

# RAPTURE REFLECTIONS.

## A REVIEW OF THE "RAPTURE" DOCTRINE.

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### INTRODUCTION.

Why is there so much conflict over the "Rapture"? Why is there so much uncertainty? In the Christian world, some have even lost their faith over this one issue. Our attitudes and outlook in life and to the world in general are based upon the doctrines we hold, and these affect our attitude to the Word of God. If the Word of God seems to be confused, the problem lies with us, or what we have been taught, not with the Word of God. We are told that "*Every Word of God is pure*", and so we must work from this basis. Any preacher who declares that the Rapture doctrine is "minor doctrine" had better think again. It is major doctrine, because what we believe affects our actions and attitudes. Jesus sent His followers on a mission and He gives gifts and talents for the task. Any doctrine which turns God's people into "*wicked and slothful servants*" is evil-[Matt.25-26].

Rapture preachers like to say that, because historically people like Augustine and many others through history believed in the "*second coming*" and "*the blessed hope*", that this must also include "the rapture". They are very lean when it comes to chapter and verse from the church fathers. The "*rapture*" doctrine was virtually unknown as a major doctrine until 1830 and began following a prophecy made by a 15 year old girl named Margaret MacDonald, in Scotland. It was endorsed up by J.N. Darby of the Exclusive Brethren at that time and the doctrine has been widely propagated over the years through the popular Schofield Bible notes. It is now a common Bible College and Seminary teaching, but it is not a historic doctrine of Protestant orthodoxy.

### END TIME BELIEFS.

Among denominational teachings, end-time beliefs tend towards being within one of three main groups of ideas:

1. That the world will continue to get worse and worse with the time of the end being a time of total chaos, at which time Jesus will return to establish His Kingdom.
2. That as the world deteriorates, Christians will be "*raptured*" from earth away from tribulation, and will later return with Jesus to reign with Him on earth, after a 3.5 year tribulation period for those left behind. They paint a picture of God's people disappearing from earth, leaving the "unsaved" behind. Most of the teachings are based upon the words "*caught up*"; that is, suggesting that being "*caught up*" means being taken away from this earth's scene. This is based upon 1 Thess.4: 13-18 which we will be looking at in detail. But, the passage is essentially about the resurrected being joined to the living at Jesus' return to earth, and then both being placed together forever with the Lord.
3. That God's people will go through their tribulation that precedes the second coming of Jesus, but although this time is violent it is not total chaos. At the time of harvest, the "*wicked*" will be destroyed but the unsaved of the nations will still be on earth.

It is true as we are told in 2 Tim.3:13 that "*Evil men will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*", but Timothy was told to "*continue*" in the Word of God. Jesus tell us about us being persecuted, being hated by all men and also "*He that endureth until the end shall be saved*"-[Matt.10:22]. Then Jesus tells us about the Tares which are gathered FIRST at the reaping time, indicating that His people are left still on earth. In Matthew 24, Jesus talks about His people being on earth at "the end". He says, "*Lo, I am with you until the end of the world*". and that "*He that endureth to the end will be saved*". We are told about "*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall confirm you until the end that ye might be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*"-[1 Cor. 1:8].

Christians are generally taught that the end time when the supposed "*rapture*" takes place will be a time of confusion, disorder and chaos. Jesus does not portray it that way. He says:

*Matt.24:37-39 "But as in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of man be. for as the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and knew not until the flood came and took them all away".*

These are rather normal activities which are not indicative of any chaos. Note the pronoun "*them*" here. Who were "*taken*", the "*we*" or the "*them*"? The same applies to those who are "*taken*" and those who are "*left*" in the passage following that quoted above. The popular teaching is that it is the "*we*" that are taken away, not the "*them*" as Jesus says.

Mark 13:32      *"But of that day and of that hour knoweth no man. Take heed and watch and pray, for ye know what the time is....."*

There is no indication here that this is a time of chaos and trouble with manifestation of that which is out of the then current ordinary. Jesus says His coming again will be as unexpected as a thief in the night and in a time *"that ye think not"*. Paul in 1 Thess.5:3 tells us also about the day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night.

Matthew 24:6      *"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of war: see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet"*.

At present we are hearing about wars and rumours of wars, so the "end" time cannot be whilst these are going on. There are race wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes; we have those all now, but the end *"is not yet"*. After these we are told about the persecution and affliction of God's people. They will be hated by all men. These are said to be just the beginning of sorrows. Jesus goes on to tell us about "after the tribulation of those days". There will be *first "the sign of His coming"*, but even then He has not returned Himself at the time of the sign.

1 Thess 5:3      *"For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction commeth upon them"*.

Note that in this passage we again have "ye" and "them". The sudden destruction is upon the "them". This is important. Those who are described as "ye" must still be left on earth. Note this well, this time of saying *"peace and safety"* must come before the sudden destruction. This time of saying *"peace and safety"* must come after the wars and rumours of wars.

At present, God's people are under the greatest world wide attack that has ever been. There has never been such "great tribulation" or pressure suffered by God's elect. The restraints of God's Word are less and less active in our "World Village" society because they are no longer being treated as being authoritative, even by denominations. World Government humanism has taken over society and also what were once Christian nations. Provision for legal action against God's people is being set up, just as Jesus forecast. We have United Nations "peace-keeping" and "peace making" and the prospect of "them" saying *"peace and safety"*, but it is the "them" who will be destroyed, not the "we".

