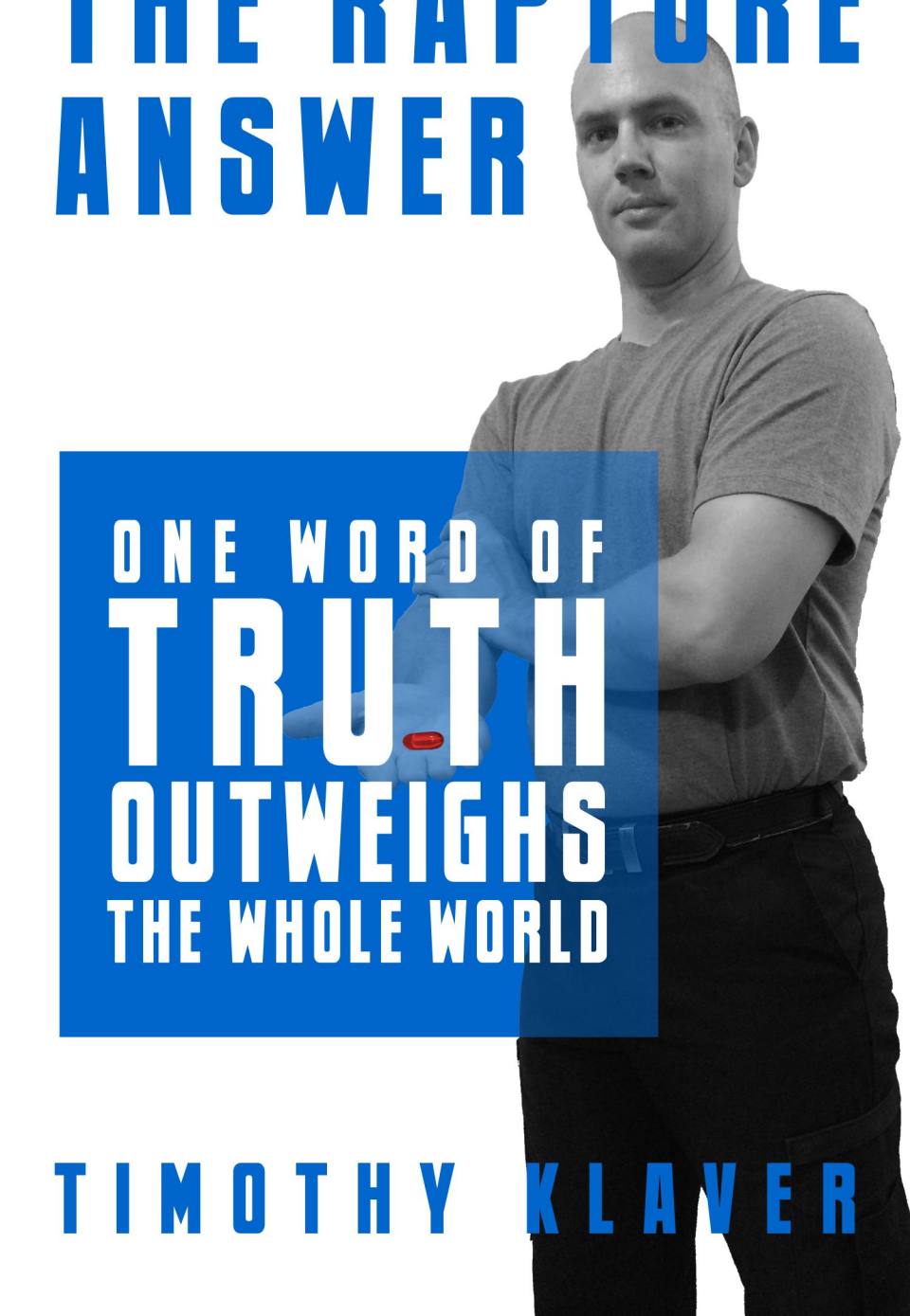
THE RAPTURE ANSWER



ONE WORD OF TRUTH OUTWEIGHS THE WHOLE WORLD

TIMOTHY KLAVER

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Dedicated to my late grandfather, Oege Klaver, who passed before I could share my first book with him.

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Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my God, my Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, for having provided me the opportunity to write this book and get it into the hands of my brothers and sisters in Christ so that they, too, may be set free by knowing the truth, for "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). This book is written with the purposes in mind to:

1. glorify God and honour His Son (Romans 15:6; Colossians 1:18), and
2. educate the body of Christ regarding truth (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 2:13).

Second, I would like to thank you, the reader, for picking up this book. It is by no accident that you have. I pray that you have picked it up because you are interested in learning the truth about what the Bible has to say, and that you are

willing to conform yourself to the truths as revealed in God's Holy Word. As you read, may God open your eyes so that you can see precisely what He has written in His Word and what He has not. It is for you that I have put this book together. May God bless it for that purpose.

Thank you, one and all.

Preface

The use of the Greek language within this book appears in two forms. When you see something like "*paralambano* (παραλαμβάνεται)," the transliteration is as it appears in *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, while the actual Greek is as it appears in the Greek manuscripts. This system applies only to *my* use of the Greek language. I mention this so that the resident Greek mastermind who may be reading this is not looking at the above and thinking, "*These are not representative of each other,*" because he wants to see "*paralambano* (παραλαμβάνω)" or "*paralambanetai* (παραλαμβάνεται)."

I do it this way for a reason, so that the individual who desires to look up the main word can do so easily without trying to find the various forms or tenses of that word, such as παραλαβεῖν (Matt. 1:20), παρέλαβε (Matt. 1:24), παράλαβε (Matt. 2:13), παραλαμβάνει (Matt. 4:5), παραλαβὼν (Matt.

26:37), etc. There is a method to my madness, so do not knock it.

Uses of the Greek language that appear within the referenced media quotations are as they appear in those works.

Introduction

THE WAKE-UP CALL BEGINS

It was early morning, May 25, 2004, and as was my practice, I entered into prayer before opening and reading my Bible. Since approximately 2002, I have made a habit of asking God to teach me according to *His* Word, and *not* according to how I was raised or what I was taught. At times, I may not like what I read because it is not what I want to hear, or it goes against what I was engrained with, but whether or not I like it, the truth is that the truth and God's Word still stands. It is our duty as obedient children to conform ourselves to the truths as revealed in Scripture. I want to believe *His* truths no matter what it might cost me. As such, little did I know where that prayer would take me. It is still a prayer I pray to this day because I want to conform myself to God's truths—not man's ideas and concepts.

As I was in prayer, my mind was considering where I might read in the Bible when I was finished. I believe I had

been considering somewhere in the Old Testament, when something in the back of my mind, an inaudible voice, nudgingly suggested, "*Matthew*." As I continued praying, I was like, "*Okay. Where in Matthew?*" Again, that voice in the back of my mind nudgingly suggested, "*Chapter 24*." I had no clue what was contained in Matthew 24.

