

## Rapture Theory Is Heresy Not Prophecy

'You have persevered and endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary' (Revelation 2:3).

'They who endure to the end will be saved' (Matthew 24:13).

This Bible study is about the modern, erroneous rapture teaching and how it 'leaked' into the church. We will also explain the differences between the so-called 'rapture' and the true resurrection. Jesus, John and Paul all used the term 'resurrection'. Not once did they say 'rapture'. It is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. The term 'rapture' is more than a misnomer – the teaching is heresy. What is spoken of in the Bible are the first and second resurrections. We must think logically about this; if Jesus taught us about the First Resurrection, by logic of language there must be a second resurrection. Jesus was the first to be resurrected from death and Christians will share in His resurrection, the condition being, we are baptised in water by full immersion like He was. 'Do you not know that all we who were baptised into Jesus were baptised into His death? We were buried with Him through baptism to death, and just like Jesus was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so we might walk in newness of life, for if we have become united with Him in the likeness of his death, we will also be part of His resurrection' (Romans 6:3 to 5). Paul said his hope was in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6) and said, "If by any means I may attain to the resurrection" (Philippians 3:7 to 21). That means he would do anything to be part of the first resurrection, and he implied this teaching was for the more mature Christian. Paul taught about the resurrection of the dead – not a 'rapture' of the living (Acts 24:15 & 21).

The teaching of the first resurrection is past the elementary stage of the teachings of Jesus and is given to those that belong to spiritual maturity, and God wants to bring everyone to more advanced teaching – the teaching of the resurrection (Hebrews 6:1 to 3). Jesus taught about the first resurrection many times, which amazed people (Matthew 22:23 to 33; Mark 12:18 to 27; Luke 20:27 to 39). Martha knew about the first resurrection and she knew it would be at the last day (John 11:24). It is of no surprise that the teaching of the first resurrection causes contention. Paul was placed on trial because he taught the truth about the first resurrection (Acts 24:21). In Jesus' resurrection, He overcame the fear and sting of death and has made us to be conquerors. Jesus' death was not futile (1 Corinthians 15:54 to 58). If people would put away the teaching of the rapture where they think they do not have to do very much for God, and if Christians would use the word resurrection where God expects a higher level of holiness, then Christians would mature in God at a very fast pace and we would not have to keep feeding milk to weak carnal Christians, and we would be able to feed people the meat of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:2 & 3).

The first resurrection is only for the righteous; those who accepted Jesus as their Saviour and were walking with God, either at the time of their natural deaths, or at the time of the resurrection. The first resurrection is to raise the righteous from the dead to receive their rewards (Luke 14:14). The second resurrection 1,000 years later, is for the people the Bible calls wicked, unsaved, evil doers, unrighteous, unbelievers etc, and their resurrection will result in them being sent to the eternal lake of fire along with the devil as their judgement for sin, called the 'second death' (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:4 to 15). Jesus said the dead will come out of their graves (John 5:28) before the dead will come out of the sea (Revelation 20:13). The first resurrection will take place at the last trumpet sound, and the righteous people who have died will rise from death first then those who are alive on earth will be changed in an instant into our heavenly immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51 to 54). Jesus said four times Christians will be raised up at the last day (John 6:39, 40, 44 & 54). If Jesus said the same thing four times, then it must be important for us to know we will be raised from the dead at the last day and not one day before! We should not doubt the teaching of Jesus regarding the first resurrection. Paul taught there would be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous (Acts 24:15). The scripture says the first resurrection will be at the last day of this age. The people who believe in the rapture, believe it will be midway through the tribulation, but that is not what the scriptures teach. Starting in Revelation 8:6 right through to Revelation 11:15, we can follow the seven trumpet blasts and all that time Christians are on earth right up until the last trumpet sound. We know that because in Revelation 9:4, after five trumpets had sounded, Holy Spirit filled Christians were being protected. They are the people who have the seal of God on their foreheads. God sent the calamities in judgement and to bring people to repentance (Revelation 9:21; 11:18) but the ungodly continued to rage against God and blaspheme.