## THE EFFECT OF THE "RAPTURE" DOCTRINE.

The fault of the "rapture" teaching is that it infers that the church is impotent to do anything until Jesus returns and the teaching leads to apathy and inaction in every area, even in the political area. It is a doctrine that infers that "politics and religion do not mix". It suggests that Christians are a hopeless lot who can do nothing without "Christ in the flesh" being present, and that Christians can do, and indeed should do, nothing against Satan and his host of evil spirits. The impetus and assignment to turn the world up-side-down as in the early church has been taken away. But, is the mission given by Jesus really no longer valid in what the dispensationalists call "this dispensation"? The "Rapture" is also a recipe for failure to exercise action towards God's purpose and intention for man to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it. Suggesting that the power of the Holy Ghost is no longer with us does great harm to belief and purposefulness. The doctrine is popular with both Dispensationalists and Pentecostals, the first saying that the age of miracles, tongues and healing is past, whereas the other emphasises these things. Both groups do little actively against the corruption and abuse found in society. Although there are exceptions, in general national ethical standards are of little concern because the thought held by people with this doctrine is this, *"What is going to happen is going to happen, so there is nothing that can be done about it"*. This was not the attitude of the early Church, the Apostles or the Prophets. It is not what Jesus teaches! There is no "go" in this attitude.

It is true that God will judge His people, but those who have made *"a covenant by sacrifice"* shall have righteousness declared [Ps. 50:5-6]. God's will is for repentance unto life for His people and for them to return under His authority. Judgement unto restoration is God's historic intent for **His people**, but judgement unto oblivion is God's historic intent for **His adversaries**.

The rapture doctrine would tell people not to worry about God's judgements upon earth, because they insist that Christians will be taken away from earth away from God's wrath. But, the prophets and apostles do not agree. Isaiah puts it this way:

Isaiah 26:20      *"Come My people, enter into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee. Hide thyself as for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity"*.

It is just a bit too hard to shut our doors about us if "we" are not still on earth at that time. Yes, even Elijah hid in a cave and Obadiah hid fifty prophets in a cave when it was appropriate to do it to escape. David also hid from Saul's attacks until the right time. Rahab hid spies and Gideon hid wheat. Joseph stored up food when *the "money failed in the land of Egypt"* but God's people were fed because of prior preparation against the time of trouble.

In the time of trouble there is no removal from the scene in scripture. In trouble David said, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked" and "hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble"-[Ps.62:2 and 69:17]. The picture is spelt out early in scripture and has never changed.

*Deut.4:29-30 "When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient to his voice....."*

We are told what will then happen. There is no "rapture" theme through scripture! But there is a long picture of action by God's people when in their tribulations.

## "CAUGHT UP".

But, is what they say about being "caught up" really what "caught up" means? If the scene painted by "Rapture" teachings were true, then there is much difficulty because we find in scripture that other people who were "caught up" remained on earth after the event. The Greek word for "caught up" is *harpazo*, and it is found 18 times in the New Testament. From these we should get a good picture of what the word means. The KJV translates the word, as follows:

Catch..... 1 time.	Catch away.....2 times.	Catcheth.....3 times.
Catch Up..... 3 times.	luck.....2 times.	Pull.....1 time.
Take by force...3 times.	Take.....1 time.	Pulling.....1 time.

From these words we can see that there is some sort of forceful or sudden transition from one state or place to another. Of all of these verses where the word *harpazo* occurs, there are only four which could possibly be construed as having anything to do with God's people leaving the earth. Although fourteen verses all agree that the word has nothing to do with leaving the earth, we will look at the four verses, so the matter can be totally cleared up and that there are no lingering doubts.

These verses are as follows:

1. Acts 8:39..... About the Spirit of the Lord catching away Phillip after his speaking with the Ethiopian eunuch..
2. Cor. 12:2-4..... About Paul being caught up to the Third Heaven.
3. Rev. 12:5..... About the 'child of the woman' being caught up unto God and His Throne.
4. Thess. 4:17..... About the so-called "rapture" verses.

### THE FIRST VERSE.

*Acts 8:39. "The Spirit caught away Phillip, that the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But, Phillip was found at Azotus....."*

Some seem to think that Phillip was zapped from one country to another after speaking with the Ethiopian Eunuch. But, it must be pointed out that Phillip started at Gaza in Palestine and was "found" at Azotus, also in Palestine, and really, the two are so very close together! One thing for sure, he was not "caught away" from the earth because he was still preaching on earth afterwards.

### THE SECOND VERSE.

*2 Cor. 12:2-4 "...such a one caught up to the third heaven".. ..... ..How that he was caught up into paradise".*

Before anything more is said, Paul was still on earth after this event; Yes, He was on earth telling the tale. But, where was Paul "caught up" to? What is "the Third Heaven"? In scripture there are at least six heavens which may be examined.

Heaven.	Singular..without definite article.
Heavens.	Plural....without definite article.
The Heaven.	Singular..with the definite article.
The Heavens.	Plural....with the definite article.
The Third Heaven.	When Jesus returns.
The New Heaven.	The fourth and last.

