

Doctrine of Being Caught Up

The “Harpazo” of the Church

1. In any discussion it is important to define technical words, lest there be misunderstanding.
2. After 1830, a new word was introduced into the consciousness of the church. That word is the word, rapture.
3. Why this particular word has found so much popularity in the church is curious since it is a Latin word, and is not found in the original Greek, or Hebrew, text of sacred Scripture.
4. The English word “rapture”, is derived from the Vulgate Bible. The Vulgate is a Latin version of the Bible, authorized, and used by the Roman Catholic Church.
5. This is how the Vulgate Bible translates 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

4:17 deinde nos qui vivimus qui relinquimur simul **rapiemur** cum illis in nubibus obviam Domino in aera et sic semper cum Domino erimus.

6. This verse is translated to English (RSV) as:

4:17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be **caught up** in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This verse is translated to English (KJV) as:

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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

7. In the English language, the words, “shall be caught up”, translate the one Greek word “harpazo (har-pad’-zo), “to seize.” This word is translated in the KJV, catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force). It is used four times in the KJV.
 - *2 Corinthians 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one **caught up** to the third heaven.*
 - *2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was **caught up** into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*
 - *1 Thessalonians 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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*
 - *Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was **caught up** unto God, and to his throne.*

Special Note.

It is possible, that, if the church had stayed with the Greek New Testament, and the word *harpazo*, meaning, “caught up”, there might not be the controversy concerning the second coming of Christ that has developed.

It is instructive to remember that none of the Creeds of Christendom throughout church history, and none of the Church Councils ever addressed the concept of the rapture as it is taught today, namely, a separate event from the second coming.

God’s people have not been ignorant of God’s Word for more than 1,800 years. They simply contended for the historic faith of the church, and set aside novel ideas.

Notice the Scripture references the Baptist Confessions of Faith are built upon. Notice there are no multiple comings of Christ, and there are no multiple resurrections of the dead which belief in a Dispensational Rapture mandates.

The Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689

CHAPTER 31; OF THE STATE OF MAN AFTER DEATH, AND OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Paragraph 1. The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption;¹ but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.² The souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into paradise, where they are with Christ, and behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies;³ and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell; where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day;⁴ besides these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

1 Gen. 3:19; Acts 13:36

2 Eccles. 12:7

3 Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6, 8; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 12:23

4 Jude 6, 7; 1 Peter 3:19; Luke 16:23, 24

Paragraph 2. At the last day, such of the saints as are found alive, shall not sleep, but be changed;⁵ and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other;⁶ although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.⁷

5 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:17

6 Job 19:26, 27

7 1 Cor. 15:42, 43

Paragraph 3. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour; the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honour, and be made conformable to his own glorious body.⁸

8 Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29; Phil. 3:21

CHAPTER 32; OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

Paragraph 1. God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ;¹ to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father; in which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged,² but likewise all persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.³

1 Acts 17:31; John 5:22,27

2 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 6

3 2 Cor. 5:10; Eccles. 12:14; Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:10,12; Matt. 25:32-46

Paragraph 2. The end of God's appointing this day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient;⁴ for then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards, in the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who do not know God, and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast aside into everlasting torments,⁵ and punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.⁶

4 Rom. 9:22, 23

5 Matt. 25:21, 34; 2 Tim. 4:8

6 Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:48; 2 Thess. 1:7-10

Paragraph 3. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin,⁷ and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity,⁸ so will he have the day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come,⁹ and may ever be prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus; come quickly.¹⁰ Amen.

7 2 Cor. 5:10,11

8 2 Thess. 1:5-7

9 Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-40

10 Rev. 22:20

THE 2000 BAPTIST FAITH & MESSAGE

X. LAST THINGS

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1

8. The Latin word that evolved into “rapture” was “rapiemur”, meaning “drag off, snatch, destroy, seize, carry off”.
9. The word “rape” came to English from the same verb.
10. To complicate the matter, the basic etymology of the English word rapture, has been transformed to have a precise theological meaning, as framed by Dispensational teaching.
11. Therefore, keep in mind, that, as with any word, how a word is used in the context of a sentence defines its meaning.
12. The word rapture could mean, “a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion.”

Example.

“The people listened with rapture as the orchestra played Handel’s, Messiah.” The meaning is that the people enjoyed a state, or experience, of being carried away by overwhelming emotion.

13. The word rapture could refer to a personal, mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things.

Example.

“When I meditate, and try to feel the presence of God, my eyes close in rapture.” In this usage of the word rapture, the soul is exalted to knowledge of divine things.

14. When the word is used as a proper noun, the word rapture is capitalized, and becomes a theological term, to mean the assumption of Christians into heaven during the end of time.

15. It is at this point that a theological debate begins, for some Christians take the word, rapture, to teach something far beyond what the Biblical narrative allows.
16. Specifically, Dispensationalism teaches that when the Rapture occurs, Christians will not only be assumed into heaven, but will go through all the heavens, leave earth, and then return seven years later, after a great period of tribulation for those who remain on earth.
17. An appeal for this belief is made in 1 Thessalonians 4.

- *1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

18. Notice what is not found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

- There are no words in 1 Thessalonians 4 that says any Christians will go to heaven. Some of the saints do come from heaven, with Jesus, but nothing is said about going to heaven, the dwelling place of God.

When I get into an airplane, and fly through the clouds from America to Europe, I do not say when I land, "I have just gone to heaven and returned." People would laugh.

- There are no words in 1 Thessalonians 4 to say that people leave permanently earth. The text only says that Christians who have died will come with God to earth, and those on earth shall rise to meet, or greet, the coming Lord Jesus who is descending from heaven.
- There are no words in 1 Thessalonians 4 to say that people leave earth to escape tribulation. The purpose of the passage is to squelch a false rumor in Thessalonica that the resurrection of the dead had already taken place. Paul wanted to comfort the church that when Jesus returned the second time, according to promise, they would know it, for they would go forth to greet the King of kings, and Lord of lords.
- There are no words in 1 Thessalonians 4 of a seven year tribulation period. A seven year tribulation period is not found in any single text in the Bible. It is a number ripped from an Old Testament prophecy.
- There are no words in 1 Thessalonians 4 of Jesus returning to heaven with those who have died, and with those whom have come out to greet Him. Not a word.

- There are no words in 1 Thessalonians 4 of Jesus coming in Phases, or Stages, or dividing His second coming into two events, going in two different directions, over a seven year period, and calling it all one event. That is nonsensical language, and convoluted thinking. It is illogical.
- There are no words in 1 Thessalonians 4 of secret, silent coming, or a “great snatch” that no one on earth is aware of.

19. Notice what is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

- What is found in this text is a clear understanding concerning Christians who have died in the Lord. There should be no sorrow about them, for one day God will bring them with Him back to earth. The assurance for their future resurrection is the resurrection of Christ.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

- What is found in the text is a clear statement that Christians who are alive at the second coming of Christ, shall not prevent, or go before, those who have fallen asleep in Christ, meaning, those who have died.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

- What is found in the text is a clear statement of the descending Christ who is coming again, the second time, according to promise (Heb. 9:28). When Christ comes, it is not a secret, silent coming, to snatch the church away. There is a shout. There is the voice of the archangel. There is the sounding of the trump of God. There is the opening of the graveyards, and the dead in Christ are resurrected.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

- What is found in the text is a clear statement, that at the second coming of Christ, believers who are alive, and remaining on earth, shall be caught up, raptured together, assumed into the sky together, with those who are already in the clouds.

We are caught up for a specific purpose. That purpose is not to escape tribulation. That purpose is not to leave earth. That purpose is not to go to the dwelling place of God. That purpose is to meet the Lord.

The words, “to meet”, is apantesis (ap-an'tay-sis; a friendly encounter). It is the same word, and concept, used in Acts 28:15 when the brethren came forth to meet, or greet the apostle Paul.

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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

- What is found in the text is the fact that when the Lord returns to earth, the second time, when the saints go forth to greet Him, we shall ever be with the Lord, the coming Lord, the descending Lord, the Lord who has returned to earth, not near the earth, but to the earth, according to promise (Acts 1:11). Now comfort one another with these words.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.