No one knows precisely what will happen during the first resurrection because it will be a brand new phenomenon. It has never happened before so we really do not know what to expect. There are many prophecies about that subject, but usually prophecy is not fully understood until after it happens. The same was true regarding the first coming of Jesus. The promised Messiah was to come out of Nazareth, Bethlehem and Egypt but how could one Person come from three different places? How could anyone get all that right in advance? Nowadays, we would have had three 'schools' of thought; the Nazarene school, the

Bethlehem school and the Egypt school, and each one would have tried to prove the others wrong. The only thing we can be sure of is this: The first resurrection is not a 'rapture' and it will happen on the last day of this age. The Old Testament prophet Job knew about the first resurrection and even the timing of it. 'Man must die. Yes, man breathes his last and where is he? ... So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more (the last day), men will not awake nor be raised out of their sleep (of death) ... I will wait till my change (into his immortal body) and release (from his sleep) will come. Then You would call and I would answer' (Job 14:10 to 15).

People believe in the rapture simply because famous preachers tell them it is true and most people do not like to question them. Many people do not search their Bibles for themselves but rely solely on their pastor's sermons. It is up to all of us to check out for ourselves what the scriptures teach. We should compare the scriptures with what church leaders are teaching. The rapture teaching is closely wrapped up with the 'Great Tribulation'. Will the whole church go through tribulation? Absolutely yes! If we are alive on this earth as Christians we will go through times of testing and pressure. This is not popular teaching in the western world because people would prefer to believe they will miss times of pressure, but that is because of fear. They do not like the thought they just might have to be faithful enough to be killed for their faith (Revelation 2:10), so a new doctrine has emerged that teaches them the 'rapture' will whisk them away and they will not have to face hardship, but that is not what the scriptures teach. The Bible says all who desire to live Godly lives in Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

What does 'tribulation' actually mean? It simply means pressure, testing or trouble. If we hide ourselves in the Lord, when trouble comes we can endure it until God delivers us out of it (Psalm 91:1 to 16). The Lord does not say we will not have trouble – He says He will deliver us and we do not need to be afraid of it (Revelation 2:10). Jesus promised us peace during times of tribulation, oppression, trials, distress and frustration, and we are to take courage and have a cheerful heart. He did not say we would be taken away from the troubles (John 16:33). 'It is through many afflictions, hardships and tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22). 'Let us rejoice in our troubles and sufferings for we know that pressure, affliction and hardship produce endurance, maturity, integrity and confident hope of eternal salvation' (Romans 5:3 & 4). Notice that? Tribulation produces maturity. Why then do some Christians want to run away from tribulation via the 'rapture'? It shows their immaturity in God. They have more fear than faith.

'Rejoice in hope, endure suffering and tribulation, be constant in prayer' (Romans 12:12). 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Father of mercy and the God of every comfort, Who comforts us in every affliction, so we may be able to comfort those who are in distress, with the same comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as Jesus' suffering falls to us abundantly, so through Jesus, comfort is also abundant. If we are afflicted it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted it is for your comfort which works in patient endurance the same evils that we also suffer' (2 Corinthians 1:3 to 6). Notice that? Abundant suffering falls to us because we must share in the suffering of Jesus. That fact will not make people feel all warm and fuzzy will it? Especially those who are being taught they will escape tribulation via the 'rapture'. On one occasion Paul felt he could not stand his suffering any longer (1 Thessalonians 3:4 & 5) but he never gave up.

There are many other scriptures that tell us we will all go through tribulations right up until the day we die naturally, or until the last trumpet sound and we are to be courageous and rejoice in our sufferings. Suffering is God's way of chastising and disciplining us as a Father, and we are not to run from it nor are we to resent it. 'My son, do not despise God's discipline, neither be weary of His reproof, for whom the Lord loves, He reproves as a father reproves the son in whom he delights' (Proverbs 3:11 & 12). 'Whom the Lord loves, he chastens. He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with children, for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?' (Hebrews 12:6 & 7). Suffering is God's will for us (1 Peter 4:19) and suffering will continue till the last day. The sixth seal (Revelation 6:12 to 17), the seventh trumpet (Revelation 10:7 & 11:15) and the seventh bowl (Revelation 16:17) are all the last day of this age, after the Lord has poured out His judgement on the earth (Revelation 16:1 & 21). That time of judgement is what some call the 'Great Tribulation' and Christians will go through it to the end and will not be taken out half way through. There is no scripture that says Jesus will take Christians from the earth 3½ or 7 years prior to His return. The 'gate' or the way of salvation is very narrow (straitened by pressure) and very few people enter through it (Matthew 7:13 & 14).