**THE THIRD HEAVEN** is our immediate consideration. We have a popular conception that there are different 'heavens' which are stacked up vertically, like the air belt, the stratosphere, and above that, and that is all. "Third" in 'Third Heaven' is *tritos* in Greek which means the third in order in time sequence. In time sequence we have:

FIRST HEAVENS.	Man sinned.....God ceased to walk with man.....ended with the flood.
SECOND HEAVEN.	Present age.....sin continues.....Jesus redeems Israel.....ends with fire.
THIRD HEAVEN.	Jesus returns.....millenium.....sin and death continue until everything and the last enemy, death, is placed under Jesus' feet. Then Jesus hands the Kingdom over to the Father.
FOURTH HEAVEN.	God again tabernacles with man.....no more sin.....eternity.

If we consider 2 Peter 3:5-6, Peter talks about the 'heaven' which was before the flood as perishing. Since that 'heaven' passed away, we have the present 'heaven', or sky above us. Prophecy tells us that the present 'heaven' will pass away also, and that this will be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth-[Is.65:17, Is.66:22, 2 Peter 3:13]. In these verses, the situation in the new heavens is very much on earth. The time is *"the day when the Lord binds up the breach of His people, and heals the stroke of their wounds"*-[Isaiah 30:26]. When Jesus returns the earth will be renewed and will be under the 'Third Heaven'.

The prophets tell us about the new "heaven" where the moon will shine as brightly as the sun, and that the light of the sun will be seven-fold what it is now. This is the Third Heaven that Paul was caught up into. It is an event in time, rather than in geography. Paul had a vision, or "an earnest" of his inheritance"-[Eph.1:14] He had a glimpse or a pre-view of what is to come in the next age when Jesus comes to take His Kingdom, on earth. Paul was caught up into paradise; the Third Heaven will be paradise for all of us who are looking for His appearing. This is *"our blessed hope"*! The "Rapture" is presented by Dispensationalists as being the *"hope"*, but in scripture it is *"His appearing"*.

Paul is not the only one recorded in scripture to have had such an experience. Peter, for instance tells of the similar experience on the Mount of Transfiguration-[Matt. 17:1-9 and 2 Peter 1:17-18]. The resurrected Moses and Elijah were present in this pre-view. The three disciples concerned did not depart from earth at this time, either!

In Revelation 4:1, the Apostle John records, *"The first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, 'Come up hither' and I will show you things that must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven....."*. The point here is the the apostle was in the *pneuma* = "current of air", which is translated as Spirit here. Although *"come up"* = "ascend" in this verse is not *harpazo*, the apostle was physically on earth after the experience, because he too, also told the tale. Paul said he did not know whether his experience was in the body or not, we do not know this either.....and neither will we try to guess.

{But, those with some understanding of the relationship between, energy, time and matter might have a clue because we read, *"there should be time no longer"*-[Rev.10:6]-.}

### THE THIRD VERSE.

Rev 12:5 *And she brought forth a man child who was to rule the nations with a rod of iron. And her child was CAUGHT UP God and unto His throne".*

Few would find any problem in this verse about the ascension of Jesus after His resurrection, and this does not include the "woman" [Israel] being also "caught up".

### THE FOURTH VERSE.

1 Thess 4:17 *"Then we which are alive and remain, shall be CAUGHT UP together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"..*

This is the key verse of the "Rapture" doctrine. We do not find any other verses like it in the Bible and so the popular interpretation lacks the two or three scriptural witnesses as required to "be established" and to back it up. 'Types' cannot do this. Before we look at the order of the whole passage in context, it would be helpful to look at some individual words in this verse.

### DESCEND.

*Katabaino* is found 138 times and is a common expression with the common meaning. It comes from *basis* which means *to walk on foot!*

### “SHOUT”.

A lot is made out about this word, but *keleuma* is found only here. It comes from *keleuo* [27 occurrences] which are translated as “commanded” 25 times in the KJV.

### “THE ARCHANGEL”.

*Archaggelos* simply means “the Chief Messenger”., and is used referring to Michael in Jude 1:9.

### "ALIVE".

The word translated "alive" is *zao* in Greek. It is used both figuratively [e.g *"man shall not live by bread alone"*], and literally [e.g. *"To whom He showed Himself alive after his passion"*]. The literal usage most commonly contains a supernatural element such as being brought back to life after death. It is often used relating to lifestyle or manner of life, such as enjoying God's blessing. Out of the 144 occurrences, there are very few verses that could be taken as "alive" just meaning normal everyday life on earth -[i.e. it is not just not being physically dead].

The popular teachings are that "we" are caught away from normal physical life on earth to be forever with the Lord in another place than earth. That place is said to be 'heaven' and we have already looked into that word and that the Third

Heaven is on earth. Paul tell us in 1 Cor. 15:51-52 that we shall all be changed at the last trump. [Note that the "trump" is also part of the "rapture" verses]. "Changed" is *allasso* and is used in Heb.1:12 about the heaven and the earth also being changed. The time of being changed is the same time as when the heavens and the earth are changed; that is, the time of Jesus' return. It is the time of the Third Heaven. As the timing is given as "*the last trump*", the time of being changed must follow the earlier six woes of tribulation when each of the angels have sounded their trumpets! -[Rev.8]. So, there could be no pre-tribulation "rapture" in the way it is most commonly presented.