After I finished praying, I opened up my Bible and began reading Matthew 24. When I had finished, I was slightly perplexed. Something was not making any sense whatsoever. So I read it again. It still was not making any sense. I figured that I would take a break from it and come back to it later that day. Maybe it would make more sense then. Later that night, after having returned from work, I opened up my Bible and re-read Matthew 24 again, this time reading the parallel passages contained in Mark and Luke. I was digging and sifting through the Bible, weighing and measuring the words I was reading from 6:00pm until 10:30pm. Yet again, something *still* was not making any sense.

The next day, I called up my friend, who had attended Bible school (the same one I would soon attend, little did I know), and asked if I could borrow all his Systematic Theology notes. I looked up every verse that was quoted in regard to the Rapture and then read them in my Bible. What I was reading and what the notes were telling me the verses said did not harmonize in the least. I believe I went over those notes and Bible passages for the next two or three days before writing a letter in regard to what I had found. I even sent a copy of my letter to the Theology Professor at New Brunswick Bible Institute (NBBI), where I would find myself only months later.

THE JOURNEY FROM SPOON-FED TO BEREAN

In August of 2004, I applied to New Brunswick Bible Institute and was accepted. I figured that if I had made any kind of mistakes in my research, Bible College was the best

place to help me sort them out and correct them.[1] But it did no such thing. As such, from the time I wrote my initial paper, to the response I had received from NBBI's Theology Professor, through my time at Bible College, and for a couple years afterward, I settled in my mind that whether there was a Rapture or not, I knew where I was going when I died or when Christ Jesus returned. So I put the whole concept behind me in the back of my mind.

About two or three years after my graduation, I decided to re-visit my old paper and study the subject more in depth. I had *many* Bible study tools at my disposal now, which I did not have previously. You see, it was not until *after* I graduated from Bible college when I finally started to *read* and *study* my Bible for myself (rather than being *told* what it said) that I began to notice more and more inconsistencies in the Dispensational interpretation thereof. At first, I would turn to my Dispensational books (those which I received from Bible College) to try and sort out the confusion I was receiving from reading my Bible, and what they had to say seemed to make sense on the surface. That was until I read the verses they quoted in their context and cross-referenced everything. Then they, too, began to add to my confusion. I had been raised under the beliefs of Dispensationalism and I had wholeheartedly believed in the Rapture. But the deeper I dug, the less convinced I was of the doctrine.

Did you notice my wording above? "*The confusion I was receiving from reading my Bible.*" You see, my problem was in thinking that the Bible was not measuring up to Dispensationalism, when really it was the other way around.

[1] I have since learned that education merely serves to teach one to think and believe as one's teacher thinks and believes. Rarely is one taught to think logically or objectively, let alone taught to think for one's self, teaching one the accurate methods of study required and allowing one to come to one's own conclusion based on the evidence. We need to be taught to think for ourselves, but not in a way that allows pre-suppositions, personal feelings, or personal opinions to lead the way. Opinions and feelings have very little place in the matter of evidences and truth.

When I started to believe what my Bible had to say *over* how I was raised and what I was taught, *then* I began to make progress through the confusion. As I read my Bible and studied the subject afresh, digging deep with all the verses that are often quoted, my position from my original study began to become solidified. The context of the verses they were quoting did not fit the interpretation they were giving it. In fact, a plain reading of the Bible was not supporting their claims. After studying the subject afresh, I began re-writing my original article. I addressed each verse quoted individually, digging deep into its context and original language. I compared Scripture with Scripture and soon had a proper foundation beneath my feet that was not made of sand.

The book you hold in your hands now is the fruit of my studies concerning the Rapture in as basic a form as I could accomplish (without speaking over the heads of the majority of my intended audience). If you are looking for a more complete study on the various doctrines of Dispensationalism, I would suggest you pick up a copy of my book *The End Times: Letting the Bible Speak For Itself*. The book you hold in your hands now is meant to be an introductory book. It is intended to specifically address the alleged event of the "Rapture" since it is probably the most popular topic addressed by many "Christian" books and movies. May this work be a blessing and an eye opener for you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, as you continue to seek Him and His truth, drawing ever closer to Him.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORK

The aim of this book is to help clear away the fogs of confusion that are out there so that believers can return to a simple faith and acceptance of the teachings of the Word of God. So many people shy away from the issues when they should be meeting them head on. Remember, we are *commanded* to "[Study] to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling

accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), and to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). It is *our duty* to be as the noble Bereans and to "…[receive] the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things [are] so" (Acts 17:11).

One of the problems with Christianity today is that people would rather be spoon-fed their beliefs by someone else instead of studying it themselves and coming to a proper understanding. Problem is, when you are spoon-fed, the beliefs never become real to you. All you do is parrot what someone else told you. Quite often, while you are parroting those beliefs, your own heart and the actions of your life are contradicting the words coming out of your mouth. It is because what you have been spoon-fed has only reached your head. Simply reading your Bible every day is *not* studying the Bible. Reading books that support your position is *definitely not* studying the Bible either—it is the *epitome* of being spoon-fed.

When you study the Scriptures for yourself (and I do mean *study*), as you go through the process you get to witness the result of that study come to fruition, which leads you to a faith of the heart, a faith you can claim. Your faith is no longer vain faith because now you believe it not because someone else told it to you, but because you worked it out for yourself and were convinced of what Scripture had to say. But if you are not willing to examine Scripture and prove whether what you believe is correct, and be willing to change your beliefs and conform yourself to what Scripture has revealed to you, then you will simply cling to whatever falsehoods you were taught and raised with because you are too proud to admit that you were wrong.

Most people will preach to you their pre-suppositions, speculative opinions, and feelings rather than the truth. My own pre-suppositions were those of Dispensationalism, because that is how I was raised and what I was taught. I

thank God that He enabled me to be able to test the spirits and express a simple child-like faith that led me to His truths as He wrote them in His Word. If you do not test the spirits, you will simply follow the masses and fall for whatever wind of doctrine comes your way. When you study the Word of God for yourself and are convinced of what it truly teaches, you build yourself a foundation that cannot be moved, and that faith becomes something tangible. You provide yourself with answers for those who would ask about the hope that lies within you. You also show yourself to be "approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15).