There are three more erroneous beliefs surrounding the 'rapture' theory. (1) Many believe we are living in the time of grace and believe, when the tribulation begins grace will end so they will be raptured off the earth. What they are really saying is, they can live their lives as they choose, they do not need to be holy because all will be forgiven at the 'rapture'; they say God is patient and in His grace He will take no notice of their carnality. That belief is a 'cop out'. They confuse patience with God's grace, which is unmerited mercy and a state of God's favour. We need to stand for righteousness and be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

'Are we to remain in sin so God's grace may abound? Certainly not!' (Romans 6:1). 'Certain men have crept in (to the church) stealthily, ungodly men who pervert the grace of our God into lawlessness and immorality and denying our Master, God and the Lord Jesus' (Jude 1:4). Grace is unmerited mercy that should bring good Christian behaviour that abounds during tribulation, making us disciples for Jesus and should make us righteous and teach us wisdom (Colossians 3:16). (2) Some believe the Holy Spirit will be taken from earth during the 'rapture'. If that were true, how would anybody be saved? It is the Holy Spirit Who draws us to God and without Him, nobody can be saved (John 6:44). (3) Some people say the church must be 'raptured' away because there is no mention of the church after Revelation 3:14. That is also incorrect because in Revelation 22:16 & 17, Jesus again speaks to the church, but this time as His bride.

Hundreds of thousands of Christians believe that they will be 'raptured away' or taken out of this world before the 'Great Tribulation' and hundreds of church leaders are preaching this doctrine. What is dreadfully sad about this, is thousands of Christians will fall away from God because they are expecting to be taken out before tribulation starts. Once things become unbearable, they will be offended, blame God for not rescuing them and leave the faith. They will be completely ill prepared and taken by surprise. People who tend to believe in the rapture, live lives that are less than the level of holiness God expects of us, and they are less likely to serve the Lord with their whole heart. To them, Christianity is just a belief and something to fill in time on Sundays, instead of a whole way of life to prepare us for eternity with our holy Father God, our holy Saviour Jesus and the holy angels. The 'rapture' people put more trust in their pastors and false prophets than in the words of Jesus. What they should be doing now, is preparing themselves for a difficult time of immense pressure and persecution, not living their lives in a carnal way in iniquity, believing they can do whatever they like and all will be forgiven when Jesus comes for them.

Because of the damage the rapture teaching is doing right now, and is going to do in the future, the Bible says doctrines like this are from demons (1 Timothy 4:1), because they cause people to fall away and lose their salvation. It is the teaching of false prophets who are leading many astray; many will be offended and will stumble. That will happen when people realise there will never be a rapture and they will have to endure a time of extreme testing. God is going to test their faith. What did our Saviour Jesus say about it? Did He say we would be taken out of this world before the tribulation, or did He say we would suffer through tribulation right to the end? Here is what Jesus said, "They will hand you over to suffer tribulation and put you to death. You will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. Many will be offended and will stumble and fall away and will betray one another and pursue one another with hatred. Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many and lead many astray. Iniquity will multiply causing the love of the great body (of believers) to grow cold, but he who endures to the end will be saved ... There will be great tribulation ... False Messiahs and false prophets will arise to deceive God's elect ... See I have warned you beforehand! ... Just as the lightning flashes in the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be ... Immediately after the tribulation of those days ... the Son of Man will appear in the sky ... He will send out His angels and they will gather His elect from one end of the universe to the other" (Matthew 24:9 to 31).

We can see Jesus was warning us about this time of judgement or tribulation and sadly, millions of God's elect have been deceived by false prophets just as Jesus said they would be. Did Jesus say there was to be a secret 'rapture'? No! He said His coming would be as quick and as visible as a lightning flash. Does Jesus say He would gather His elect before or after the tribulation? He said after, and makes it clear His elect will be around during the tribulation phase and He will not be coming until afterwards. If you as a Christian, were hoping to be 'raptured' beforehand to escape the time of judgement or tribulation, then you have not been listening to Jesus' words, but rather you have been listening to a false prophet or a doctrine demons teach, and you will be dreadfully disappointed. The 'rapture before the tribulation' teaching does not come from Jesus. He made it very clear, and He was careful to warn us beforehand, the first resurrection would be after the Great Tribulation.

