

The Great Escape?

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"These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

According to the publication of the "Word Christian Encyclopedia" which is a comparative survey of churches and religions, that from AD 30 to 2017 "There are 19 major world religions which are subdivided into 270 large religious groups, and many other smaller ones.

For eighteen of the world's major religions and its 270 subdivisions, the concept of the sudden and instantaneous translation of millions of adherents from one form of existence into the next is completely unheard of. It is even a controversial doctrine within Christianity. There are entire huge subdivisions, or denominations within Christianity that totally dismiss the concept of the Rapture.

I read on the internet a column which is appropriately named "Againstdispensationalism.com" that argues that the rapture is nothing more than the "arrogance of the West". So we are the ones who came up with this theory of the instantaneous removal of the Church of

the Living God and it was never spoken of until the 1880s by one, John Darby from the rantings of a mentally disturbed young girl, Margaret McDonald....I chose this article because it focuses on why the rapture is so controversial.

In another article, a one Jerry Johnson who is president of some so called Nicene Council, the rapture is nothing more than "paperback theology" and a recent concoction that was never taught by the historic church.

For context, the historic church is the one that embraces replacement theology and Anti-semitism and my bible is the paperback. Why do I say that? Because it can be easily proven that the 1st century church did indeed teach a sudden "catching away" of the Church of the Living God. I will address that momentarily.

Note this Johnson fellow that lashes out that "one is hard pressed to link all of the great minds from St. Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Charles Spurgeon, that as they read 1st Thessalonians 4 and 1st Corinthians where Paul spoke of this "mystery" that had not been revealed to the OT prophets, Jesus did not teach it, nor any of the apostles, till Paul revealed this information, and failed to understand the important teachings of a pre-millennial, pre-Tribulation rapture of the church, called the "Harpazo" in scripture when read in Greek.

This Johnson fellow further denigrates the doctrine of the rapture, calling it "a foundation of conceited theology". Amazing how those who fail to understand Bible prophecy lash out at things they do not understand. But he gave it his best "Sunday punch".

His main objection, and frankly, the objection of many nay-sayers of the opponents of this doctrine, is the misconception that the rapture is nothing but a "Great Escape". They reason why do Christians of this age get to escape the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation while others do not? They site that this is not fair, and God is not unfair.

I wonder sometimes, if they find it equally unfair that some go to heaven and others go to hell. Not being a betting man, but I would wager that they find it totally unfair that God would send anyone to such an awful place, but all would agree that murdering dictators of this age, such as Hitler, or Pol Pot do not deserve to go to heaven. Oh, the conflict in their arguments.

That's why God is God and theologians are not.

LET US DISCUSS WHERE THIS DOCTRINE CAME FROM

As noted, no other religion has anything resembling a Rapture doctrine, including whatever 'historic church' Jerry Johnson was referring to. So where did it come from and why is it there?

The first thing nay-sayers will do is to hopelessly complicate the issue so that whatever they come up with, is practically impossible to decipher.

First let us address where the doctrine actually came from and it wasn't by John Darby, but he did revive the belief that had been squashed during the Dark Ages by none other than the ruling theocracy of the Roman Catholic Church. It was the purpose of this ruling theocracy to blind the population and make them totally dependant on them, not God the Father, or Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

PROPONENTS OF THE HARPAZO

In the first Century, men like Irenaeus (130 A.D. – 202 AD) was a bishop of the church in Lyons, France. He was an eyewitness to the Apostle John (who wrote the Book of Revelation) and a disciple of Polycarp, the first of the Apostle John's disciples. Irenaeus is most-known for his five-volume treatise, Against Heresies in which he exposed the false religions and cults of his day along with advice for how to share the Gospel with those were a part of them.

In his writings on Bible prophecy, he acknowledged the phrase “a time, times and dividing of times” in Daniel 7 to signify the 3 ½ year reign of the Antichrist as ruler of the world before the Second Coming of Christ. He also believed in a literal Millennial reign of Christ on earth following the Second Coming and the resurrection of the just. In his writings called “Against Heresies” Irenaeus writes:

““Those nations however, who did not of themselves raise up their eyes unto heaven, nor returned thanks to their Maker, nor wished to behold the light of truth, but who were like blind mice concealed in the depths of ignorance, the word justly reckons “as waste water from a sink, and as the turning-weight of a balance — in fact, as nothing;”(1) so far useful and serviceable to the just, as stubble conduces towards the growth of the wheat, and its straw, by means of combustion, serves for working gold. And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.”(2) For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.”