## “REMAIN”.

"*Perileipomai*" is not the common word used for 'remain', [*meno* is the common word which has the meaning of staying in a given place or state]. It means to be "*left all about*" or "*to survive*" or "*to be left over*". To survive, someone else other than those who "remain" must have been taken already! We will be seeing that it is the "wicked" that are taken out first.

## "CLOUDS".

"Caught up together with them in the clouds" in our original text as translated, does not show in English that these clouds [*nephele*] are different from the normal clouds [*nephos*]. The difference parallels the use of "*anan*" and "*ab*" in Hebrew. [There is no definite article with *nephele*]. "*Nephele*" according to lexicons refers to a specially shaped cloud like that seen on the mount of transfiguration or the cloudy pillar that Israel had at the Red Sea. The following verses show this.

<i>Matt. 24:20</i>	<i>"...Son of Man coming in the CLOUDS of heaven".</i>
<i>Matt. 17:5</i>	<i>"...A bright CLOUD overshadowed them".</i>
<i>Acts 1:9</i>	<i>"...A CLOUD received Him out of their sight".</i>
<i>Rev. 11:12</i>	<i>"...And they ascended into heaven in a CLOUD".</i>
<i>Rev. 14:14-16</i>	<i>"...Sat on a CLOUD".</i>
<i>1 Cor 10:1</i>	<i>"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye be ignorant, how that OUR FATHERS were under THE CLOUD, and that all passed throught the sea, and were baptised unto Moses in THE CLOUD, and in the sea, and did all drink of that spiritual drink which was christ [anointed]."</i>

It is not the scope here to talk about being baptised both in the cloud and in the sea. "*Baptizo*" means "*to make fully wet*" or "*to cover fully with a fluid*". The cloud is fluid and the Children of Israel were baptised in the *nephele*. This pillar of cloud gave light, and fire to God's people [Israel], but it gave darkness to their enemies. It is also associated with "air", so we must look at "air" because it is mentioned in our text phrase, "*meet the Lord in the air*".

## "AIR".

This word is "*ruach*" in Hebrew and in Greek it is "*aer*", and they are translated as "breath", "air", "wind" "spirit", etc., including "to blow", "to breathe [unconsciously]", and "to respire". It comes from a root meaning "to cover or encompass". Now, the moving "air" makes "wind" [*pnoe* or pressure]. We read, "*the wind bloweth where it listeth*" - [John 3:8]. When we consider all these elements, we can see a similarity with Pentecost -[Acts 2:1-3], where those present were "baptised" in those elements. There was the sound [voice] of the wind and there was the fire [cloven tongues of fire]. Then we read about them seeing visions. Although the cloud is not specifically mentioned at Pentecost, there are elements of the Third Heaven experience that were present. They met the Lord in the "air" with the air in the form of a rushing mighty wind. **Yet, they remained on earth after it!**

And whom did they "meet"? The "Lord" here [and in the "rapture" passage] is *Kurios* which is the word used as in "the Lord Jesus". It is not *Theos*, the word used for "God". After the meeting the Lord "*in the air*" at Pentecost they were changed people. "*And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus*" -[Acts 4:13]. To be "*ever with the Lord*" will make people changed people!

## "MEET".

One popular idea is that Christians will ascend into "the sky" to meet Jesus, and then later return to earth with Him. The word "*apantesis*" means "meet" just like it means today. But, what is the time when those who are "*alive and remain*" have this meeting? What happens first? Let us look at the sequence as given in 1 Thess 4:13-18..

- 1.The Lord himself shall descend. -[First, and once only].
- 2.The shout. -[*Keleuma*, a unique word].
- 3.The voice of the archangel. -[Voice is 'sound'].
- 4.The trump of God. -[The last trump].
- 5.The dead in Christ arise. -[Resurrection].

The 'then' of verse 17 comes inbetween here, so next we have in sequence:

6. The 'catching up' together. -[The living plus the resurrected].

7. The meeting in the air and then being forever with the Lord. -[It does not say where..."in the air" is not a place]. Even if any were to use "air" as "atmosphere", this is not outside of the air belt of earth.

We are not clearly told here whether or not the first five events are simultaneous, but we are told in 1 Cor. 15:50-54 that the time frame is "*in the twinkling of an eye*" and that when the trumpet sounds the dead will be raised. This is a passage which confirms that this time is that of the last trump at the end of the tribulations. Then we are told, "*And we shall be changed*", putting on incorruption. Verse 17 comes between [5] and [6] above. The verse starts with "then" indicating the above five events happen first. "Then" is *eipeita* which has been translated as "thereafter", "after that", "thereupon", and relates to time or order. The context where the word appears through scripture indicates "**immediately afterwards but in the same time period**". In this passage, Paul is answering concerns about those Christians who had already died. He tells them that the dead in Christ will be resurrected, and Jesus will bring these with Him when He descends. He is telling these concerned Christians that they then will all be together with the resurrected dead for ever. This fact is stated as being a comfort for Christians -[1 Thess.5:11]. Christians are told to edify each other with these words, in this verse. Instead of doing this we find the "rapture" doctrine taught; this destroys by encouraging looseness, rather than building up in "*godly edifying*" -[1 Tim. 1:4].