It is my goal with this book that I would be able to teach you by leading you by the hand, showing you what *the Bible* has to say for itself, and letting you see it with your own eyes so that you can be convinced of the truth. I ask that the reader comes to this book free of any idols in his/her heart, willing to seek God's truth regardless of what it means to himself/herself and regardless of what he/she was raised with or taught. Just because we are raised a certain way or taught a certain thing does not make it true. Just because someone isolates individual verses in order to convince you of their doctrine does not make it true. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses do this every day, as do many other cults. I will urge you to test the spirits, test everything you are told against Scripture. If someone quotes a verse to you, do not simply read that verse on its own (because by itself it could very well convince you of what they are trying to tell you), but read that verse in the context of its surrounding verses, chapters, and the entire book, cross-referencing everything. I ask you to do the same with what I am going to teach you throughout this book, so that you may prove to yourself that what I am saying accords with the truths of Scripture and not the ideas and concepts of men. Remember, the Bible was not written with the divisions of verses and chapters as we have in our Bibles today.

Lord God, those who pick up this book to read, I pray

that You would cause them to leave behind the idols they are concealing in their hearts; the ideas and concepts that they want to see in Your Word, rather than what is truthfully contained therein. I pray that You would cause any scales that are on their eyes to fall off so that they can see clearly what You have said in Your Word. Bless each individual as they study these things themselves to come to a right understanding of Scripture and to strengthen their faith in You. May You receive all the glory from this project, Lord, for Your name's sake. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Yours because of Calvary,
Timothy Klaver

"*Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Thy name give glory.*" **–Psalm 115:1**

"*Not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit.*" **–1 Cor. 2:13**

"*Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.*" **–Luke 24:45**

1

The Rapture in the Synoptic Gospels?

The term “synoptic” means “presenting or taking the same point of view.” The Synoptic Gospels consist of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, because a significant portion of their information can be located in parallel passages of each other, sometimes with *more* or *less* detail. One example, found only in the pages of Matthew and Luke, is the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew, it begins with chapter 5 and continues through to the end of chapter 7. Three whole chapters! But in Luke, it begins in chapter 6 with verse 20 and continues through to the end of verse 49. A second example is Jesus’ parables by the sea. You can find them in Matthew 13:1-35; Mark 4:1-34; and Luke 8:4-18.

The first proof text that we shall examine in connection with the Rapture is Matthew 24:40-41. Certain individuals will quote this in support of the Rapture, but they fail to connect it to both its immediate context, from verses 37-39, and its parallel passage in Luke 17:34-37. It reads: “Then

there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left." Concerning these verses, William Hendriksen has incorrectly written, "Of the two men engaged in the same kind of work, probably even toiling next to each other in the field, *one* is taken. By the angels he is gathered to be forever with the Lord. *The other* is left behind, assigned to everlasting perdition."[2]

If we examine the parallel passage, Luke adds a question that the disciples had asked. It reads: "I tell you, on that night there will be two [people] in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. And answering they said to Him, 'Where, Lord?' And He said to them, 'Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered.'" Concerning these verses, Mr. Hendriksen has also incorrectly written, "What does 'taken' mean? The answer is found in I Thess. 4:17, 'They shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.' And what does 'left behind' signify? It signifies 'left to their doom.'" [3] The question "Where, Lord?" makes little sense if you try to apply it to those "left."

Brothers and sisters, the word translated "left" is the Greek *aphiemi* (ἀφίεται), which, in one of its three chief meanings, means "to send forth, let go, forgive, or pardon."

> "Metaphorically, to let go from obligation toward oneself, to remit, e.g., a debt, offense, with a [dative] of person. Of sins, to remit the penalty of sins, i.e., to pardon, forgive, with the [dative] of person."[4]

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[2] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1973), 1:870.
[3] Ibid (1978), 3:809.
[4] Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 298-300.

"*to remit, forgive*"[5]

> "**The Use...in the LXX.** ... b. for verbs of "remission"... The object of remission is sin or guilt... The one who forgives is God... **The NT Usage.** ... 2. There are also the instances in which ἀφιέναι means "to remit" or "to forgive," whether in the profane sense in Mt. 18:27 and 32, or more often in the religious. ... The forgiveness denoted by ἄφεσις (ἀφιέναι) and πάρεσις is almost always that of God. ..."[6] [3/5 of this entry are dedicated to the discussion of forgiveness.]

If two people are in a field, and one is taken and the other left, do you really have to ask "Where?" regarding the one that was left? Obviously he is still in the field where he was in the first place. The word translated "taken" is the Greek *paralambano* (παραλαμβάνεται), which means "to take, to receive." In certain contexts, it means "to be taken violently in judgment," as can be seen in Matthew 27:27 of the "taking" of Jesus by the soldiers to be scourged, and in John 19:16 of the "taking" of Jesus to be crucified.

> "In Matt 24:40, 41; Luke 17:34, 35, *paralambánō* in the passive form is used as the opposite of *aphíēmi*, to let be. In these verses, those who are taken are not to be misconstrued as those whom the Lord favors, as if they were the same saints spoken of in 1 Thess 4:17... The verb *paralambánō* in most cases indicates a demonstration in favor of the one taken, but not always. ... In John 19:16 it is used of taking Jesus to lead Him to the cross. ... The verb *paralambánō* is to

[5] Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 88-89.
[6] Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdman's Publishing Co, 1964), 1:509-512.

> be contrasted in Matt 24:40, 41 to *aírō*, to take up and away. It is used to refer to those in the days of Noah who were taken away, not being favored but being punished, while Noah and his family were left intact. ... It refers to those who, as in the days of Noah, are taken to destruction."[7]

> "*one to be led off as a prisoner*, Jn xix. 16)"[8]

The disciples asked, "Where, Lord?" This hardly makes sense if you apply it to those who are left. That answer would seem obvious. It makes sense in the question of "Taken where?" or "Received where?" to which Jesus gives His reply. Those taken are taken in death—*not* the Rapture. The context of this passage is dealing with judgment, as can be seen from the references to the days of Noah and Lot.

In Matthew 24:38-39, a different Greek word is used for "took." This is the Greek *airo* (αἴρω). It can mean "to take up, to lift up, to raise up, to carry away," which could apply to Noah and the ark, but it can also mean "to take away, remove, with the idea of lifting away from, usually with the idea of violence and authority," which would apply to those destroyed during the days of Noah.

> "To take away or remove out of the world by death, and so forth (Matt. 24:39)"[9]

> "*To take away from among the living*, either by a natural death, or by violence (Mt. xxiv. 39)."[10]

This passage contrasts "they" with "Noah." The "they"

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[7] Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, 1108-1109.
[8] Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 484.
[9] Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, 99.
[10] Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 16-17.

who were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage are the same "they" who did not understand and were destroyed by the flood. Grammatically, it would make no sense to change subjects/objects midstream from "they," referring to those who perished, to "them," referring to Noah and his family. Therefore, while it is possible for *airo* to be speaking of Noah in the ark, it is not probable.

