

The Rapture, Fact or Fiction?

The rapture teaching was not part of the Apostle's Creed, nor was it an accepted teaching within Orthodox Christianity for the first 1,800 years of Church History. Within the last 100 years this wind of doctrine has blown through the church and gained significant acceptance, but is the rapture doctrine Biblical?

The Old Testament is written in Hebrew, and the New Testament is written in Greek. So why is this one word, rapture, singled out to be translated into English from Latin? Why not remain consistent, and employ the Greek? The Greek word is *harpazo*, which means "to seize."

To begin with, we will conduct a word study. Within this word study we will examine all 14 instances where the word *harpazo* is employed. If the *harpazo* is a physical teleportation of believers from the earth to Heaven, then it follows logically there will be 14 such events recorded in the Bible. Let's examine the Holy Scriptures and see what position the preponderance of the Biblical evidence supports.

The NAS Strong's Version - 3 Verses

Mt 11:12

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men **take it by force**.

Mt 12:29 -

"Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and **carry off** his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

Mt 13:19 -

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and **snatches** away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

After looking at the first three verses in the Gospel of Matthew, do any of them illustrate a physical teleportation from earth to Heaven?

The NAS Strong's Version - 4 Verses

Joh 6:15 So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and **take Him by force** to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Joh 10:12

"He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf **snatches** them and scatters them."

Joh 10:28

"And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will **snatch** them out of My hand."

Joh 10:29

"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to **snatch** them out of the Father's hand."

After looking at the next four verses in the Gospel of John, do any of them illustrate a physical teleportation from Earth to Heaven?

The NAS Strong's Version - 2 Verses

Ac 8:39

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **snatched** Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

Ac 23:10

And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and **take** him away from them **by force**, and bring him into the barracks.

The first Scripture in Acts 8:30 could be interpreted as a physical teleportation from point A to point B on the earth, but it can also be equally interpreted as a re-direction from the Holy Spirit. To expound, Phillip received new instructions from the Holy Spirit, went diligently east, for example, as the Eunuch went west. Perhaps some buildings or landscape blocked their line of sight to each other. Thus, this Scripture does not necessarily illustrate a "mini-rapture."

. If we were in a court of law the evidence thus far would be one maybe for the current popular rapture doctrine, and eight opposed. Shall we continue? The next passages in Acts may, or may not, illustrate a physical teleportation from earth to Heaven

The NAS Strong's Version - 2 Verses

2Co 12:2 [

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago --whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows --such a man was **caught** up to the third heaven.

2Co 12:4

was **caught** up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

These two Scripture are fascinating. Many theologians believe the Apostle Paul is speaking of himself in the first passage. The first Heaven being the sky, the second space, and the third Heaven as we commonly perceive Heaven to be. Note the Apostle Paul admits he is not sure if this man experienced a bodily teleportation to Heaven from earth, or if it was a spiritual seizure from earth to Heaven. Since the Apostle Paul is 50-50 about it, shouldn't we exercise the same restraint? How many rapture teachers admit there is a 50% chance they are wrong? Do you know of any?

The Apostle Paul was frequently stoned and left for dead, is it possible his spirit was raptured at that time?

The NAS Strong's Version - 1 Verse

1Th 4:17

Then we who are alive and remain will be **caught** up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

This is the primary verse rapture proponents use to support their position. Let's take a good hard look at it.

First, the Apostle Paul employs the word "we." If this were referring to us in the 21st century today the inspired Word of God would have used the word "they." That is, "They who will be alive in the future," rather than, "...we who are alive and remain." Clearly, the literal time indicators of "we" and "are alive" can not be dismissed without doing violence to the clear and plain meaning.

Second, Exodus 19:4 employs similar language:

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."

Did the Hebrews ride on giant eagles like in the movie The Lord of the Rings? Did they physically fly up into Heaven and meet God the Father? This is common Old Covenant language for God's protection. Likewise, this is what 1 Thes 4:17 references.

Third, the word air is not referring to the air where planes fly, and the physical clouds exist. A word study on air in the Greek reveals it is referring to the air immediately around us. It is the air we inhale. That is how close God's protection around the church at Thessalonica was during the Great Tribulation in the 1st Century .

Fourth, Jesus Himself prays against a rapture in John 17:15:

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one."

The NAS Strong's Version - 1 Verse

Jude 1:23

save others, **snatching** them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

After looking at the second to last verse in Jude, does the Word illustrate a physical teleportation from Earth to Heaven?

The NAS Strong's Version - 1 Verse

Re 12:5

And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was **caught** up to God and to His throne.

Again, the word in the Greek is harpazo; to sieze. Like 1 Thes 4:17, the word up is added into the text in the English. It does not exist in the Greek. While on that subject, the word "for" does not exist in the Hebrew in Daniel 9:27 either. It is inserted into the text.

Verses 3 and 4 expound about a red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and about its' tail sweeping 1/3rd of the stars to the land. In context, the Book of Revelation employs highly symbolic language. This language in verse 5 illustrates God's protection.

So, if you were the judge in a court of law, what would the preponderance of the evidence suggest? 5 of the 14 passages are in the maybe column; while 9 of the 14 passages do not lend their support. Is the current popular rapture teaching a fact, or is it fiction? Apply Acts 17:11. How do you rule?

There are also two additional passages rapture enthusiasts promote to support their position. The first is Matt 24:38-41. Go ahead and read those verses in context. Note that in verse 39 the wicked are taken away (killed) by the floodwaters, and Noah and his family are left alive in the Ark. Likewise, the people in the field and at the mill would either be taken (killed during the Roman-Judeo War), or left alive. No rapture here.

Matt 24:31 is the yet another so-called rapture passage. Go ahead and read that verse in context as well. The angels can either be human messengers or angelic beings in the Greek. I believe they are the 1st century disciples / apostles who turned the Roman world "upside down." The sound of a trumpet means to loudly proclaim, like in Matt 6:2. The gathering is a spiritual gathering into Christ, not a physical gathering. Last, the four winds are the four directions of a compass; north, south, east, and west. Again, no rapture here.

After studying the rapture doctrine, I believe it is not a factual Biblical teaching. I believe it an emotionally comforting fictional doctrine, a la Star Trek, that is being exposed according to the Acts 17:11 principle. What do you believe God's Word says?

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