In the "*so shall we be ever with the Lord*" that the passage concludes with, it says absolutely nothing about this being on or off the earth. The presumption that being with the Lord means being away from the earth comes from the presumption of what "heaven" means in this passage. As the Third Heaven is on earth, we can be sure that it means being with the Lord on earth. It is not a case of the Lord returning to take us to where the resurrected dead are, but it is that of the Lord bringing the resurrected dead to where we ["those that *are alive and remain*"] are. There is no obvious point in bringing the resurrected back to earth and then immediately zapping them away again, as is suggested by some. [But, it will be literally "heaven on earth" when we are forever with the Lord].

To verify whether "*being ever with the Lord*" means being on or off the earth, we have to confirm this with prophecy which would foretell where this will be. As there is no prophecy to support being away from earth, the popular view has to be supported by "types". For instance, "*Enoch walked with God, and he was not for God took him*" is said to be a type of being raptured. The Bible does not say anywhere that Enoch was raptured [*harpazo*], but that he was translated [*metatithemi*]. If any like to say that these two Greek words are the same then they are being dishonest. To this they add the story about Elijah being carried up in a chariot of fire as a type. Elijah was carried up to 'heaven' or to "*shamayim*" which is the place where birds fly -[Ezek 31:13]. If Elijah had been raptured in the popular conception, then he may not have gone very high! If we wanted to resort to "types" to prove a point, we could speak about Moses talking face to face with God. Yet, Moses was buried.....and buried on earth! -[Deut.34:6], so what was he a type of?.

Again we can all read about Jesus being "taken up" and a cloud receiving Him out of their sight. Here "taken up" is "*anambano*" in verse 2 of the first chapter of Acts, whereas it is "*epairo*" in verse 9, and so the rapture enthusiasts must needs decide which word they are referring to, if they want to use this as a 'type'. Neither has the meaning of "*harpazo*".

The rapture enthusiasts also like to use Revelation 7:14 to say that "*they which came out of great tribulation*" were raptured. "Came out" here is "*erchomai*" which hardly fits as it has to do with kindred persons arriving.....[not leaving].

To say that those which follow the Lamb "*clearly describe the rapture of 144,000 Jewish evangelists*" is really going just too far in the imagination. Ignoring the peculiar but wrong common use of "Jewish" for "Israelite", "follow" here is "*akoloutheo*" which has the meaning of "accompanying as a disciple, cleaving steadfastly with, or following one who precedes". It has nothing to do with anyone being 'snatched away'.

The "two witnesses" of Revelation 11:3-12 are recorded as "*ascending to heaven in a cloud*", and here "ascending" is "*anabaino*" which has to do with walking up steps, so this can hardly be associated with all the religious notions about "the rapture", however many attempts are made to make it 'fit' as a type.

## WHO ARE TAKEN AND WHO ARE LEFT?

One important thing is, who is going to be taken, and who is going to be left? Another consideration is whether those taken are from among every one on earth or just from among God's people. The popular common teaching is that the good are taken and the bad are left out of all the peoples on the earth. This is not the way Jesus puts it. [Being the very opposite to what Jesus says makes the rapture doctrine an evil doctrine].

*Matt.13:39*      "*So shall it be at the end of the world [age]. The angels shall come forth and SEVER THE WICKED **FROM AMONG THE JUST***".

Likewise, we see this same order in the accounts:

1. -Of the net and fishes.....the bad are cast away and the good are gathered -[Matt.13:48].

2. -Of the Tares and the Wheat...the bad are FIRST burned and then the good are gathered -[Matt.13:30].
3. -Of the man without a wedding garment who was bound and cast into outer darkness...he was cast out before the feast started -[Matt.22:11]
4. -Of the Edomite leaders of Jewry being thrust out of the Kingdom before those chosen sit down in the Kingdom of God -[Luke 13:28].
5. -Of the days of Noah, which is connected with one being taken, and the other left in the parable of the two being in the field, and also the parable of the two women grinding at the mill -[Matt.24:3]. Jesus here is speaking about the end of this age. He says that it will be "*as the days of Noah*". The bad will be taken out in death as in the days of Noah. The pronouns in this section contain both "them" and "ye". It is the "them" that are 'took' and 'taken' -[Matt. 24:37-42]. We are told that the flood came and 'took' "them" all away in death.

## THE WICKED.

The popular picture is that God's people are taken away from the earth leaving everyone else to tribulation. Jesus says that it is the "wicked" that are taken away. The "wicked" are not everyone other than Christians, or the unconverted. They are the "*poneros*" who are of evil influence in God's Kingdom. *Poneros* is not *harmartolos*, the latter basically meaning sinful or "missing the mark". **All Christians are sinful, but all are not wicked.** These are distinctions that are not commonly made, but there cannot be understanding, or right doctrine, unless the Word is rightly divided.

[NOTE: If anyone wants to look through these differences, they could start with 1Tim.1:9-10, where we also find the categories of lawless, disobedient, ungodly, sinners, unholy, profane, murderers, manslayers, whoremongers, homosexuals, liars, perjurers, and anything contrary to sound doctrine].