The context of these passages is addressing the Second Coming of Christ Jesus:

> "For the coming of the Son of Man..." (Matt. 24:37)
> "...so will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt. 24:39)
> "...so will the Son of Man be in His day." (Luke 17:24)
> "...so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man." (Luke 17:26)
> "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed." (Luke 17:30)

Practically every theologian, past and present (including many of the Dispensational persuasion), agree that this passage is talking about the Second Coming of Jesus—and *not* the imaginary magical "Rapture." It is a fact that the context of these passages, and especially the passage in Luke 17, is quite clearly and unmistakably in reference to judgment:

> "...the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:27)
> "...it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:29)

Noah and Lot are not even mentioned, except in passing in order to refer to their time in history. The "they" and "them" are speaking of those who were destroyed. Judgment. Since verses 26-27 and 28-29 are quite obviously speaking of judgment, it stands to reason that those taken in verses 34, 35, and 36 are likewise taken in judgment. And Jesus' answer to

the disciples' question of "Where?" supports this.

You will notice that verse 37 of Luke accords with Revelation 19:17, "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, 'Come, assemble for the great supper of God,'" and 19:21b, "and all the birds were filled with their flesh."

Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30 also illustrates the reality that those taken are taken in death. It reads:

> He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' And the slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

In his commentary, *Thru the Bible*, J. Vernon McGee says in regard to this passage: "Satan is the enemy, and he sows tares among the wheat. The tares are false doctrine. As wheat and tares first begin to grow, it is difficult to distinguish between them. Frankly, a lot of cults and 'isms'

also sound good at first. You cannot tell them from the real thing until about the twelfth or thirteenth lesson. Those are the lessons in which they introduce their false doctrine. Someone once said to me, 'Dr. McGee, you should not criticize so-and-so. I listened to him, and he preached the gospel.' Well, he does preach the gospel every now and then. But it is the other things he says that are in error. You see, he sows tares among the wheat."[11] Brothers and sisters, I want you to notice the interpretation that *Jesus* gives for His *own* parable:

> And He answered and said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

Brothers and sisters, it is *so* important that we let the Bible speak for itself without any added imagination from us. If you do not pay close attention to what the Bible says, you are more than likely to veer off into many wild and speculative fantasies that cannot be substantiated in or by

[11] J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 4:75.

Scripture. I have no doubt that Mr. McGee was a very godly man, and I respect him dearly. However, he was wrong in his interpretation. Jesus interpreted the "tares" as being the "sons of the evil one"—*not* false doctrine. It was *His* parable, so I am sure He knows the illustration He is painting for His listeners. He also interpreted the wheat as being the "children of the kingdom."

Concerning verse 38, Matthew Poole has said, "By *the good seed* he meant *the children of the kingdom*; such as had a true change wrought in their hearts, were truly regenerated and converted. By *the tares* he meant *the children of the wicked one*, that is, of the devil; such as did the works of the devil, John viii. 44."[12] Concerning this same verse, William Hendriksen has said, "*the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom*, meaning that the sons of the kingdom, those who gladly own Jesus as their Lord and King, are those in whom the good seed of the gospel bears fruit."[13] Jesus said "the good seed, these *are* (*eisi*, εἰσιν – present indicative) the children of the kingdom," (Literal translation, emphasis supplied.)—*not* "they will be."

Brothers and sisters, we are in that kingdom *now*. It has been inaugurated, but it has not yet been fully consummated. Dispensationalists will argue that we cannot be in the kingdom because it was supposedly postponed. We will deal with this assertion in chapter 5, but for now I want you to notice one more thing in Jesus' *own* interpretation of His parable. In verse 41 Jesus says, "…they will gather *out of* his kingdom…" (emphasis supplied). If the kingdom is not inaugurated *now*, how can anything wicked be taken out of it at the end of this present evil age? Remember, Jesus is telling us "the kingdom *is like*…" This is known as a simile. A simile is a figure of speech in which an explicit comparison is made between two essentially unlike things, usually using

[12] Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, undated), 3:64.
[13] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 1:571.

like, *as* or *than*. Jesus is giving us illustrations of what the kingdom is like, and what He can liken it to for us to understand it. You *cannot* say that this is speaking about any time after Jesus' return because once He has judged the world, there will be *no more* sin remaining in it. It will have all been purged out. Righteousness shall reign.

Listen to what Matthew Henry has to say: "The tares will then be gathered out: *The reapers* (whose primary work it is to gather in the corn) shall be charged first to *gather out the tares*. Note, Though good and bad are together in this world, undistinguished, yet at the great day they shall be parted; no tares shall then be among the wheat; no sinners among the saints: then you shall plainly discern *between the righteous and the wicked*, which here sometimes it is hard to do, Mal. 3:18; 4:1."[14] Matthew Henry is correct. Let us look at an example of what he is speaking about in regard to the great day and the parting of the wheat and the tares. It is found in Matthew 25:31-46:

> "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' … Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

[14] Mathew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 5:153-154.

It should be noted that in an attempt to contradict what Scripture says in regard to those who are taken as being taken in death, some have cited the parable of the net, where the good fish are sorted into containers (Matt. 13:48). However, these individuals have failed to read verse 49. The passage reads:

> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

There can be no doubt about what Jesus is teaching us. But this brings us to another issue. Concerning the phrase "the end of the age," Dispensationalists teach that this refers to the end of the Mosaic Law. Does the above passage sound like it took place at the end of the Mosaic Law? Re-read Jesus' interpretation of His parable of the weeds in Matthew 13:37-43 and you tell me if that sounds like the end of the Mosaic Law. Or, how about this verse: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). Moments before His ascension into heaven, we are to believe, according to Dispensationalists, that Jesus said He will be with us until the end of the Mosaic Law? So… He will not be with us *after* the Mosaic Law? For individuals who claim to interpret the Scriptures *literally*, this sure is an awful mangling of the phrase's true meaning.

Now, when we opened up this section, we said that those individuals who quote Matthew 24:40-41 in support of the so-called Rapture have failed to keep it in its immediate context. Let us examine the full context of these verses and see what Jesus is telling us.

> "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 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. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

Do you see that? Jesus said that "the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah" (v.37). During Noah's days, the flood came in like a storm (no pun intended) and destroyed everyone who was not found in the ark. There was *nobody left behind* except for the eight righteous upon the ark. At the coming of the Son of Man there will be *nobody left behind* except for the righteous that will inherit the kingdom. *This* is a *literal* interpretation of what the text *says*. "The very suddenness of the coming points up the necessity to guard against unpreparedness and carelessness.

During the days of Noah – that is, when this 'preacher of righteousness' was building the ark (Gen. 5:32-7:5) and warning the people (II Peter 2:5) – they refused to take to heart what he was doing and saying. They were unconcerned. They continued to live 'as always,' eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage."[15]

Notice that when speaking about the end times, Jesus, when relating what the coming of the Son of Man will be like, uses the days of Noah as an example (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27) and the days of Lot as an example (Luke 17:28-30). He *never* uses Enoch (Gen. 5:24) or Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) as examples. If the Rapture were true, one would think this would be the case.

