

EBC POSITION CONCERNING THE RAPTURE

The following is a response by Greg Lundstedt to an email received concerning the Rapture.

Thank you for your gracious patience. I also appreciate your desire not to undermine the one who is teaching the Bible study you referred to. With this in mind, I don't want to undermine them either, but maybe I could share a couple things that might be helpful for you to help you understand, what I believe is a biblical view of the rapture and that which might help you understand how others come about some of their arguments against such of view.

First of all, it appears to me that your Bible study leader is using a strawman argument to challenge what I believe is a biblical view of the rapture.

When I see arguments like this, I'm always alerted to the fact that maybe they've never dug into the Scripture enough to understand for themselves but are taking what they have heard from others and repeating it. For example, the argument that the rapture is a North American Christian idea based on dispensationalism is a total strawman. I've heard these arguments before, and they are sometimes phrased in such a way that they reveal the wacky elements of dispensationalism and then pull down the strawmen along with certain valid biblical truths of dispensationalism.

Now we should never make our doctrinal arguments based on our own reason and history. Our arguments should be from the Word of God. Unfortunately, I often see those with an amillennial viewpoint, often rely on human reasoning and proof texts rather than faithful exposition of the Scripture concerning certain doctrines. On a side note, I do consider those with this view as brothers in Christ, although I disagree with them.

Now although we do not rely on it, I think it's interesting to note that if you look at history honestly, it was not until the early church fathers became prominent that the church took upon itself an amillennial viewpoint. It is also important to note that this eschatology or end-times paradigm continued throughout the Catholic Church's history up to the Reformation. And I find it very interesting to note that although the Reformation brought clearly revealed truth concerning justification and sanctification, yet some areas of erroneous Catholic doctrine were not reformed at that time. Indeed, most of the mainline reformers continued to hold a Catholic end-times view. For example, we see this same concept with the Lutheran Church, who although were reformed in terms of salvation (which is most important by the way), they were not reformed in their views of infant baptism, carrying on the Catholic Church's traditions. I believe this happened too with eschatology. And I certainly do not believe it is to one's credit to hold to a doctrine that was really formulated through those who would eventually be the fathers of the institutionalized Catholic Church, which was not the true church at all, having rejected salvation by faith alone in Christ.

Now setting history aside, what matters most is what the Scriptures say. And I admit this is a difficult doctrine, although I do not believe it is hidden. I also recognize that most amillennialist's back their viewpoints with certain Scriptures which could on the surface lend themselves towards that view, yet I find their arguments are highly saturated with human reason rather than good exposition of the Scripture. All this to say I do believe their interpretations are wrong, although they do have some basis in Scripture.

Now you're probably aware the word "rapture" does not appear in Scripture. My understanding is that it is the Latin translation of the Greek word *harpadzō*, which means to be forcibly grabbed and is used in first Thessalonians 4:17, translated caught up.

Now what we know for sure, and all can agree on is that Christ is coming again. But does this include a removal of the church before He comes and judgment? I believe Scripture does point to this. Take for instance John 14

John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there you may be also.*

The Lord Jesus Christ is relating to His disciples that He is going to come for them again and receive them to Himself, not here, but where He is going. Obviously the context here is clear that this place is not on Earth, it is where He is going and is preparing, this being heaven.

Just these verses alone do not fit into the amillennial paradigm of interpretation that sees His coming as one total event, not a series of events culminating in Him actually coming to earth in judgment, which we would believe.

Now certainly in context people could say this is only directed towards the disciples and obviously would have happened before any so-called rapture. But this argument falls short also because Jesus says He's coming back to get them. He's not waiting for them, He is coming back to get them, and bring them to heaven. Now although the disciples died before the rapture of the church, they lived within the context of the revelation they and we have, which focused on immanency of Christ return for His church (1 Thes 1:9-10, Titus 2:11-14 and others).

