

Biblical Forensics ©

“Unbelief - The Point of Reckoning” Part 3

In the last two segments, “patterns”, “themes” and “parallels” were highlighted to illustrate how God provides Biblical imagery to both teach doctrine and reveal truth. To the unsuspecting reader it might not make sense, but to the trained observer it reveals a wealth of dimension and depth about the Creator and His message. Where this journey is leading will soon become apparent to the reader as we unveil this sweeping and panoramic backdrop into Scripture. Let’s look at Moses’ revelation for Israel at Mount Sinai. We find **six important parallels** that occurred with Moses on Mount Sinai:

1. God called Israel a kingdom of priests and a peculiar treasurer -(Exodus 19:5-6).
2. The elders were assembled with Moses -(Exodus 19:7).
3. God said “*I will come in a thick cloud...*” -(Exodus 19:9).
4. The Lord would come down in the sight of the people -(Exodus 19:11).
5. The voice of a trumpet waxed long and loud -(Exodus 19:19).
6. The Lord came down and Moses went up -(Exodus 19:20).

Note closely as I show how these Sinai “parallels” are found in the Apostle Paul’s “Rapture” revelation; ***“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”*** -(1st Thessalonians 4:15-17). At this point we know from the text:

1. The church consists of kings and priests -(Revelation 1:6).
2. The 24 elders will assemble around the throne -(Revelation 4:4).
3. The Lord will return in the clouds -(1st Thessalonians 4:17).
4. The Lord will come down (descend) from heaven -(1st Thessalonians 4:16).
5. The Lord descends with the sound of a trumpet -(1st Thessalonians 4:16).
6. The saints will be caught up -(1st Thessalonians 4:17).

In 54 A.D. Paul’s first letter was written to the church at Thessalonica in which Paul revealed the Lord’s Second Coming saying:

- ***“And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”***. - (1st Thessalonians 1:10).
- ***“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?”*** -(1st Thessalonians 2:19).
- ***“To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints”***. -(1st Thessalonians 3:13).
- ***“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep”***. -(1st Thessalonians 4:15).
- ***“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”***. -(1st Thessalonians 5:23).

In these five passages, Paul has made it quite clear that there will be a Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even more importantly just as these last five passages indicate, Paul is even clearer when he presents us with a direct message of the Rapture for believers in the following verses: ***“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”***. -(1st Thessalonians 4:15-17).

The major questions that we need to address here are, why did God wait until the New Testament to reveal the Rapture doctrine and why doesn't the Old Testament teach anything about it? The answer to these questions are extremely important. It explains why the Lord Jesus Christ Himself answers this issue in His recorded words of the Gospels but not in the manner we would commonly expect. I will address that point separately later but for now the points noted below are the key reasons:

- The Rapture was a revelation for both the Jews and the Gentiles -(Read Ephesians 1).
- The Rapture could not be revealed until the church was birthed -(Acts 2:1-4).
- The Rapture could not be revealed until the Gentiles came in -(Acts 10).

Notice closely the following five points here are for clarity with regard to the Biblical order:

1. Jesus predicted He will return to receive us -(John 14).
2. The church was born on Pentecost with 3,000 Jewish souls converted - (Acts 2).
3. Paul was converted and spent time seeking God in Saudi Arabia -(Acts 9).
4. The Gentiles were grafted in at Caesarea and were accepted by the Jews - (Acts 10).
5. Paul was called to be a preacher to the Gentiles and revealed the Rapture “mystery”-(Acts 9)⁽¹⁾.

God chose to wait until the church was birthed at Pentecost and the Gentiles had been grafted in before revealing the Rapture “mystery”. These foundational pieces of the puzzle were shared to clarify several points which will become the basis of understanding concerning how and why the sin of “unbelief” proves to be a major factor leading to the disqualification of those who do not believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture and their resulting consequence of being “Left Behind” to face the Tribulation.

Paul wrote:

- ***“Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him”.*** -(Ephesians 1:9-10).
- ***“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him”.*** -(2nd Thessalonians 2:1).
- ***“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”.*** -(1st Corinthians 15:51-52).

Notice the phrases:

- **Caught up together** -(1st Thessalonians 4:17). Clearly, all believers—whether they are alive or have died at the time of Christ’s return—will be together with one another and with the Lord forever. This supernatural event will cause a great reunion among believers who are alive and those who have already died. Both groups will experience Christ’s return together. This joyous reunion will go on forever.^(b)
- **Gather together in one** -(Ephesians 1:10). The plan is **“to head up all things in the Christ”**. During the Millennial Reign, all things in heaven and on earth will be summed up in Christ. The Savior who is

now rejected and disowned will then be the preeminent One, the Lord of all, and the object of universal worship. This is God's goal—to set up Christ as Head over all things, heavenly and earthly, in the kingdom.