[15] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 1:860-870.

2

The Rapture in the Gospel of John?

Dispensationalists claim that John 14:2-3 is the first mention of the Rapture. John MacArthur says, "This is one of the passages that refers to the rapture of the saints at the end of the age when Christ returns."[16] But is this so? It reads: "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. 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."

I am sorry, but there is absolutely *nothing* in this verse that even *remotely* hints at a secret Rapture. There is merely a promise from Jesus to the Christian believer that He will return to claim His own. "He said 'I go to prepare a place for you,' and this in connection with the statement that in His

[16] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 1571.

Father's house, or universe, there are many abodes (John 14:1-3). Evidently not one of those abodes is in His estimation suitable for His Bride. Thus it comes about that He is preparing an abode which will be even more glorious than all within God's creation at present. He is now thus engaged."[17]

Matthew Poole writes, "The particle *if* in this place denoteth no uncertainty of the thing whereof he had before assured them; but in this place hath either the force of although, or after that: When, or after that, I have died, ascended, and by all these acts, as also by my intercession, shall have made places in heaven fully ready for you, I will in the last day return again, as Judge of the quick and the dead, and take you up into heaven, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; that you may be made partakers of my glory, John xvii. 22."[18]

God said, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." (Isa. 65:17). Peter said, "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13). John said, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away" (Rev. 21:1). Could this be the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us? I believe that it is.

If Jesus did not go to *prepare* a place for us, by means of his humiliation and exaltation, then there would be *no* place for us. Note what Mr. Hendriksen has said: "The coming again of which Jesus speaks in this verse is the counterpart of the going away. Cf. Acts 1:9-11. That fact explains its character. In all probability, therefore, it refers to the second coming, and its purpose is to enable Christ to receive the disciples into his loving presence, to abide with him forever."[19] In verse 4, Jesus says, "You know the way to

[17] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1976), 5:277-278.
[18] Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 3:353.
[19] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary* (1953), 4:265.

where I am going." When Thomas says that they do not know where He is going, then Jesus declares to them, "*I* am *the* way" (emphasis supplied).

The use of verses 2-3 in an attempt to support the doctrine of the Rapture demonstrates powerfully the fact that Dispensational Christians exude the classic example of hermeneutical "reaching." That is, seeing in the passage what one already desires to find there. Dispensationalists impose the Rapture upon this text. Lewis Sperry Chafer incorrectly stated, "Earlier in this work the student has been reminded of the wide difference between two great events which, though in no way related, are each in their turn rightly styled a coming of Christ. The first in the chronological order is the signless, timeless, and prophetically unrelated coming of Christ into the air to gather the Church, His Body and Bride, to Himself; and that event, which might occur at any moment, marks the termination of the Church's pilgrim sojourn on the earth. … This leads to the second coming of Christ per se, which is His glorious appearing."[20] In other words, "two great events, though in no way related, are each in their turn rightly styled a coming of Christ" is an admittance toward a second and third coming of Christ. But then he enters a state of denial and calls the third coming the second coming. Confusing, I know.

Because Dispensationalists are unwilling to admit the truth of what they believe and teach—that they have Jesus coming back for a second *and* third coming (in a similar manner to which the Mormons have had Him return a couple of times already), they have devised this scheme wherein they explain it away. They say, "Oh, well, He only comes into the air. He does not plant His feet on the earth, therefore it is not really a coming even though it is a coming." *How preposterous!* I guess the next time I pull into your laneway to visit you, and then leave without coming into your home; I was never really at your house. Brothers and sisters, to read

[20] Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 5:164.

the Rapture into this verse is eisegesis (reading something into the text that is not there), and *very* poor hermeneutics (the art and science of studying the Bible).

If we examine what Jesus had to say, it eliminates any concept about believers being "raptured." In John 17:15, Jesus prayed, "I *do not* ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to *keep* them from the evil one" (emphasis supplied). The word translated "keep" is the Greek *tereo* (τηρήσω), which literally means "to guard, to preserve." You will see this word again later when we examine *The Rapture in Revelation*. For now, please note carefully the exact words that Jesus is saying in this verse and meditate on them.

To show the purpose of verses 1-3, I want to quote from Matthew Henry: "Here is a particular direction to act faith upon the promise of eternal life, v. 2, 3. He had directed them to trust to God, and to trust in him; but what must they trust God and Christ for? Trust them for a happiness to come when this body and this world shall be no more, and for a happiness to last as long as the immortal soul and the eternal world shall last. Now this is proposed as a sovereign cordial under all the troubles of this present time, to which there is that in the happiness of heaven which is admirably adapted and accommodated. The saints have encouraged themselves with this in their greatest extremities, *That heaven would make amends for all*."[21]

[21] Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 5:894.

3

The Rapture in 1 Corinthians 15?

Another verse used by Dispensationalists is 1 Corinthians 15:52. Let us look carefully at what this verse says: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." Paul N. Benware says, "Paul explains that all Christians will receive their resurrection bodies at the rapture."[22] Where does he say this? The Dispensationalists seem to be confused. Let us try and keep this verse in its immediate and surrounding context, shall we, and interpret it correctly by what they *say—not* by what they *do not* say.

Now, if we read this verse in its context, the evidence is clear that this passage is speaking in regard to the second coming of Christ Jesus:

[22] Paul N. Benware, *Survey of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 168.

> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, *after that* those who are Christ's *at His coming*, *then* comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, *when* He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He *must* reign *until* He has put all His enemies under His feet. *The last enemy that will be abolished is death*. … Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell 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 trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But *when* this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "*Death is swallowed up in victory*."
>
> (1 Cor. 15:22-26, 50-54, emphasis supplied.)

Brothers and sisters, notice that it specifically states that believers will be resurrected "at His coming" and that "*then* comes the end" (emphasis supplied). This is *not* the Rapture. This is Jesus' second coming. When the resurrection takes place, death will be defeated. This all takes place at the "end of the age," on the "last day," which is "the day of the Lord." Why make the text say something that it does not? If this does not convince you, please look at Matthew 25:31-46. Who is He separating here? Sheep from goats. Who do you suppose the sheep are? "The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11), "I lay down My life for the

sheep" (10:15), "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (10:27-28). How much clearer do we need it to be?

Matthew Poole writes of verse 51, "There will be many saints alive in the world at the day when Christ shall come to judge the world, they will have natural bodies, such as they were born with, and grew up with in the world until that time. Saith the apostle, I now tell you a secret thing; for so the term *mystery* signifieth, Rom. xi. 25; xvi. 25, and in many other texts. *We shall not all sleep* any long sleep: some think all shall die, but some for a very short time, and then they shall revive. *But we shall all be changed*, either dying for time, or by some other work of God, their natural, corruptible bodies shall be turned into spiritual bodies, not capable of corruption."[23] This is true, as many passages of Scripture suggest. As soon as Jesus returns at His second coming to judge the world, the dead will be raised incorruptible and the rest of us will be changed into our glorious bodies.