Irenaeus in this passage describes the church leaving the sinful world just before unprecedented disasters. Note his use of the term “caught up” which is Rapture terminology as that is the meaning of *harpazo*, the term for “caught up” in the King James Bible describing the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4. He then quotes Matthew 24:21 where The Lord Jesus Christ says: “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 it is during this time that those who convert to Christianity during the final years will receive the incorruptible crown mentioned by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:25. In Irenaeus' belief, the Rapture took place prior to the end times Great Tribulation. (beginningandtheend.com)

This is but one of the early church fathers who believed in the doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture or “catching away” of the Church, as others such as Cyprian and Ephraim the Syrian which wrote:

“With a sense of urgency and strong warning, Ephraim writes that the end times are upon this world and could start at any moment. This text very clearly states the saints and elect of God, all born again believers in The Lord Jesus Christ, will be “taken to the Lord” before the Great Tribulation. Ephraim also identifies the Old Testament “Day of The Lord” and the end times Great tribulation as the same event (in line with the teachings of the *Beginning and End Rapture Series*). Ephraim quotes Amos 5:18 which says: “Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.”

TWISTING SCRIPTURE TO YOUR OWN END

But if you ignore these early church fathers, that some say was not taught during this period, and their writings disprove this absurd position, you can take enough verses from the different places throughout the bible, and taking them out of context, make a case for Rapture, against a Rapture, for Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Post-Trib, amillennial, premillennial, or post millennial, with or without the 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ.

If you do enough research, you will find that there are scholars that adhere to each and every position I have quoted and they have names for them, and I refuse to believe that they hold these varied views without hanging some sort of scripture to hang from them. But of course, they must take them out of context, and twist them to fit their preconceived notions that their position is the true one.

If one disbelieves in the rapture of the Church and believes that it is some kind of "Great Escape," then it is easy to take verses from all over the Bible to refute it. Not because the Rapture is false doctrine, but because that isn't the purpose of the Rapture and knowing why provides valuable clues to when and how.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ promised His disciples that when He ascended into Heaven, the Holy Spirit would come upon them and indwell them and empower them. That indwelling Power would come upon and indwell all who believed.

16 " And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:16-18)

Jesus promised that "the Comforter" would be with me and those He indwells forever and would never leave us.

SO DID JESUS TELL A WHOPPER? NO!

Let's examine the simplest questions first.

What does it mean when Jesus Christ makes a promise to the Church? Is it reliable? What does "forever" mean? Is there a time constraint on forever? When would forever run out? Does abide forever mean "abide forever for every generation but one?" Meaning our generation as the tribulation begins?

Houston, we have a problem. According to my paperback theology, the Comforter is:

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:7)

So the Comforter, known as the Holy Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth and He indwells me. That's what the Bible, my "paperback" theology teaches me which is part one of that promise. Part two of that promise is again in the Gospel of John repeated here:

"I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." (John 14:18)

Do you as you read this message, see a contradiction in scripture from what the main stream religions spue out as their version of the Truth? So how do we resolve this obvious contradiction? There is only one way. First one way, is the Holy Spirit indwells me throughout the Tribulation period. Therefore, by the authority of God's Holy Spirit and the Word of God, specifically 1st John that covers that authority:

4 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1st John 4:4-6)

Since the indwelling Holy Spirit is greater than the powers of this world, and since He will never leave me or forsake me during the Tribulation, (if that position were true), then it is not possible that the Anti-Christ to overcome me and the Spirit of Truth indwelling in me, and making me pledge allegiance to him.

But that contradicts Revelation 13:

7 “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.” (Revelation 13:7-9)

For the antichrist to overcome an indwelt child of the Living God, he must defeat the Indweller. Unless the Holy Spirit no longer indwells me. And if He doesn't, did He ever? And if He did, and we know from scripture that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, receive the Holy Spirit, then where did He go? And if He left me, how then can He do that and not break the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ to not leave us Comfortless? Remember that the Tribulation will be the greatest spiritual trial in all of human history.

And all through the history of the Church Age from those thrown to the lions in the Coll0sseum in Rome, to those being massacred by ISIS and other terrorist groups in the Middle East today, have the benefit of the Holy Spirit and I have to go throught the Tribulation without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and God will leave me Comfortless when I need Him the most?

Talk about contradictions. How does that work? If the rapture is the “great escape” from Tribulation for Christians, then wouldn't the opposite be when I need God and His support the most in all of human history and my mortal life and is suddenly without warning taken away?

6 “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,” (2nd Thessalonians 2:6-9)

For argument sake, if I am in the Tribulation and indwelt by God's Holy Spirit, then why are there 144,000 Jewish evangelist, the two witnesses at the temple in Jerusalem, and the angels of God preaching the Gospel to mankind during this time? Is that not my job? What's wrong with using me and others like me who have God's Holy Spirit also? That was the Great Commission delivered to the Apostles by Jesus before He ascended back to the Father:

18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

SO WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

If you take the positions noted above, the only one that makes sense and does not contradict what I just spoke of, in that the Holy Spirit will be with me always...and when God pulls His Holy Spirit from holding back rampant evil on this earth, then those who have God's Holy Spirit as a deposit of future glorification, will be removed at the same time. THEN, and only then will God reveal the Anti-Christ as Jesus opens the 1st seal of the title deed of His creation that He has bought with His own blood. How long will the period be between the removal of the Church and the beginning of the Tribulation? It could be immediate, it could be days, or even years, as we are not

plainly told. All we know from Revelation chp. 4 forward, that the Saints of God are not called the Church, not one time. They are called the elect or elders.

10 "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Revelation 3:10-11)

Note that God will KEEP us from this hour of temptation, or tribulation that will try all who dwell upon the earth....these are called the nations, and they are separate from God's people.

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

The age of Grace began at Pentecost with the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit on those who accept Jesus as Savior and Lord of their life. That's a given.

God will remove His Holy Spirit back to Pre-Pentecostal times and the Anti-christ will be revealed.

Those who have God's Holy Spirit will be removed at the precise time that God pulls back from holding evil at bay and Satan will have full sway over the destiny of mankind to destroy them and those who worship the Beast. Jesus promised He would never leave us Comfortless, or leave us forever.

The Anti-Christ, will overcome the saints of the Tribulation, as God's Holy Spirit has been pulled back. The AC cannot overcome the Church, as he can't overcome God, so it is another point for confirmation of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

The Promise to the Church is kept precisely as it was given by the Lord Himself.

Now, if one really works at it, one can find creative ways to portray the Rapture as the Great Escape and from there, all kinds of creative ways to dismiss it as paperback theology.

But the simplest answer is still the only one that makes sense.

SO WILL YOU BE LEFT ON YOUR OWN?

It will be the most trying spiritual time in all of mankind's history upon the earth. Many will take the easy way out and be damned because of them taking the Mark of the Beast.

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (Revelation 14:11)

It will be a time, when one can actually lose their salvation, because of all the trials and the coercion by the Anti-Christ and his henchmen, all the delusions that seem right, but are dead wrong, and those who actually have pleasure in their unrighteousness and think it's party time. But will realize that the time comes to be "hell on earth" and there is no party, but severe physical, emotional, and spiritual torment that no man or woman should have to live through. But since the offer is open and the gift is free, why not take God at His Word and accept His mercy and grace? Avoid something we deserve but do not receive because of His mercy, and receive grace or something we cannot earn, but is given freely by a Loving and Righteous Creator, God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. His mercy and grace is only a prayer away, when you repent of your sins and take Him at His Word.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17, or God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.
18, He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

If you believe the above verses, then confess them to God and make that decision for Christ today.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10, For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11, For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 10:9-11)

In the end, let them scoff that it is a “Great Escape” as you and I know that it is not what God has it designed for, but I believe it can be summed up in three words...not the “Great Escape” but “**VICTORY IN JESUS**”.

This is pastor Mike Taylor, praying you make that decision for Christ today, and join me and others like me when we stand before our Savior. If you need prayer, counseling, or just a listening ear, email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net, or visit me online at www.pastormiketaylor.blogspot.com. God bless you all.

TILL WE MEET AT JESUS FEET