We see once again, Jesus confirming the elect will be in the midst of terrible tribulation. "At that time there will be such affliction such as there has not been since creation ... but for the sake of the elect He has shortened the days" (Mark 13:19 & 20). 'When the Son of Man comes, will He find persistent faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:8). Those words should be a warning to those who are expecting to be 'raptured' away. Is your faith strong enough to endure what is coming upon the whole earth? Will you stand or fall? Will the Lord find you being persistent in faith?

The false premise of the pre-tribulation 'rapture' comes from Bible stories from the Old Testament. Lot was rescued before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Noah was rescued before the flood came. Enoch was not because God took him (Genesis 5:24). We need to understand, no one was secretly 'snatched away' before the destruction of judgement came. Enoch preached to the people and was well pleasing to God. He warned of God's judgement before God took him, and the people murmured against him so it was likely his life was in danger for being so outspoken about their ungodly behaviour (Hebrews 11:5; Jude 1:14

& 15). Lot's rescue was a very public matter (Genesis 19:1 to 25). Lot was a righteous man who was very distressed by the lustful lives of wicked people. He was the only righteous man dwelling among them and was tormented in his righteous soul from day to day with seeing and hearing their lawless deeds. He preached righteousness before the Lord turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them to destruction, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives (2 Peter 2:6). Noah's rescue was also very public (Genesis chapters 6 & 7). He was also a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). There is no scripture that backs up the 'secret' rapture theory. When the first resurrection happens, it will be very quick but not secret and Christians must be ready for it. Jesus will come at the same time as the first resurrection and that will be a global event. Every person in the whole world will see Him (Revelation 1:7).

Men of God mentioned in the Old and New Testaments who suffered terribly and yet were never 'raptured' out of their tribulations were Job, Joseph, Daniel, David, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Jeremiah. Paul went through terrible persecutions and trials, Peter was crucified upside down and James was beheaded. Jesus asked God three times to spare Him the terrible death on the cross (Matthew 26:38 to 44), but He ceded to God's will and went through the suffering for us. He wasn't 'raptured' away from His trial and we are to partake of His sufferings. The Israelites were in Egypt during the ten plagues of judgement but they and their livestock were protected by the Lord (Exodus 7:18 through to 12:41). They were told to watch and be ready, for their departure would be sudden, just as the first resurrection will be sudden. The Israelites and the multitude that went with them, did not leave Egypt until immediately after the great tribulation of judgement and suffering.

To whom, or to what part of the world does this escapism 'rapture' teaching apply? Who would benefit? Would it apply only to those who are living in the western world? Does the western world feel they are more superior to the apostles who suffered terrible persecutions? Modern western Christians are so soft and unprepared, they would have no idea what Christians in some countries are already suffering. They are being terribly persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, their children are taken from them and some are killed for their faith. It is a crime in some countries to be a Christian. None of these Christians are being removed from tribulation. If we study the words of Jesus, we see He warns His true followers to expect trouble, not comfort, safety, sweet convenience or an easy way out. 'Who can separate us from the love of Jesus? Can suffering, oppression, affliction, anguish or tribulation? Calamity or distress? Persecution, hunger, destitution, danger or the sword? As it is written; for Your sake we are put to death all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter ... Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God' (Romans 8:35 to 39). Does this speak of Christians being snatched away from trouble? No way! Quite the opposite. It gets worse. 'It was given to him (the beast) to make war with Christians and to overcome them. Authority over every tribe, people, language and nation was given to him ... If anyone has an ear, let him hear ... If anyone has captivity, he will go into captivity (prison). If anyone is with the sword, he must be killed. Here is the call for endurance and the faith of God's people' (Revelation 13:10). 'Here comes a call for patience and endurance of God's people; those who keep God's commandments and their faith in Jesus' (Revelation 14:12). The phrase, 'If anyone has an ear, let him hear' means to listen carefully and allow this to go down into the spirit.