Please note the preceding verse, which Dispensationalists deliberately leave out when they quote this passage: "Now I say this, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (v.50, emphasis supplied). Yet this is precisely what Pre-Millennialists have occurring during the Millennial Kingdom. Miraculously, they have men in corrupted mortal bodies of flesh and blood entering into the kingdom with the saints in their glorified bodies, somehow bypassing the judgment. We will deal with the implications of this in chapter 5. Regarding the fact that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom, Jesus said, "Unless one is born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, emphasis supplied) and "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he *cannot enter* the kingdom of God" (John 3:5,

[23] Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 3:598.

emphasis supplied).

Simon J. Kistemaker writes, "The writers of the New Testament in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation write the expression *look* repeatedly as an idiom of Semitic speech. But surprisingly, in his epistles Paul only occasionally uses the word; indeed, it appears once in this epistle. He answers an anticipated question: How will the believer be changed to inherit God's kingdom? Thus he tells his reader a mystery, which is a revelation from God through Paul about the future transformation of the believers. In a similar context about the end times, Paul alludes to this revelation as a word of the Lord (I Thess. 4:15).

"'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.' The Greek term Paul uses for 'moment' is *atomos*, from which we have the derivative *atom*. The word refers to something so small that it cannot be divided any more. Here *atomos* applies to time. The phrase *in the twinkling of an eye* is appositional; it represents a momentary wink of the eyelid. (Our equivalent is "in a split second," which commonly signifies the shortest possible moment.) In such a brief moment the miracle of transformation will occur both for those who rise from the dead and for those who are alive."[24]

On verse 53, Matthew Henry writes, "He assigns the reason of this change (v. 53): *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*. How otherwise could the man be a fit inhabitant of the incorruptible regions, or be fitted to possess the eternal inheritance? How can that which is corruptible and mortal enjoy what it incorruptible, permanent, and immortal? This corruptible body must be made incorruptible, this mortal body must be changed into immortal, that the man may be capable of enjoying the happiness designed for him. Note, It is this corruptible that must put on incorruption; the demolished fabric that must be reared again. What is sown

[24] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary* (1993), 7:581-582.

must be quickened. Saints will come in their own bodies (v. 38), not in other bodies.

"He lets us know what will follow upon this change of the living and dead in Christ: *Then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory*; or, *He will swallow up death in victory*. Isa. 25:8. *For mortality shall be then swallowed up of life* (2 Cor. 5:4), and death perfectly subdued and conquered, and saints for ever delivered from its power. Such a conquest shall be obtained over it that it shall for ever disappear in those regions to which our Lord will bear his risen saints. And therefore will the saints hereupon sing their *epinikion*, their song of triumph. Then, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, will death be swallowed up, for ever swallowed up, *eis nikos*. Christ hinders it from swallowing his saints when they die; but, when they rise again, death shall, as to them, be swallowed for ever. And upon this destruction of death will they break out into a song of triumph."[25]

"The fact our new bodies will be 'imperishable' means that they will not wear out or grow old or ever be subject to any kind of sickness or disease. They will be completely healthy and strong forever. Moreover, since the gradual process of aging is part of the process by which our bodies now are subject to 'corruption,' it is appropriate to think that our resurrection bodies will have no sign of aging, but will have the characteristics of youthful but mature manhood or womanhood forever. There will be no evidence of disease or injury, for all will be made perfect. Our resurrection bodies will show the fulfillment of God's perfect wisdom in creating us as human beings who are the pinnacle of his creation and the appropriate bearers of his likeness and image. In these resurrection bodies we will clearly see humanity as God intended it to be."[26] Amen!

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[25] Henry, *Matthew Henry's* Commentary, 6:480.
[26] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 831.

"Paul draws a comparison between the body we are to have and our present body:

1. The present body is perishable, subject to disease and death; the resurrection body is incorruptible, immune to disease and decay.
2. The present body is sown in dishonor; the resurrection body will be glorious.
3. The present body is weak; the resurrection body is powerful.
4. The present body is physical (ψυχικόν – *psuchikon*); the resurrection body will be spiritual."[27]

As you can see, brothers and sisters, Dispensationalists must force 1 Corinthians 15:52 to support the Rapture because, otherwise, if they do not, it informs us that once we are "raptured" we will not be changed for another seven years. But the text is clear: "at the *last* trumpet" (emphasis supplied) – *eschatos* (ἐσχάτῃ) "farthest, final, last, uttermost." It is illogical to state this is the Rapture, and then seven years later there occurs yet *another* trumpet when our Lord comes in the clouds (Matt. 24:31). Mr. Kistemaker notes, "Paul indicates that the last trumpet will sound to announce the occurrence of the resurrection. This trumpet blast is the final one in the history of redemption."[28]

Dispensationalists, especially the KJV-Only variety, like to attempt to argue that there are two different Greek words for "trumpet" in the Bible. In the KJV, two seemingly different words appear: "trump" and "trumpet." What is a "trump"? Is it different from a "trumpet"? If it is the same thing as a "trumpet," why is it shortened to "trump" in two of the eleven verses (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16)?

When we examine both of these words in the Greek, we quickly learn that they are *one and the same*, the *exact same thing*: *salpigx* (σαλπιγξ) [Gr. 4536]. Once again, we have

[27] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 1012.
[28] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 7:582.

confirmed that the "last trumpet" is the *last* trumpet. The implication is that when that last trumpet sounds, there *cannot* be another trumpet after it. This is just one of several problems the Dispensationalist has with Scripture.

The word *salpizo* (σαλπιζω) [Gr. 4537] is *to sound a trumpet*, as in blowing on it to make a noise (Matt. 6:2; 1 Cor. 15:52; see also Rev. 8:6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13; 9:1, 13; 10:7; 11:15). The word *salpigx* is the *trumpet* itself, the physical musical instrument.

> **Matt. 6:2**– So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet (*salpizo* [σαλπίζω]) before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.
>
> **Matt. 24:31**– And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.
>
> **1 Cor. 14:8, KJV**– For if the trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?
>
> **1 Cor. 15:52**– in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]); for the trumpet will sound (*salpizo* [σαλπίζω]), and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
>
> **1 Thess. 4:16**– For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) of God, and the dead in

Christ will rise first.

Heb. 12:19– and to the blast of a trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.

Rev. 1:10– I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]),

Rev. 4:1– After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

Rev. 8:2– And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) were given to them.