The extent of the dominion of Christ is found in the words, **“the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth”**. Bellett writes:

“This is a secret never made known before. In the prophet Isaiah, we get a beautiful picture of the millennial earth; but do we ever get the millennial heavens with Christ at their head? Was it ever said by Isaiah that all things in heaven and earth should be headed up in the glorified Man?”

Verse 10 is sometimes used to support the false doctrine of universal salvation. It is twisted to suggest that eventually everything and everyone will be restored and reconciled in Christ. But that is quite foreign to the passage. **Paul is speaking about universal dominion, not universal salvation!**

- **Our gathering together unto Him** –(2nd Thessalonians 2:1). This regards not the great gatherings of the people to Christ upon his first coming, and the preaching of the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, when there were not only great flocking to hear it, but multitudes were converted by it; nor the greater gatherings there will be in the latter day, at the time of the conversion of the Jews, and when the fullness of the Gentiles shall be brought in; nor the conversion of particular persons, who are gathered into Christ, and received by him one by one; nor the assembling of the saints together for public worship, in which sense the word is used in Hebrews 10:25: **“but the gathering together of all the saints at the last day, at the second coming of Christ”**; for he will come with ten thousand of his saints, yea, with all his saints, when their dead bodies shall be raised and reunited to their souls, and they with the living saints will be caught up into the air, to meet the Lord there and be ever with him; when they will make up, complete and perfect, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven: **this will be the gathering together of all the elect of God**; and so the Arabic version reads, “the gathering of us all”; and which, as it is certain, is greatly to be desired; it will be a happy meeting and a glorious sight; by this the apostle entreats and adjures them to regard what follows.^(d)

The word Rapture is the English word used to describe being **caught up** and **the gathering together**. Those criticizing the Rapture doctrine are quick to argue that this word is not found in the Bible. But this is a cheap shot meant to denigrate the English translation of the Bible. The fact

remains that there are also other words or concepts that are not in the English Bible including:

- The word demon
- The phrase Millennial Reign
- The phrase Second Coming or Second Advent
- The word Trinity
- The word Bible

Paul used the expression “caught up together” in 1st Thessalonians 4:17. The Greek word for that expression is **“Harpazo”**. Saint Jerome translated the Bible from Greek to Latin in the 4th century. The Latin word for “caught up” is **“rapere”**. The word means “to transport from one place to another” So the word **“Harpazo”** means that a person or an object is being removed from one place and moved to another location.

1. **Paul was “caught up” into the third heaven** –(2nd Corinthians 12:2). Although Luke records a series of visions and trances Paul received -(Acts 9:3-7; Acts 16:9; Acts 22:17-21), including the one Paul experienced while visiting Corinth -(Acts 18:9-10), none of those visions fit the description here. Paul described this revelation as such a rapturous experience that he heard words he could not repeat -(2nd Corinthians 12:4). The fact that Paul couldn’t express what he heard might explain the silence about this revelation in the book of Acts.^(b)
2. **The Spirit of the Lord “caught up” Phillip** -(Acts 8:39). This suggests more than mere guidance to another location. Rather, it speaks of miraculous and sudden removal. Its purpose was that the eunuch would not become occupied with the human instrument of his conversion, but with the Lord Himself.^(a)
3. **The man-child was “caught up” to God** -(Revelation 12:5). The sentence seems plainly to refer to the ascension of Christ and his subsequent abiding in heaven, from whence he rules all nations. The seer, perhaps, wishes to indicate at once the absolute immunity of Christ from any harm proceeding from the power of the devil, whose efforts are henceforth directly aimed only at the Church of Christ. Satan still hopes to injure Christ through his members. As remarked above (see on Revelation 19:4), what is true of the personal history of Christ is often true of his Church and of his true members.^(c)
4. **The wicked one catcheth away the word that was sown.** -(Matthew 13:19). The hard-packed pathway speaks of people who refuse to receive the message. They hear the gospel but do not understand it—not because they can't but because they won't. The birds are a picture of Satan; he snatches away the seed from the hearts of these hearers. **He cooperates**

with them in their self-chosen barrenness. The Pharisees were hard-soil hearers.^(a)

The phrase **“caught up”** will be found **4X** times in the New Testament. Other words beside the word “Rapture” can be used to describe the same event. Call it the catching away, the gathering together, or the ingathering. There are other words that some scholars will use or refer to describe the Rapture, but I prefer to stay with the primary word **“Harpazo”**. There is more to share in the next segment.

Pastor Bob

Notes:

1. <http://doctrine.org/pauls-mystery/>

Commentaries:

- a. Believer’s Bible Commentary
- b. Life Application New Testament Commentary
- c. The Pulpit Commentary
- d. John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible