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# Rapture or Rupture

By Elder Keith Ellis

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

Matthew 24:40-41

This is one of the main text which is misused to teach what is known as the rapture. I hear it on the television all of the time.

*“You, an unbeliever will be driving down the road with your Christian husband. All of the sudden you see him disappear from behind the steering wheel. No one is driving the car. You panic as the car plows into the oncoming traffic. You are killed. You go to hell.”*

Another part of the story goes like this;

*“Your wife has asked you to attend church with her. You are not a member. You are singing Amazing Grace. All of the sudden about one half of the congregation disappears into thin air. Your wife and all the others have been raptured into heaven to be with Jesus. Because you had not joined the church previously and had not accepted Jesus as your savior, you will now undergo three and one-half years of great tribulation. If you, during this period of tribulation accept Jesus, you will be spared from hell. If not you are sure to miss heaven.”*

This is an example of the non-sense which is being taught in America today and is hog-wash. I hope you recognized right away this is a scare tactic. It is quite effective upon those who do not know their bibles.

The pre millennial rapture doctrine was begun around 1830 by J.N. Darby. and C.I. Scofield. Before this time the doctrine was non-existent. Its absence in church history should sound an alarm to the unsuspecting. It began to become popular about the same time the **new** universal atonement doctrines of Andrew Fuller were taking hold in the Protestant world. There are different variations of the doctrine. Most teach the church will be taken out of the world either before or in the middle of the great tribulation period. Of course we have already shown how the great tribulation period has already seen its completion in the reformation of the church and the destruction of Jerusalem. The doctrine basically says there will be a seven year tribulation period before the one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. The idea is that the church

will be taken or *raptured out* of the world before the great tribulation period. These conclusions are reached from misapplying scriptures which plainly teach the resurrection and the ascension of the church into glory and from verses that say nothing at all about being taken to heaven.

In order to accomplish this elaborate scheme the great tribulation period which was fulfilled before AD 70 must be transported to the future. The seventieth week of Daniel must also be conveniently severed from the other sixty nine. As I stated earlier, there is no sound biblical reasoning for separating the seventieth week of Daniel and transporting it to the future. Mr Lindsey says God's prophetic stop watch stopped due to the fact the destruction of the temple was outside seventieth week. Mr. Lindsey assumes Daniel chapter nine verse twenty seven is speaking of the destruction of the temple because it refers to the ceasing of the sacrifice and oblation. Daniel says "*the midst of week*" is when this would happen. This is three and one half years. This we know is how long Jesus' ministry on the earth was. So this ceasing of the sacrifices which Daniel references came at the same time Jesus earthly ministry was near it's end. The cessation of the oblation and sacrifices is tied directly to the proclamation of the desolation of the temple. Once Jesus proclaimed the desolation of the temple, (see Matthew 23:38) God ceased to sanction or recognize the activities in the temple. This took place shortly before Jesus offered Himself on Calvary's cross as the perfect and ultimate sacrifice. Although the Jews continued to make offerings for some time after that, in God's sight, the death of His dear Son far exceeded any animal sacrifice which man might make.

Mr. Lindsey builds his entire doctrine on a false premise. No where does God's word tell us the seventieth week would be broke off from the other sixty nine. One is inclined to believe such an important event as this made to be would be substantiated somewhere in the Bible. No, all Mr. Lindsey can offer is, "God's prophetic stop watch stooped." How convenient. Just because Mr. Lindsey can not discern the scripture gives him no right to transport any scripture from it's context.

All these elements, the one-thousand year reign, (which is taking place now) the great tribulation period, and the seventieth week of Daniel have to be lifted from their true context in order to formulate the doctrine of the rapture.

The word rapture appears no where in the Bible. Though this in itself is no evidence that it does not exist. Yet the Bible is amazingly silent in regards to this mystical doctrine. Even the advocates of this doctrine will admit to the same. The supporters of this doctrine seem to have devised their system and then went to the Bible to try and find something that would work. As close as they come is to mistake scriptures which teach the general resurrection and apply them to their theories. Modern advocates of the pre-trib doctrine such as Dave Hunt and Hal Lindsey attempt to support their teachings upon text such as Revelation chapter four verse one. They attempt to prove their theory by noting the absence of the use of the word *church* after Revelation chapter four verse one which reads;

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”

Revelation 4:1

This text says nothing about the church being taken, but rather it is referring to John’s vision. John was allowed to come up to a higher level of knowledge and understanding of the things of God. This was necessary if he was to complete the writing of the book of Revelation. This is where the unveiling of Christ took place. In fact many of us have probably experienced something similar. When we sit together in heavenly places in Christ, we too are privileged to enjoy the revelation of the Spirit. Not that we are given any knowledge or understanding which is outside God’s revealed word, but that God’s word is revealed to us at times in this manner.

