

Handout I—Rapture Theology

History

- Circa 1820, at a revival service in Glasgow, Scotland, a teenage girl named McDonald claimed to have had a vision of a pre-tribulation rapture
- Her claims would have come & gone & left little impact on the church except a certain Rev. named John Nelson Darby—1 of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren denomination—was there and became convinced it was correct and began preaching it
- Even so, it still might have been a flash in the pan of a small Christian sect with a peculiar belief that no one in the 1st 18 centuries of the church believed, except Darby brought this idea to the US and came into contact with the Billy Graham of his day, Dwight L. Moody.
 - Moody became the worldwide disseminator of what is called “dispensationalism” and a pre-tribulation rapture
- To further popularize the idea, a man named C.I. Scofield included this theology in his reference Bible at the start of the 20th century, placing headings in the text like “Jesus Predicts the Rapture” and study notes at the bottom so that the ordinary person would read it and treat it as equal to the Scriptures.
 - Scofield’s Bible is the reason dispensationalism could be found throughout American fundamentalism in the 20th century.
 - Books like the “Left Behind” novels further popularized this theology that for 1800 years no one else in the Christian church ever believed.

2 Key Prooftexts

Matthew 24:40-41

- J is not saying that the church will be raptured, leaving the unbelieving workers in the field and at the mill left behind
- **Context matters.** Jesus is retelling the story of Noah and what happened in his day
 - When all of humanity was swept away by the flood, and the only ones “left behind” were the **righteous ones**—Noah and his family!
 - In the Noah story, it’s **good** to be left behind, for to be taken away is to be taken away in **judgment!**
- Jesus is not promising to extract his church from the world before things get hard. He wants his church that is in the world to watch and wait and be prepared.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17

- Paul is comforting the Thessalonians who fear that those who have died in Christ would miss out on the Lord’s return and the resurrection and blessings of the coming kingdom
- Sequence: The Lord & trumpet > dead rise > living transformed > we will meet “in the air”
 - “Air” does not mean heaven. This is a reference to a royal entourage that welcomes the Lord’s return like a king to his city
 - See Psalm 24’s entrance liturgy
 - Protocol: When the king arrives you send out the greeting committee to meet him and join his entry in royal procession
- Paul is depicting the king’s return with his royal entourage of saints and angels

Handout II—Promise & Fulfillment in Revelation

Letters (chapters 2-3)	Conclusion (chapters 21-22)
false apostles (2:2)	true apostles (21:14)
false Jews (2:9; 3:9)	tribes of the true Israel (21:12)
Christians dwell where Satan's throne is (2:13)	Christians dwell where God's throne is (22:1)
some in the church are dead (3:1)	all in the perfected church are alive (21:27)
the church is an Earthly lamp stand (1:20; 2:5)	God and the Lamb are the lamps (21:23-24; 22:5)
the church contains idolaters (2:14-15, 20-23)	the perfected church has no idolatry or lying (21:8)
Christians are persecuted (2:8-10, 13)	Christians reign as conquerors (21:6-7)
they will eat of the Tree of Life (2:7)	the Tree of Life bears fruit in heaven for the believer (22:2)
they will be a pillar in the temple (3:12)	God and the Lamb are the temple in heaven where the believer dwells (21:22)
they will be part of the heavenly Jerusalem (3:12)	they are part of the heavenly Jerusalem (21:23-27)
they will have the name of their God (3:12)	the name of God is on their foreheads (22:4)
their names will be written in the Book of Life (3:5)	their names are written in the Book of Life (21:27)
they will be clothed in white (3:5)	they are the bride adorned for her husband (21:2)
they will have a white stone and receive the Morning Star (2:17, 28)	they are part of the city whose foundations are precious stones (21:11, 18-21), whose light is God and the Lamb (21:23; 22:5), and that lives with Jesus, the Bright Morning Star (22:16)
they will rule the nations (2:26-27) and sit with Christ on his throne (3:21)	they reign forever and ever (22:5)
they will be saved from the second death (2:11)	they are saved from the second death (21:7-8)