Now another reason I believe the Lord will come for His church before He comes physically to earth in judgment, comes from my understanding of how the apostle Paul uses the Greek term *peri de*. Every time the apostle Paul used this term "*peri de*," which we have translated "now concerning", he is changing the subject. Just look at these passages in which this term is used. 1 Cor 7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1 16:12, 1 Thes 4:9

Why do I say this? Because in first Thessalonians 5:1, he uses this term also. And although I believe first Thessalonians 4 and 5 are related, I believe he is changing the subject from Christ forcibly grabbing His church, what we call the rapture, in preparation for the day of the Lord which would come afterwards.

All throughout Scripture that they Lord reveals that Christ is coming to earth. Yet passages like first Thessalonians 4 speak of us meeting Him in the air after he forcibly grabs us up. We see this same idea as I shared earlier in John 14.

Jesus doesn't take us up and then bring us right back down to bring judgment upon the earth, it appears from the Scriptures there is some time in between these two events, which are certainly related, and thus the confusion by those who see them as the same event.

Indeed, if we just read your first Thessalonians 4 and 5 we see certainly one major event His coming, yet within that coming, there is a first a grabbing of His own unto Himself to be with Him and then later Him coming to earth in judgment, i.e the day of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 ¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.** ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain **shall be caught up** (harpadzo—forcably grabbed) together with them in the clouds **to meet the Lord in the air (not on earth)**, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. **5:1** Now as (peri de- now concerning) to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then **destruction will come upon them** suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we are of *the day*, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and **love**, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ **For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.**

Indeed, throughout Scripture we have the removal of God's people before judgment.

Remember in the discourse Matthew 24 and Luke 17 where Jesus illustrates the truth about His second coming, we see, righteous, **Noah and Lot were taken before judgment. So too I believe** The church will be taken before this judgment, there will be the forcible grabbing of His church unto Himself then a 7year tribulation, then Jesus Comes executing judgment **1Thes 4 then 1Thes 5**

On an interesting sidenote, Enoch appears to be a type of the rapture also from the Old Testament, as we see he was removed before the flood judgment Gen 5 & 6

It is also interesting to note in Scripture that when Christ does come to earth in judgment, He will bring His holy ones with Him, rather than meeting them, they are already with Him. I believe this group certainly includes the raptured church. Zech 14:5-9 (cf. 15:4), Jude 1:14, and possibly Rev 19:11-16 (cf. 19:14)

I truly believe Scripture points to a pre-tribulation rapture. A removal of the Church just before the day of the Lord.

I do not believe in a pretrib rapture because of dispensationalists, my faith is not based on history or people it is based on the Word of God.

Unfortunately, history is used to prove all sorts of things which may or may not be biblical. And certainly, there are those who interpret the Word rightly, yet within that group there are those who follow the truth and those who malign it.

I think Satan effectively distorts the truth, by having wacky Christians hold to right truth in wacky ways, so as to discredit it. Just the fact that most charismatics and Pentecostals believe in a pre-trip rapture is not an effective argument against a pretrip rapture. It is a strawman argument, just like the historical argument you mentioned.

When all is said and done, I've noticed that the majority those who do not believe in a pre-tribulation rapture give great weight to arguments based on reason and history rather than Scripture. I find my many of their arguments are light on Scripture and heavy on reason.

Now you probably know the Reformation came about because of accurate study and proclamation of God's spirit empowered Word divided rightly. And I believe a truly reformed viewpoint of eschatology will only come through the study of and rightly dividing of God's Word, not the study of the early church fathers or church history.

Thus, as I mentioned before I believe those who do not believe in a pretrip rapture continue to hold a view which was cultivated in a state church that had perverted the truth concerning Christ. And I believe if one diligently and faithfully studies the Word he or she will come to the conclusion that there is a rapture that occurs before Christ comes in judgment.

I hope this is helpful. I've attached also a document concerning an end times overview, and below are some links to some messages that I preach that might be helpful too. I pray the Lord will bless you richly in your study of His Word

In Him
Greg Lundstedt