Since the word *church* is not mentioned again until Revelation chapter twenty two it is assumed the church must have been raptured in chapter four verse one when the statement “*come up hither*” is made. The book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches which were in Asia. The logic which is used by advocates of the pre-trib theory is not consistent at all. The absence of the word *church* does not justify twisting God’s word. Just because other new testament books do not mention the word *church* again after their salutations does not mean the message is not written to and concerning the church. If we applied the same logic as Mr. Lindsey and Mr. Hunt, we too would have a doctrine just as confusing as theirs. In fact the word church is absent from three of the gospels. So according to their logic, the church should have been raptured at the beginning of Mark’s gospel because this is the first book in the new testament which does not use the word ‘church.’ In my mind it takes a very great imagination and lack of respect for God’s word for anyone to think that such a scheme will be received. Close examination of the text used to support the pre-trib theory will clearly show it to be a stretch man’s imagination.

Even though there is not a single verse of scripture to support the pre-tribulation theory, it is a popular doctrine in the Protestant world today. Perhaps it is due to the same human curiosity which attracts people to inquire into UFO’s and end time scenarios. Hal Lindsey’s new book *Blood Moon* has just hit the shelves. It is touted as a number one best seller in the category of fiction. He confesses his latest book to be just that, fiction. *If only he would confess the truth concerning his other writings maybe people would stop looking to him as the prophecy expert which he is not.* The popularity of his writings are due to the predictions which he makes in them. All of which have proven to be failures and inaccurate. I think the National Enquirer with its annual predictions of Jean Dixon has a better record than Mr. Lindsey. In *The Late Great Planet Earth* (written in 1970) he predicted the beginning of the tribulation period to begin forty years after the establishment of Israel as a nation. He arrives at this conclusion by misapplying the parable of the fig tree used in Matthew chapter twenty-four. In order to do this he must also transport the generation which would experience the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:34) two thousand years into the future. He has no authority from the scripture to do this. More than likely he will claim

special revelation outside the word of God. Most all cult founders do this very same thing. (Mormons, Jehovah's Witness', Campbellites, Millerites, etc.)

Israel was restored to statehood in 1948. Forty years later, 1988 and still no great tribulation period. If people would only realize all of his works are fiction and not fact what a difference it would make. Study the Bible for yourselves and see. Mr. Lindsey and those like him are con artists.

Another text relied upon to teach the rapture is found in Matthew chapter twenty-four. What Jesus is referring to in verses forty and forty one is easy to discern.

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

Matthew 24:40-41

After the Romans conquered Jerusalem, of course the Jews were defeated. Once the Roman soldiers went through out the land they simply took some prisoners and left the others behind. The children of Israel many times took plunder or booty from the nations they conquered. These are commonly referred to as the spoils of war. Sometimes they killed every living thing. Other times they took the young and strong and made them servants. This is what is under consideration in the above text. This is exactly what the Roman soldiers were ordered to do. Joesphus goes into great detail to show forth these types of actions on the part of the Roman armies.

History records for us;

*"And now, since his soldiers were already quite tired with killing men, and yet there appeared to be a vast multitude still remaining alive, Caesar gave orders that they should kill none but those that were in arms, and opposed them, but should take the rest alive. But, together with those whom they had orders to slay, they slew the aged and the infirm; but for those that were in flourishing age, and who might be useful to them, they drove them together into the temple, and shut them up within the walls of the court of women;..."* **Flavius Josephus, The War of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 9, 2. 414-415**

*"Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole seige eleven hundred thousand,..."* **Flavius Josephus, The War of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 9, 3. 420 (one Million one hundred thousand)**

*"Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in a prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants."* **Flavius Josephus, The War of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 9, 4. 428**

After reading these accounts it is not hard to envision the fulfillment of Matthew chapter twenty-four verses forty and forty one.

It is further stretch of ones imagination to think a rapture of the church is here mentioned.