Both Testaments tell the same story about the end of the "wicked". They are to be "cut off" or "taken". There are many definitions of who are "wicked" through scripture, and many churchgoers are wicked and do not know it, [e.g. Psalm 10:2-15, "*The wicked.....God is not in ALL his thoughts*"]. The wicked are those who know what is right but refuse to do what is right. They have returned to their vomit. The unconverted do not know all that is right for themselves, but the wicked know what God wants them to do, and also what God does not want them to do. Yet, the wicked go ahead and do what God does not want them to do. 2 Peter 2:15 says they have forsaken the right way and *that it would be better not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and have turned away from it*. In other words, the "wicked" are those who have turned away from the truth. They are in a worse condition than the unconverted!

- They are like Esau and his descendents [Edom] whom God says He hates -[Rom. 9:13]. Esau was rejected and could find no place of repentance -[Heb.12:17].
- They are rejected like King Saul who refused to obey God --[1 Sam: 15:23]--God rejected King Saul.
- They are those who *resist the ordinance of God, and receive to themselves damnation* -[Rom.14:2].
- They *eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body* -[1 Cor. 11:29].
- They are having "*damnation because they have cast off their first faith*" -[1 Tim. 5:2].
- They are rejected because they *bring forth thorns and briars...*and will be burned -[Heb.6:8].
- They are looking back and are not fit for the Kingdom of God -[Luke 9:62].
- They are those who do not use their talents , "*And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*".

Even in this age, it is a requirement that wicked people are to be put out of Christian assembly -[1 Cor. 5:13- "*Wherefore, put away from yourselves that wicked person*"]. Instead of practising this excommunication and teaching who the wicked are, the popular doctrine changes this and says the wicked are the unconverted. The unconverted are "unsaved", not "wicked". **There are three main groupings, the unsaved, the converted and the wicked.** Because of doctrinal teaching about "*once saved, saved for ever*" there could be no "wicked" under this teaching. Therefore, their idea is that there are only the saved and the unsaved, with the "saved" being raptured and the unsaved being left behind on earth. The truth has been reversed and altered! If there was such a word as "rapture" it would apply to the "rapture of the wicked". This "rapture" is not bliss; it is judgement! God does not, in fact, accommodate the wicked in the Kingdom of God. What Jesus says about these offensive wicked is:

*Matt.13:41-42 "The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall **gather out** of His Kingdom, all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father".*

Then Jesus says, "*Let him that hath ears, let him hear*". Let us hear this carefully! The wicked are taken OUT, and this means those who remain are NOT the wicked.

## DOCTRINAL SCHIZOPHRENIA.

Two popular but opposing beliefs are taught simultaneously today;

- [a] That Christ will return to earth with His saints and rule all nations with a rod of iron-[Rev.2:26-27].
- [b] That Christians will be raptured away from earth to heaven.

To try to marry up the two beliefs it has been necessary to invent mechanisms to cover this. These vary in what are often labelled, pre-trib, mid-trib and post-trib tribulation positions. The pre-tribs and the mid-tribs have to re-work the prophetic scriptures to try to fit prophecy with these. It all gets so complicated that the average person cannot understand it. These positions are far from the original "postmillennial" position. It is the rapture doctrine that has created chaos among Christians. The uncertain sound this has created in prophecy has destroyed multitudes, split assemblies and families. That is the danger of this "rapture" doctrine, and therefore, this cannot be treated as minor doctrine.

It is not the purpose of this paper to go over the three main prophetic positions, to discuss Futurism..v..Historism, or Dispensational Teachings. There are points of view over phrases like Jesus coming "*for his saints*" and "*with his saints*" that some try to make issue over. They are trying to say by these phrases that there are two second comings of Jesus, but these are not valid comparisons and they have no meaning, because "saints" includes **both the living who "remain" and the resurrected**. So, "for" and "with" refer to the same time period. We have seen that these both meet the Lord "together" at the same time. And, of course, there is no prophetic stream about two second comings of Jesus. Dispensationalists talk about New Testament revelation of mysteries to establish their position, ignoring the statement that God would do nothing without speaking through His prophets-[Amos 3:7].

One of the incomprehensible things about those who support futurism and any form of dispensational theology is how they can quote Daniel 9:27 about "*the midst of the week*" and then say that the second half of that same week is sometime in the future. To do that they have to say things without prophetic or biblical basis like, "*God's prophetic clock stopped ticking*"! The "*great persecution against the Church*"-[Acts8:1]-" or the tribulation period from "the midst of the week" until the stoning of Stephen, was three and one half years [the second half of the same week of years]. At the end of this time the early church were "*scattered abroad*".

It is popular with Rapture teachers to start speaking about being ready to meet Jesus who "*could come before the end of this meeting*". In the process of expounding 1 Thess.4:13-15 they will say that there is a resurrection before being "caught up". It is to be wondered what they might respond if someone asked them about the resurrection happening during the meeting! Probably many would get a great fright to see the *dead in Christ* rise [standing = *anistemi*] amongst them. The timing factors are not mentioned.

In 1 Corinthians 15, we read about Jesus reigning "*till He hath put all enemies under His feet*", until finally death itself is destroyed. Is the Rider on the white horse in heaven or on earth? Are these enemies in heaven or on earth?

## DO GOD'S PEOPLE GO THROUGH TRIBULATION?.

Perhaps the greatest substantiation of right doctrine lies simply within the multitude of accounts and statements that God takes his people through tribulation, rather than away from it. There are verses like, "*And to wait for His son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come*"-[1 Thess. 1:10] which are deceitfully used to support the false rapture doctrine. An examination of "delivered" through the New Testament of the use of "*rhuomai*" = "rescue or deliver" will swiftly show that this deliverance is not by taking His people away from trouble, but the rather it is by deliverance from iniquity and ungodliness. The wrath to come is "*against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness*"-[Rom. 1:8]. Once again, the wrath of God is against the "wicked". It is always the wicked that are to be removed and judged.

The whole picture about God's people being taken away before tribulation is false. The first use of the word 'tribulation' in the English of the KJV is this...it has already been quoted:

[Deut.4:30]. "*When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon you, even **in the latter days**, if thou turn to the Lord the God, and shalt be obedient to his voice, [for the Lord thy god is a merciful god], he will not destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto you*".

The covenant fulfilment place is on earth. This could not be true if Christians were "raptured" away from earth.

For those who want more scripture about God's people being taken through tribulation, the following will help:

2 Sam. 22:7	2 Chron. 15:4	Neh. 9:27	Psalm 4:1
Psalm 18:6	Psalm 27:12	Psalm 32:7	Psalm 59:16
Psalm. 102:2	Psalm 107:6	Psalm 108:12	Isaiah 26:16
Isaiah. 59:19	Isaiah. 63:9		Hosea 5:15
Matt. 24:9	" <i>They shall deliver you up to be afflicted....</i> "		
Matt. 24:21	" <i>For then shall be great tribulation</i> ".....[the elect are there in it].		
Matt. 24:29	" <i>Immediately <u>after</u> the tribulation of those days</i> "...Jesus returns to save and gather his elect <u>out of tribulation</u> .		
Mark 13:19	" <i>For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not since the beginning of the creation</i> ".		
John 16:33	" <i>In the world ye shall have tribulation....</i> "		

Acts 14:22        "*We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*".  
 Rom.5:3           "*We glory in tribulations*".  
 Rom. 12:12       "*Patient in tribulation*".  
 Rev, 2:9           "*I know thy works and tribulation...*"  
 Rev. 7:14         "*These are they which came out of great tribulation...*".  
 We cannot "come out" without first being "in" tribulation. [NOTE: "Affliction" and "tribulation" are the same word in Greek].

There are those who are teaching that Christians have to suffer nothing at all, because Jesus suffered for them on their behalf. Then they say that we do not have to be concerned about all the troubles coming upon the earth because "we" will be raptured away from earth before it all happens. These teachers do not believe, "*If we suffer with him, we will reign with him*"-[2 Tim. 2:12], or the "*When thou art in tribulation*" as quoted above. They do not believe Jesus when He says:

*Matt.24:22        "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, to this time, no nor ever shall be, and, except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved. But, for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened".*

It would be not much use shortening the days for the elects' sake if the elect are not on earth. The "elect" are still on earth in this tribulation. In the passage Jesus speaks about "immediately after the tribulation of those days" [v29]...this tribulation is before His return [v30]. Jesus starts off this section about his return by saying, "*Let no man deceive you*". He says many will be deceived. Jesus then points to the ten virgins, as a warning! Being a virgin is not enough; even a virgin must have a supply of fresh oil or else be shut out!

## **FALSE COMFORT.**

The Jesuit [Roman Catholic] support of the 'rapture' doctrine can be followed historically. The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth has leavened the three measures of meal, as Jesus said would happen -[Matt.13:33], and Rome will yet be drunken with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus -[Rev.17:6]. This will be tribulation indeed for the saints of God! This leaven of the "rapture" has permeated through perhaps 90% or more of the mainline churches today. Most modern Bible translations [from Roman Catholic minority texts] have removed all references to "comfort" by changing translations or by dropping out phrases. For example, compare Isaiah 61:1 with Luke 4:18 where the phrase "*He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted*", has been left out of the New Testament. [Yes, even in the NIV...have a look!]. The word *parakaleo* which is translated "comfort" in I Thess 4:13 and 22 other places in the KJV, occurs 107 times in the New Testament. "Comfort" is vanishing fast in new translations! But the lexicon meanings of "to console", "to beseech", "to exhort" "to encourage", "to comfort" have not disappeared in fact. Even the "Comforter" has been changed to "Counselor" in the NIV, and in later translations to New Age words such as "helper" used of spirit-guides or demons. These "*doctrines of devils*" in the latter days are prophesied about in 1 Tim.1:4 and connects with Christians departing from the faith and "*having their conscience seared with a hot iron*". Before the "rapture" passage, Paul is exhorting about the manner of life Christians must live. After the passage, Paul warns about walking as 'children of light' and for them to seek to to escape the wrath to come. The next chapter is a continuation of the same subject and in 1 Thess.5:11 he again speaks of comfort, "*wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify each other*", the reason being because the living and the resurrected "*should live together with him*".

Today, the comfort offered is a false comfort. *Parakaleo* is translated 43 times as 'beseech' in the KJV, but we no longer find anything so strong as beseeching people to totally transparent life or noting that "*if we walk in the light as He is in the light*" is the condition and way to walk so that the Blood of Jesus can cleanse us from all sin -[1 John 1:7]. Instead of this we find the teaching that if any have made a profession of salvation they do not have to worry too much because "Jesus has done it all" and anyway, they will be raptured away regardless. In other words, there is no right teaching about who the "wicked" are, or that if any are found wicked without the garment of righteousness, they are to be numbered among the "wicked" and will be cut off. They will not be 'gathered together' with the resurrected. They will ever be in outer darkness, not "*ever with the Lord*".

The verses from Isaiah 66 about the new heavens and the new earth quoted in the paragraph below are altogether too tough for today's churchgoers, but that whole chapter is addressed to God's people! In it God says he will choose their delusions! "*For this reason God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*"-[2 Thess.2:11]. Isaiah 66 likens their worship to eating swine's flesh, drinking swine's blood and doing abominable things at the same time as trying to worship God. He tells us to whom God is looking ; it is to those "*who tremble at My word*"! People are no longer taught to tremble at the Word of the Lord. There is no longer any "*fear of God before their eyes*" -[Rom.3:18]. There is no longer "*a certain fearful looking for of judgement*" for wilful sin -[Heb. 10:26-27]. As Jesus says, "*Narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it*". "Narrow" is *thlibo* which means "suffer tribulation"! This shows up the "rapture" doctrine for what it is, namely a false promise of escaping tribulation.

The whole thrust of scripture is contrary to the popular "Rapture" doctrine. To deceive, or to try to avoid responsibility for one's actions, we find either:

The "*handling the Word of God deceitfully*"-[2 Cor. 4:2].

The place of scripture and the Revelation of God is questioned.....the "*Did God say?*" of Satan.

The doctrine is too hot to handle because of controversy and confusion.

The ignoring the prophetic scriptures -[2 Peter 1:21].

Saying we just need to teach "The central doctrines of the Christian faith", ignoring *that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* -[Deu.8:3 and Matt.4:4]. And then they say, "We will not touch anything controversial because that brings division into the church".

Teaching that Judgement "is not the nature of God", inferring the wrath of God is *not "revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the Truth in unrighteousness"*-[Rom. 1:18]. Truth has to be known to be able "hold" it. The judgement is against believers who do not "*walk in the light*" each individual has received personally. There are 194 references to "cut off" in the KJV. The meaning is very clear!

## THE EARTH.

The usual starting point for teaching the "Rapture" doctrine is to commence with John 14:1-3 where it is said that Jesus is preparing us a place in "heaven". In His words "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also*". Firstly, there is no mention of "heaven" in this verse; nor is there mention of where the "place" is. At the time of speaking, Jesus was ON EARTH, and He said He would come again TO EARTH, "*that where I am there ye may be also*". The only "place" mentioned is "earth". But we have to go further to see what "*tropos*" = "*place*" really means. We find there are eight references and these are the translations in the KJV:

"*Even as*" Matt.23:37.

"*In like manner*" Acts 1:11 and Jude 1:7.

"*Every way*" Rom. 3:2 and Phil 1:18.

"*Any means*" 2 Thess 2:3.

"*All means*" 2 Thess 3:16.

"*Conversation*" Heb. 13:5.

From these we can confidently say that that the simplistic meaning put on this word by the rapturists is not the right picture.

It is not the scope here to say a lot about the place where the Kingdom of Heaven is that Jesus is talking about here, but Jesus says He will return to earth and take His Kingdom -[See the parable of the vineyard -Matt 21]. The "vineyard" is a specific limited area of the earth with a hedge about it -[Mark 12:1].

The place where Israel rules with God is on earth -[Rev.5:10-"*And we shall reign on the earth*"]. God's will is done in the Third Heaven now, and it will be done on earth soon when Israel rules with God. That is one thing that we are asked to pray for; "*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*". Israel is God's battle axe over the other races for this purpose -[Jer.51:20]. Israel is to be regathered to the land promised to the fathers of Israel -[Ezek.37:5 and many other places]. Is it to be suggested that this land Abraham walked over and which was promised to his seed is not on earth? In "*and so shall we ever be with the Lord*", "ever" = "*pantote*" means "at all times", and has to do with time, not place. That this earth is to be purged and judged by fire does not mean that it will cease to exist any more than it ceased to exist after the flood.

"New" in 'new earth' is *chadash* in Hebrew which comes from a word meaning to repair or renew. In Greek this is *kainos* which Thayer gives as "*recently made superior to what it succeeds*" or "*a new and better condition*", or "*begin to be far different from what they were before*".

About the transition taking place into the time of the Third Heaven, we read:

*Isaiah. 66:16 "for by fire and by His sword shall the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many".*

V24 "*And they shall go forth, and shall look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched. and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh*".

- The "they" that go forth are stated to be God's servants. [These are alive on earth].
- The carcasses of the transgressors have not been "raptured" away from earth.
- The scene is still upon earth.

After this tribulation, where will "we" be? Let us see.

Ps 25:13            *"His seed shall inherit **THE EARTH**...-[The man that feareth the Lord].*

Psalm 37:9        *"For evildoers shall be cut off, but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit **THE EARTH**".*

Psalm 37:11       *"But the meek shall inherit **THE EARTH**, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace".*

Psalm 37:22       *"For such as be blessed by Him shall inherit **THE EARTH**, but they that be cursed of Him shall be cut off".*

Proverbs 2:21-22. *"The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect SHALL REMAIN IN IT. But the wicked shall be cut off from **THE EARTH**, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.*

Jesus says,            *"The meek shall inherit **THE EARTH**".*