

## The Rapture

## A Biblical *Ordo Eschatos*



## Rapture – the word itself

- From the Latin
  - *Rapio*
  - “To snatch or to seize”
  - “To remove by force from one place to another”
  - Latin word used in 1 Th. 4:17 (English, “caught up”)

## Its Foundation: an Exegetical Dilemma



## Reluctant Admissions

- No definitive Scriptural statements
- John Walvoord [pre-trib]: “The fact is that neither posttribulationism or pretribulationism is an explicit teaching of Scripture. The Bible does not in so many words state either.”
- George Allen Ladd [post-trib]: “With the exception of one passage, the author will grant that the Scripture nowhere explicitly states that the church will go through the Great Tribulation.... Nor does the Word explicitly place the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation.”

## Apparent Conflicts

- Passages that indicate Christ’s return will be sudden and unexpected.
  - His return is imminent.
  - *Imminent* does not mean:
    - Christ will return soon.
    - Christ must return soon.
  - *Imminent* does mean:
    - Christ could return at any moment, and we should live constantly in expectation of that event.

## Apparent Conflicts

- Passages that indicate Christ's return will be sudden and unexpected.
- Matt. 24:42-44 – "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.
- Matt. 24:50 – the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know.
- Matt. 25:13 – "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

## Apparent Conflicts

- Mark 13:32-33 – "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*. 33 "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come.
- Mark 13:34-37 – "*It is* like a man away on a journey, *who* upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, *assigning* to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. 35 "Therefore, be on the alert-- for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning-- 36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 "What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"
- Luke 12:40 – "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

## Apparent Conflicts

- 1 Cor. 16:22 – Maranatha [O, Lord, come!]
- Phil. 3:20 – our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Phil. 4:5 – Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.
- 1 Th. 1:10 – and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.
- 1 Th. 5:2 –you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.
- 2 Tim. 4:8 – in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

## Apparent Conflicts

- Titus 2:11-13 – the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.
- Heb. 10:24-25 – let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
- Heb. 10:37 – YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

## Apparent Conflicts

- Jam. 5:7-9 – Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.
- 1 John 2:18 – Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.
- 1 John 2:28 – Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

## Apparent Conflicts

- 1 John 3:2 – Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
- 1 Pet. 4:7 – The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.
- 1 Pet. 5:4 – when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- 2 Pet. 3:10 – the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

## Apparent Conflicts

- Rev. 1:1 – The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place.
- Rev. 1:3 – Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.
- Rev. 3:11 – “I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
- Rev. 22:7 – “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”
- Rev. 22:12 – “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.
- Rev. 22:20 – He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

## Pitfalls of Imminency

- “Paul was convinced that Christ would return in his lifetime.”
  - 1 Th. 4:13ff – “we who are alive and remain will be caught up.”
- Using the same logic, Paul also expected to die:
  - 1 Cor. 6:14 – God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.
  - 2 Cor. 4:14 – He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

## Apparent Conflicts – signs

- Passages that indicate that certain signs will precede Christ’s return.
- Matthew 24

## Apparent Conflicts -- Signs

- 1) False messiahs (24:4-5; 23-26)
- 2) Wars and rumors of wars (24:6-7a)
- 3) Famines, earthquakes, and pestilences (24:7b; Luke 21:11)
- 4) Persecution of true believers (24:9)
- 5) Spiritual defection of false believers (24:10-13)
- 6) Gospel preached to the whole world (24:14)
- 7) The Great Tribulation (24:15-28)
- 8) Cosmic signs in the sky (24:29)
- 9) The Coming of the Man of Sin (2 Th. 2:1-3)

## Proposed Solutions

- 1) Deny imminency & argue that the signs have not been fulfilled.
  - Christ could not come at any time.
  - Several signs that must happen first.
  - Mid- and post-tribulation Return of Christ

## Proposed Solutions

- 2) Redefine the signs so you can still believe in imminency.
  - a) all the signs have definitely been fulfilled and Christ could return at any moment.
  - b) it is unlikely, but possible that all the signs have been fulfilled; and because it’s possible, we should like as if the return of Christ could happen today.

## **Proposed Solutions**

- 3) Deny that there will be any signs before Christ comes for His church.
  - The Rapture of the Church
    - Before the Tribulation
    - No signs to be fulfilled
  - The Second Coming
    - Seven years later
    - Preceded by the signs
  - The Second Coming in two distinct acts or aspects

## **The Primary Views**

- Three primary views
- Based on their relationship to the Tribulation period
  - before the Tribulation
  - during the tribulation
  - after the Tribulation

## **Pre-tribulation – before the Tribulation**

- Defined: in the first stage of the Second Coming, Christ will come in the air for his saints before the Tribulation begins and will take them back to heaven—this is called the Rapture; the second stage of his Coming occurs after the Tribulation, when Christ will return to earth with his saints to defeat his enemies and establish his earthly kingdom.

## **Mid-tribulation – in the middle of the Tribulation**

- Defined: Believers in Christ will be raptured in the middle of the Tribulation, prior to the outpouring of God's wrath called the Great Tribulation. Christ will take them back to heaven with Him until the end of the Tribulation, when He will return with them in the Second Coming.

## **Post-tribulation – after the Tribulation**

- Defined: Living believers will be raptured into the air at the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation, and will then immediately descend with Christ back to the earth.

## **Preliminary Observations**

- There is no definitive passage that asserts a clear biblical position.
- There is no view of Christ's return that is without difficulties.
- We must study and seek to reconcile the apparent contradictions as we do with every other doctrine.
- We must avoid dogmatism on this issue.
- We ought to emphasize what Scripture emphasizes.