Re 8:6– And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) prepared themselves to sound them (*salpizo* [σαλπίζω]).

Rev. 8:13– Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]) of the three angels who are about to sound (*salpizo* [σαλπίζω])!"

Rev. 9:14– one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet (*salpigx* [σάλπιγξ]), "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river

Euphrates."

4

The Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4?

The primary passage used as a proof text to promote the Rapture is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, specifically verses 16 and 17. “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. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Paul Benware says, “When Paul was in Thessalonica, he had taught them that one day Jesus would return and suddenly take all believers to heaven. (This event is commonly called the ‘rapture’) He apparently taught them that the rapture could occur at any moment with no events necessarily preceding it.”[29]

What Mr. Benware is doing is conjecture—a statement,

[29] Benware, *Survey of the New Testament*, 168.

opinion, or conclusion based on inconclusive or incomplete evidence and guesswork. He is not faithfully representing the text of the Bible and what it reveals. Dispensationalists have a habit of impressing their subjective opinion upon the Bible. Paul had taught them no such thing as what Mr. Benware has just suggested. It is believed that Paul was taught of the Lord Jesus Himself for three years (Gal. 1:12, 18). Many Dispensationalists try to pit Jesus and Paul against each other, several claiming that Jesus taught one gospel and Paul another; that they had different theologies. Any careful student of the Bible will see that Paul's teachings reflect the teachings of Jesus harmoniously. Paul was not given any "new revelation" that Jesus had not already taught. Remember, Jesus and Paul used the same Scriptures—those of the Old Testament. What Dispensationalism teaches is contrary to what Christ Jesus revealed.

"The New Testament nowhere clearly says that the church will be taken out of the world before the tribulation. If this significant event were to happen, we might at least expect that explicit teaching to that effect would be found in the New Testament. Certainly Jesus tells us that he will come again and take us to be with himself (John 14:3), and Paul tells us that we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17), and that we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye and receive resurrection bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-52), but each of these passages has been understood by believers throughout history as speaking not of a *secret* rapture of the church before the tribulation, but of a very visible *public* rapture (or "taking up") of the church to be with Christ just a few moments prior to his coming to earth *with them* to reign during the millennial kingdom (or, on the amillennial view, during the eternal state)."[30]

Dispensationalists try to mangle 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 into some sort of "secret" coming and taking away of the

[30] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1134.

saints, leaving the rest of the world in a chaotic mess with cars crashing into each other and planes falling out of the sky creating a phenomenal death toll. My Bible says that God is not the author of confusion. Further, as we already looked at, those taken are taken in death. Jesus' own interpretation of His parable of the weeds informs us that this will happen at the end of this age with His second coming.

"In order to make their case for pretribulationism, dispensationalists must and do separate Paul's 'rapture pericope' (1 Thess. 4:13-18) from the immediately following pericope dealing with the Christian's behavior as 'sons of light' in view of the approaching 'Day of the Lord' (1 Thess. 5:1-11). The events of the former pericope, according to dispensationalists, occur seven years before the Day of the Lord, which comes later as a thief in the night. But such a chronological division between the pericopes finds no support in the text. The concern which prompted Paul's 'rapture pericope' (1 Thess. 4:13-18) in the first place was the issue of the state of the Christian dead, a concern troubling the Thessalonian believers. He begins his pericope by stating: 'We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep [τῶν κοιμωμένων, *tōn koimōnmenōn*]' (4:13). Then he treats the Lord's 'appearing' (4:15; τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρὶου, *tēn parousian tou kyriou*), a term descriptive of Christ's second coming (2 Thess. 2:8), stating that Christians will be alive and remain on earth 'until' (εἰς, *eis*) his 'appearing,' and assures them that Christ will raise the Christian dead at that time and that they will accompany the living (glorified) Christians into his presence. He concludes this section by urging his readers to 'encourage each other with these words' (4:18). Then with no discernible shift in subject matter, he immediately reminds his readers that 'the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night' (5:2) and urges them until that day to live alert and self-controlled lives as 'children of light.' He then returns to his original concern and states that Christ 'died for us so that, whether

we are awake or asleep [καθεύδωμεν, *katheudōmen*], we may live together with him' (5:10). He then repeats his earlier admonition that his readers should 'encourage one another and build each other up' (5:11). The unity of this entire section (4:13-5:11) is transparent. Because of the several ideas that parallel each other in these two pericopes, there is no scriptural warrant to rend them apart and make them refer to two separate chronological events.

"Finally, from Paul's declaration that 'relief' for the church from its troubles and persecutions will come not seven years before but '*when* the Lord Jesus is revealed [ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει, *en tē apokalypsei*] from heaven with his holy angels with blazing fire' (2 Thess. 1:7, emphasis supplied), which 'revelation' he describes only verses later as the 'appearing [ἐπιφανεία, *epiphaneia*] of his coming [παρουσίας, *parousias*]' (2 Thess. 2:8), it becomes quite clear that Christ's coming and the ensuing rapture spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 are neither separate events nor is the rapture a 'secret, hidden event but a [very visible] breaking into history of the glory of God.' The Lord's 'loud command,' the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet-blast of God – all announcing Christ's coming – make this one of the 'loudest' pericopes in the Bible! I say again, Christ's coming and our rapture to him are not separate events nor is the rapture a secret event. It is anything but secret!" [31]

Please note that Mr. Reymond's use of the word "rapture" and the Dispensationalist's use of the word "rapture" are two completely different concepts. Mr. Reymond applies the term to the phrase "caught up," signifying nothing more than when Christ takes us to be with Him forevermore. If a believer chooses to do that with the word, that is fine, but with all the negative connotations and all the fictionalization that has been attached to it, I would prefer to avoid the word altogether so as not to confuse

[31] Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1023-1024.

people into thinking I support the Dispensational nonsense behind it. As soon as we start talking "Rapture," their minds immediately go to the Dispensational fairytale.

