of the Church

1. The view that the Church is a make-shift measure benefiting the Gentiles is *unbiblical*.

- a) *The Church is the Body of Christ (Eph 5:23; Col 1:24)*
- b) *The Church is the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2; Rev 21:14 and Eph 2:19-22)*
- c) *The Church is the Kingdom of Heaven*
- d) *The Church is the Bride of Christ the Jesus marries at the end of time*
- e) *Jesus promised to be with His Church until the end of time*

2. This view that the Church is just a passing phase until the Kingdom of Israel is restored

- a) *is found nowhere in Scripture.*
- b) *Contradicts clear Biblical evidence that the Kingdom of God is the Church*
- c) *Prominent Dispensationalists teach that the Church is the false religion that will align itself with the Anti-Christ (the Whore of Babylon of Rev 18)!*

B. A Faulty View of Israel

1. Catholic Theology Basics:

- a) *The Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament*
- b) *The OT Priesthood is fulfilled in the Priesthood of Christ.*
- c) *OT Sacrifices prefigured the sacrifice of Calvary*
- d) *The OT Israel is fulfilled in the NT CHURCH!*
- e) *This is basic to understanding what's wrong with the dispensationalist view of Israel!*

2. The current nation of Israel is a *political* construct – *not a theological* one!

- a) *The UN is secular and anti-Christian*
- b) *The Nation of Israel was created in 1948*
- c) *The OT Israel was a covenant nation established by God*

3. We DO believe that the Jewish people are still a part of God's plan (St. Paul tells us so on Romans 11, esp. Rom 11:25-32), and will one day become a part of the NT chosen people.

²⁵ I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers, so that you will not become wise (in) your own estimation: a hardening has come upon Israel in part, until the full number of the Gentiles comes in,

²⁶ and thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come out of Zion, he will turn away godlessness from Jacob;

²⁷ and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

²⁸ In respect to the gospel, they are enemies on your account; but in respect to election, they are beloved because of the patriarchs.

²⁹ For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ [5](#) Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they have now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may (now) receive mercy.

³² For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.

4. There is *no* religious significance to the contemporary nation of Israel.

C. A Faulty Reading of 1 Thessalonians 4

1. 1Thess 4 is the linchpin of the Rapture for our separated brethren.
2. Remember 1 Thess 4:17 - Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord.
3. Read the verse: "...together with them..." With who? Read verse 16: For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
4. This passage is teaching about the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of Christ; some were apparently concerned that those who had died before the Second Coming would miss out on Christ's triumphant return.
5. NO ONE GETS "LEFT BEHIND".

D. A Faulty Reading of 1 Thess 4 – Part II

1. How does Paul speak of Christ returning?
 - a) *He says "coming", not "comings".*
 - b) *He says this "coming" will be preceded by the Shout of an Archangel (pretty loud!), and by a trumpet blast (loud enough to wake the dead!)*
 - c) *He says that those who will be raptured are those "who are left", meaning those who have survived and are alive when Christ returns.*
2. Where does Paul speak of Christ returning *secretly* to the Earth to *secretly* take folks away?
 - a) *Um...He doesn't!*
 - b) *There is no mention of a seven-year tribulation after "the elect" leave.*
 - c) *More importantly, there is no mention of Jesus switching directions!*

3. “Who makes the U-turn?”

- a) *The Greek word for “meet” is apantesis (ap-an' -tay-sis).*
- b) *Refers to the practice of prominent citizens going out to welcome an approaching dignitary and escorting him into the city.*
- c) *The citizens leave, meet the dignitary, and return with him to the city. The citizens make the u-turn.*
- d) *This is the way the word is used elsewhere in Scripture:*
 - (1) Matt 25:6: “At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' “
 - (2) Acts 28:15: “The brothers from there heard about us and came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us.”
- e) *So when 1 Thess 4:17 says both the dead and the living in Christ will rise to “meet” (apantesis) Christ in the Clouds, they are meeting Christ to escort him back to his destination: earth!*
- f) *Who gets “Left Behind”? NO ONE.*

4. What else do we know about “The Generation That Will Not Die”?

- a) *See 1 Cor 15:51-52: ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed,*
- b) *⁵² in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*
- c) *See Matt 24:29-31, which describes the same event as 1 Thess 4. (see the chart in the PowerPoint).*
 - (1) Interestingly, most Dispensationalists will say this refers to the end of the World, NOT the Rapture.
 - (2) Matthew 24:29 says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days..." there IS no rapture before the Tribulation; it happens “immediately after”, according to this verse!
- d) *See 2 Thess 2:1, 3, and 8:*
 - (1) 2 Thess 2:1 - We ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with him,...

(2) V. 3 - Let no one deceive you in any way. For unless the apostasy comes first and the lawless one is revealed,³ the one doomed to perdition,...

(3) V. 8 - ...And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord (Jesus) will kill with the breath of his mouth and render powerless by the manifestation of his coming...

(4) The Rapture comes AFTER the Apostasy and the revelation of the Anti-Christ (the man of lawlessness). It does NOT precede a seven-year period of tribulation; it happens AT the Second Coming!

E. A Faulty Reading of Matthew 24:38-41

1. **Nothing in the text of Matt 24:38-41 speaks of a secret rapture:**

³⁸ "In (those) days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. ³⁹ They **did not know** until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be (also) at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left."

2. **A secret rapture is being read *into* the text; doesn't flow immediately FROM the text**

3. **Luke 17:22-37 is a parallel passage; Jesus uses the example of the flood, and adds Sodom. The emphasis is on the *suddenness of judgment*.**

4. **Luke 17:24 (parallel passage) refers to lightning (someone read, please?) Nothing is secret about lightening.**

5. **Luke 17:26 refers to how unaware people were when the flood came.**

6. **Some Rapturites will use the events of Noah's flood Lot's Sodom to support their theory that the righteous are raptured while the wicked are left behind on earth.**

a) ***But...Who was snatched away in the Flood? THE WICKED***

b) ***Who was snatched away in Sodom? THE WICKED.***

c) ***Who were "Left Behind" on earth after those events? THE RIGHTEOUS.***

d) ***Oops!***