The scriptures say Christians will be hated for Jesus' sake and only he who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13). Nowhere in these scriptures are we told that some Christians will be taken to safety (raptured off) then the others (the 'left behind' ones who are, it is supposed, saved later, or were not 'good enough' to be raptured) will have to endure the terrible tribulation. All of the scriptures say we have to have patience, we have to endure, we have to have faith and we will suffer. It is dreadful the people who teach the 'rapture' have in fact cheapened the wonderful, upcoming experience of the first resurrection. Authors who have written about the 'rapture' have to be declared false prophets because most of what they have written simply cannot take place because the world has changed and their foretold events can never happen, yet some church leaders cling to this incorrect teaching to keep pushing this theory. Some pastors have admitted they do not believe in it themselves, but do not want to 'rock the boat' by telling the truth. For them, it is easier than standing up for righteousness. False prophets and authors make millions of dollars from this teaching, but they do not like to teach on holiness, obedience, submission to the Lord's will, integrity, pure holy love, steadfastness, endurance under trials and the persecution of Christians. Some people confuse the 'rapture' with the first resurrection, and because the word 'rapture' is more popular than the first resurrection, they continue to lean in that direction instead of standing up for the truth. It is very obvious in the New Testament teachings, we must go through suffering. Were the apostles and the early Christians 'raptured' away? No they were not, yet if anyone deserved to be rescued from tribulation, it was them. If terrible sufferings were there for them, then suffering will be there for us too and we must be prepared for it, because if we are not prepared, the suffering will cause us to stumble and possibly fall away. Our suffering will never stop God from loving us, but it could stop some people from loving God when they realise with horror, they will have to go through the Great Tribulation of the earth's judgement.

Where did this erroneous 'rapture' teaching start? Before 1830, the 'rapture' theory was never heard of nor was it taught in any church. In 1830, a 15 year old Scottish girl named Margaret MacDonald had an 'end-time' vision. Margaret was heavily involved in the occult and was seen standing like a statue, barely touching the ground in a supernatural levitation. The word 'rapture' was used in medieval mystic circles to explain the levitation from a few centimetres off the floor to a metre or higher. The church condemned these 'raptures'. Margaret belonged to a tiny Protestant sect known as the Irvingites. Her so-called 'vision' gained some credibility and the story spread through the Plymouth Brethren. One of the Brethren's leaders, John Darby, took the idea as a new doctrine to the United States. Decades later it was adopted by the American Fundamentalists. The Fundamentalists added more to the heretical theory, like the mid-tribulation 'rapture', the secrecy of Jesus' return, and an anti-Christ who will set up a one-world government. Even more years later, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 18 was taken completely out of context and used to promote this new doctrine, even though the words of Jesus says the opposite. Then further still, these false teachers added more scriptures and created more confusion about the mark of the beast, the 144,000 men, the saints dressed in white robes etc. They took scriptures from the Old Testament to back up their 'theory', and relying on the ignorance of most Christians regarding the Hebrew Scriptures, they twisted passages of scripture like Daniel's seventy weeks, Daniel's interpretation of the image, the abomination of desolation and others, until we now have a whole huge doctrine, twisted into a confusing, weakened form of Christianity, where the people falsely believe they do not have to do any more than just believe, and they do not have to be actively serving God because they are told they will be 'raptured away' before the tribulation. The church has fully embraced the teaching it once condemned. The truth is, we need to be the salt of the earth and if the salt has lost its flavour it is good for nothing and it is to be thrown away (Matthew 5:13). It is time the false doctrine of the 'rapture' was thrown away.

What does Jesus say about the wicked? He said the wicked will be removed from the earth first, not the righteous, and that is exactly opposite to what the 'rapturists' teach. Jesus said the darnel (tares, false wheat) will be gathered first, bound and burned ... The darnel (tares) are the children of the evil one ... The angels will gather out of His Kingdom, all causes of offence (Matthew 13:30, 37 & 41). Jesus taught us the children of the evil one would be gathered first. There are many more scriptures explaining to us, the righteous will be left on earth (to rule and reign with Jesus for one thousand years), and it is the wicked that will be removed. Remember, the wicked are not going to inherit the earth, the righteous are! (Psalm 37:9 & 29; Matthew 5:5). The righteous are not removed (Proverbs 10:30). The righteous will be recompensed on earth (Proverbs 11:31).

On the other hand, the wicked are tossed into the furnace and are burned like stubble (Matthew 13:48 to 50). The wicked are destroyed (Psalm 145:20) and will not escape (1 Thessalonians 5:3). The wicked will be rooted out of the earth (Psalm 52:5; 101:8; Proverbs 2:22) and will be cut off (Psalm 37:9) while those who wait for the Lord will inherit the earth. Wickedness will be shaken out of the earth (Job 38:13). The wicked will be consumed and will be no more (Psalm 104:35). So we see in these scriptures, it is the wicked that are removed and taken out first. It is the wicked that are removed from earth, not the righteous. Notice what Jesus said next, "Have you understood all these things?" They answered him, "Yes, Lord" (Matthew 13:51). How many people really understand what the Lord was telling us? The rapturists have to solve this mystery; how can the Christians rule and reign over the earth for one thousand years if they have been raptured off? It is impossible to be in heaven and on earth at the same time!

Rapturists use other scriptures to 'prove' the rapture. Jesus said, "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. Watch therefore, for you do not know in what hour your Lord comes" (Matthew 24:41 & 42). "I tell you, in that night there will be two people in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. There will be two grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other will be left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left." Then the disciples asked Him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Wherever the dead body is, there will the vultures be gathered together" (Luke 17:34 to 37). What did Jesus mean? Wherever the (spiritually) dead are taken so the vultures (demons) gather together. It is the wicked who are taken and the righteous will be left to rule and reign on the earth.

Another scripture used to promote the 'rapture' theory is this: Paul taught us about the first resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 18). If we carefully read the whole passage, we can see Paul was trying to reassure the Thessalonian church, they would not miss out on the first resurrection if they died, nor were they superior to those Christians who had already died. They were told not to grieve for the dead as the unbelievers do, who have no hope but to comfort one another with these words, and from that we can see there was some concern about missing out on the first resurrection. That passage of scripture was not put there to build a new doctrine, but to comfort the people. Prior to 1830, these scriptures were accepted as referring to the first resurrection.

Daniel's prophetic 70 weeks and the Abomination of Desolation are fully completed and ended in 70 AD. They were given to Daniel 490 years prior to that date according to the Hebrew calendar not the Roman calendar we currently use (Daniel 9:24 to 27). The prophecy was about the Anointed One (Jesus) Who was to come and bring eternal righteousness to those who believe. The Anointed One would come to Jerusalem during troubled times, and the Roman Empire was troubled times for the Jewish people. The Lawless one would end animal sacrifices with a flood – that is a flood of violence and war not a flood of water. The 'code' for seven years is a 'week' so 70 weeks = 490 years. Before He died, Jesus told the disciples to remember and to watch out for the fulfilment of these prophecies written in the book of Daniel (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). Daniel describes the terrible persecutions by the despotic Nero in 70 AD, which ended the Jews' animal sacrifices in the temple. They had no choice because the temple was destroyed as Jesus said it would be (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2). The animal sacrifices had to cease because Jesus became the final sacrifice for all mankind, including the Jews. The destruction of the temple (the sanctuary) completed the 490 years of Daniel's 70 weeks. The 'Lawless One' (the antichrist; 2 Thessalonians 2:3 to 8) was accepted by the early church as being Nero, who entered into a peace covenant with the Jews for 7 years, then he broke it after 3½ years when he destroyed the temple, which made the animal sacrifices cease. Pigs were sacrificed in the temple and the pigs blood poured over the sacred Hebrew scriptures and set alight. Nero committed dreadful abominations and slaughtered thousands of Christians and Jews right up until he died. There is no 'gap' in Daniel's seventy weeks; it is a continuous time in the history of the Jews, culminating in the destruction of the temple as prophesied.

The people in white robes are people from all over the world who died for their faith in Jesus during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:9, 13 & 14) so they were never 'raptured' off. They are people who accepted Jesus as their Saviour and have their names written in the Lamb's book of Life (Revelation 21:27). They were patient and kept their faith in Jesus through all kinds of persecutions (Revelation 14:12). They asked the Lord how long they would have to wait before their blood was avenged and they were told to wait even longer because there would be many more people who would be killed for their faith in Jesus (Revelation 6:10 & 11). They will rise again and live and rule with Jesus for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4).

The rapture story has the believers disappearing before the famous Battle of Megiddo (Armageddon). Remember we read the first resurrection was not until the last day of this age, and Christians will be on earth until then. When is the battle of Megiddo? It is just before the last bowl of God's wrath is poured out (Revelation 16:16 & 17), so Christians will be on earth then, but will be protected by the seal of God. Jesus spoke of the end of this age (Matthew 13:39 & 40; 24:3; 28:20). The end of this age is not the end of the world. This 'age' of Grace will end when Jesus returns. The scripture says there will be another major battle after the first resurrection and after Christians have lived and ruled with Jesus for 1,000 years with the devil locked away in chains (Revelation 20:1 to 3). It is after the 1,000-year millennium rule when the devil is released again and he will go forth to muster the deceived people to war (Revelation 20:7 to 9). They swarm around Jerusalem to wage war on Jerusalem and Jesus. The army chiefs are called Gog and Magog. God is against them and He will destroy them. The devil will be hurled into the lake of fire and will stay there forever. After that, the judgement of the wicked begins (Revelation 20:10 to 15). That is the time of the end of this earth; the end of the world, which takes place a little more than 1,000 years from now. This earth will be burned by fire (2 Peter 3:7, 10 to 13) and Christians will then go to the newly created new heaven and the new earth to dwell there forever (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). That is when the second resurrection takes place (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29). The ungodly on earth at that time will be burned up with the earth (2 Peter 3:7). The ungodly who are already dead and those who died when the earth is burned up will be resurrected only to be judged according to their sin and be sent to the lake of fire with the devil, false prophet and the beast (Revelation 20:10).

It actually takes more faith to believe in the 'rapture' than to believe in the truth. The rapturists have written very foolish scenarios about the supposed rapture. For example they have bandied around really stupid theoretical stories of pilots disappearing and their aeroplanes crashing; of babies disappearing out of their mothers' wombs; of babies disappearing while being fed; of dogs sitting down wondering where their owners have gone and of empty clothes lying all over the place. Other scenarios are of parents being panic stricken when their 'raptured' children never come home from school; cars crashing when the drivers are 'raptured' and all manner of ridiculous fictions that would cause utter chaos. None of those things will ever happen. Our God is a God of order, not of chaos. He has instructed us to do everything decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40), so He would never then do anything that would cause incredible chaos. Other rapturists have on several occasions given exact dates when the 'rapture' is supposed to happen, but it never does. Jesus said we will not know the hour or the day He is going to return, until He comes (Matthew 24:36) and anybody who claims to know when that day is going to be, is a false prophet. Other rapturists have made graphic movies about what they assume will happen after the rapture and the movies can only be described as foolish fiction. The movies are utter rubbish and are completely unscriptural. Why Christians continue to

choose to believe in the confusion surrounding the supposed rapture, instead of believing the truth written in the Bible is unfathomable.

We can try to sum up the bigger picture from God's point of view, as much as is humanly possible. God put mankind on earth where the devil was thrown (Ezekiel 28:17). Eve was deceived by the devil and Adam was disobedient (Genesis 3:1 to 17; 1 Timothy 2:14). Since then, mankind has regressed into more wickedness (Genesis 6:5). The Lord saw mankind was terribly wicked, however our excuse is mankind has been deceived and seduced by the devil to do all kinds of evil. For thousands of years this has been the case. Just before Jesus comes to rule and reign on the earth, the whole earth will be cleansed of all wickedness (we have already given appropriate scriptures) and also, the devil will be bound up and locked away for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:3). As we saw in the earlier scriptures, the earth will be shaken free of all wickedness which will be rooted out and there will be only Christians left on earth who will be priests to God the Father and to Jesus (Revelation 20:6). Our King Jesus will rule the earth with a rod or iron (Revelation 19:15) from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16). During that thousand years, even though there will be no devil to entice people to do evil, millions of people will become wicked. This time though, the people will not be able to offload blame by saying, "The devil made me do it," because the devil will be locked away and will not be there to make anybody do anything. We know they will become wicked, because after the devil is released from his prison, the people who allow themselves to be deceived, are the ones who will gather together to wage war on Jerusalem and our King but of course, they will be devoured by the Lord (Revelation 20:7 to 9). Imagine the foolishness of trying to war against Jesus! Remember, in the 1,000 years, every person on the earth at that time will be the descendants of the Christians left on the earth after the wicked are removed at the end of this age, so they will have the utmost privilege of knowing only God's rule on earth without any evil influences, yet they will still turn their hearts away from God, and they will have no excuse. The Lord has spoken truthfully when He said man's heart is always wicked (Genesis 6:5).

Anything that causes people to fall away from the Lord is evil. The rapture theory has its roots in the occult and even the word 'rapture' is an occultic term for levitation. The rapture is not scriptural, it is not reality, therefore it is just heresy and false prophecy. Do not believe it, it is a demonic doctrine spread by deceived men and many will fall away because of it. Remember this verse: 'The Holy Spirit says expressly, in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons through the hypocrisy of men who speak lies' (1 Timothy 4:1 & 2).

Amen and God bless you.

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