Just as pre-tribs transport the seventieth week of Daniel into the future they try the same trick with the time context of Revelation. The timing of the messages to these churches is another factor which should not be overlooked. Revelation chapter one verse three states "*the time is at hand.*" Revelation chapter twenty two verse ten states... "*seal not the saying of the prophecy of this book: **for the time is at hand.***" The book of Revelation is opened and closed with time context verification. Chapter three verse eleven states; "*Behold, I come quickly...*" In reference to the prophecy of the book of Revelation Jesus says in chapter twenty two verse seven; "*Behold, I come quickly...*" In chapter twenty two verse twelve again he says; "*And, behold, I come quickly...*" Just in case we may overlooked the time context of this marvelous book, Jesus states at the conclusion to His word in chapter twenty two verse twenty; "*...Surely, I come quickly. Amen...*"

The reason I mention this here is because again we must be reminded that common sense should guide our thinking when considering the time context of the book of Revelation. There is no way we can rightly transport the above quoted text two thousand years into the future. This book was probably written between 64 - 69 AD. It's pages foretell the destruction of the Jewish economy, of Jerusalem, and depict the rise of the glorious church of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth (gospel kingdom) in the first century AD.

In chapter eleven verse one and two John is told to go and measure the temple of God and the altar and them that worship therein. He was specifically told not to measure the outer court. "*...for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*" This verse clearly speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. It foretells how the Gentile armies of Rome would control the city for three and one half years. If the book of Revelation was written from AD 92- 95 why would God tell John to measure the temple twenty five years after its destruction? Remember the things spoken of in this book of prophecy were "*at hand.*" *They were things which must shortly to come to pass.* (see Revelation 1:1)

Something else to consider when seeking to determine when the book was written is the commission given to John in chapter ten verse eleven.

"And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations and tongues, and kings."

Revelation 10:11

John must have been born close to the same time as Jesus. (Remembering modern scholars place Jesus birth between 6 BC and 4 BC) In AD 95 John would have been

close to the age of one hundred years old. It is hard to imagine someone as old as he would have been being commissioned to preach in the manner which the above verse directs. However it is easier to envision a man who is thirty years younger doing so. John is said to have died in AD 101. Tradition says he was very frail and had to be helped in the church and spoke very little. At the latter stages of life he was said only to speak a few words before the church. *“Little children love one another.”* It is this same John Jesus said would remain alive until He came again. As we have already discussed in a previous section, John was alive when Jesus appeared in the glory of His kingdom in AD 70. When the book of Revelation is considered as having been written before AD 70 it makes much more sense. As a book of prophecy it fits the events we know transpired in the destruction of Jerusalem. Placing the date of its writing between AD 92-95 leaves it open to the fancies of people like Hal Lindsey and Dave Hunt.

John is commonly believed to have been banished to the Isle of Patmos at the latter part of Domitian’s reign. Dr. John Gill in his commentary of the new testament in his preface to the book of Revelation says regarding the timing of it’s writing;

*“Some think it was written in the times of Claudius Caesar, before the destruction of Jerusalem. In the title of the Syriac version, this revelation is said to be made to John in the isle of Patmos, into which he was cast by Nero Caesar.”*

Of course we know that Nero committed suicide on June 9, AD 68. If Nero banished John to Patmos John would have been sent there before June AD 68.

Hassell’s History of the Church of God says; *“It is thought that the apostle John was banished by Nero to the lonely island of Patmos in the Aegean sea, (or Grecian archipelago) where he saw the vision in the book of revelation about the same time (AD68); though it has heretofore been generally thought that his banishment was under the Emperor Domitian AD 95.”* **Sylvester Hassell, “History of the Church of God.” Chapter 8, page 215**

*“Laodicea was overthrown by an earthquake (AD 60) but was immediately rebuilt, so that it’s being called “rich and increased with goods” is not incompatible with this book having been written under the Neronian persecution (AD 64).”* **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary on the Whole Bible, Preface to Revelation, Place and Time of Writing.**

*“Eusebius in (Evangelical Demonstrations) unites in the same sentence John’s banishment with the stoning of James and the beheading of Paul, which were under Nero Ceasar.”* **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary on the Whole Bible, Preface to Revelation, Place and Time of Writing.**

*“Clemens Alexandrinus’ story of the robber reclaimed by John, after he had pursued, and with difficulty overtaken him, accords better with John then being a younger man than under Domitian, when he was 100 years old.”* **Jamieson, Fausset,**

**and Brown Commentary on the Whole Bible, Preface to Revelation, Place and Time of Writing.**