Brothers and sisters, I would like you to notice the parallels here, of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, to other portions of Scripture that are undoubtedly speaking of Christ's second coming:

Clouds	Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Acts 1:9; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 1:7; 14:14
Trumpet	Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 11:15
Angels	Matt. 13:39, 41, 49; 16:27; 24:31; Mark 8:28; 13:27; Luke 9:26; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7
Loud Noise	Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Pet. 3:10
Thief	Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15
Day of the Lord	Isa. 1:12; Amos 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3: 10-13
Resurrection	Job 14:12, 14; 19:25-27; Isa. 25:8; Hosea 13:14; Matt. 24:31; John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 1 Cor. 15:51-52, 54-55; 1 Thess. 4:16

[32]

Dispensationalism tends to confuse Jesus' second coming with their "Rapture." It is Jesus' second coming that has no signs necessarily preceding it, as supported by Scripture (Matt. 24:36-51; 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-40; 17:26-30; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; 2 Pet. 3:8-10; Rev. 16:15). The Scriptures

[32] John C. Egerdahl, *The Bible Versus Dispensational Eschatology* (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2009), 166.

declare that Jesus will return personally (John 14:3; 21:20-23; Acts 1:11; 3:19-21; 1 Cor. 15:23-26; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; Heb. 9:27-28; James 5:7-8; 2 Pet. 3:3-4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2-3), publicly, bodily and visibly (Matt. 24:30-31; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 14-15; Rev. 1:7), unexpectedly (Matt. 24:27, 36-51; 25:1-13; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 17:24, 26-30; 2 Pet. 3:8-10), suddenly (Matt. 24:23-28; Luke 17:22-24; 21:34-36; Acts 1:11), quickly (Matt. 24:27; Heb. 10:37; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20) with His angels (Matt. 16:27; 2 Thess. 1:5-10), in the glory of His Father (Matt. 16:27; 19:28; 25:31-46; Luke 21:27; Titus 2:13), and triumphantly (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27).

Dispensationalists claim that it is absurd to think that, at the end of this present age, we will meet the Lord in the air and then immediately return with Him. I submit to you Genesis 29:13, where Laban "ran to meet" Jacob and then "brought him to his house"; Matthew 25:1-13, where the wise virgins went out "to meet the bridegroom" and then accompanied him back to the wedding banquet; and Acts 28:15, where the Roman Christians came "to meet [Paul and his companions]" as they approached Rome and then returned with them. It is absurd to a Dispensationalist because they do not pay attention to custom and culture. Even in our own day and age, although not as prominent any more, when someone came to visit our home, we would go outside (even to their car) and welcome them, and then accompany them back inside our house. That is precisely what will take place at Jesus' bodily, visible, public return. It will be a glorious event! We will be caught up in the air to greet and welcome Him, and then we will accompany Him back.

To show you that I am not out of my mind by suggesting this: "When Paul says that 'we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thess. 4:17), he uses the Greek word *apantēsis*, for "meet," which is used in Greek literature outside the Bible to speak of citizens going out of a city to meet an arriving

magistrate, then to return to the city with him."[33] So, brothers and sisters, which view is *truly* consistent with the truths of Scripture?

[33] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1134. Footnote 42.

5

The Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 5?

In my Theology Professor's lecture notes, he stated that 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 "summarizes the Rapture." Let us take a look at what this passage has to say:

> Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 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. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at

> night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 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. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

This passage is speaking of "the day of the Lord." As we learned in chapter 2, "the day of the Lord" has *nothing* to do with the so-called Rapture. They were not worried that they had missed the Rapture, as we are often told. Dispensationalists tend to isolate specific verses from this passage, such as verse 9, in order to try and support their concept of the Rapture. But look at what Paul tells them: "For you yourselves *know full well* that the day of the Lord *will come just like a thief in the night*. 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. *But you*, brethren, are not in darkness, *that the day should overtake you like a thief*" (emphasis supplied).

What did Jesus teach us in Matthew 24:36-51? "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. … Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 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. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

I do not know about you, brothers and sisters, but this is

crystal clear to me.

1. "They are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly."
2. "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."

Perhaps you are thinking, "Yes, I know this is speaking of His second coming, but we will already be gone because verse 9 says it is not appointed for us." Okay then, look at this: "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief" (v.4). If they are already gone, there is no sense in even mentioning them being caught off guard. But, as Jesus said, we are to be on our guard, being ready, staying awake, and keeping vigil (Matt. 24:42, 44; Mark 13: 33, 35, 37; Luke 21:36) because we "do not know which day [our] Lord is coming." Even Paul instructs them to "be alert and sober" (v.6). As Louis Berkhof puts it, "The Bible intimates that the measure of surprise at the second coming of Christ will be in an inverse ratio to the measure of their watchfulness."[34]

What about verse 9? I am glad you asked. Scripture repeatedly teaches us that the Day of the Lord will consist of *both* blessings (Isa. 4:2-6; 30:26; Hos. 2:18-23; Joel 3:9-21; Amos 9:11-15; Mic. 4:6-8; Zeph. 2:7; Zech. 14:6-9) and curses (Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:18-20; Zech. 1:14-15). That this is so can be seen from Matthew 25:31-46. We do not need to invent a secret "Rapture" in order to face the facts and deal with the truths that Scripture presents us. It is from a wrong reading of Scripture that Dispensationalists come up with the idea that God's wrath is going to be poured out upon everyone. But what does Scripture say? Revelation 16:2

[34] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939), 706.

declares that these will come "…upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image." Just as Israel was not harmed when the plagues affected Egypt, so Christians will not be harmed when the wrath affects the world because "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). But this is speaking of His second coming, where those who have stored up wrath against themselves will finally receive it. We shall not. Why make it more difficult than it needs to be?

Paul Benware insists, "Paul emphatically assures believers that they will not experience the 'day of the Lord.'"[35] John MacArthur writes, "Believers have no part in the day of the Lord, because they have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13)."[36] Then we have a severe problem on our hands, if that is the case. Scripture declares that the resurrection occurs on the day of the Lord and that we are to be transformed and receive our blessings and rewards. If we do not participate in the day of the Lord, how is any of that to take place? Contrary to what the Dispensationalists want to tell you, brothers and sisters, we *will* participate on that great day. Christ Jesus our Lord shall stand before us and separate us, separating the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the good fish from the bad fish, the good soil from the bad soils, the wise virgins from the foolish virgins, and He will say to us, "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). The day of the Lord has *nothing* to do with the "Tribulation," as Mr. Benware tries to intimate. Lastly, our being transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light has to do with our salvation—nothing to do with the concept of the Rapture, as Mr. MacArthur erroneously implies. We are no longer in darkness, but in the light. That day shall not overtake us

[35] Benware, *Survey of the New Testament*, 168.
[36] MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1801.

because we know of its coming and are warned repeatedly to watch for it (v.6; cf. Matt. 24:42, 44; Mark 13: 33, 35, 37; Luke 21:36).

Dispensationalists claim that "The Day of the Lord may be defined as an extended period of time beginning with the Rapture of the church (as a thief in the night) and continuing until the Great White Throne Judgment after Christ's millennial reign."[37] Since the Bible defines the day of the Lord as coming like "a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10), it is rather impossible to refer to it as an extended period of time—*especially* 1,007 years! We have covered much evidence in this book that proves once and for all that the day of the Lord is the "last day;" the day when Christ Jesus returns, the dead are resurrected, death is defeated, the nations are judged, the heavens and Earth destroyed, and we, Beloved, enter the kingdom "prepared for [us] from the foundation of the world."

Some Dispensationalists will claim that the phrase "a thief in the night" refers to the Rapture. In truth, they must, and have, create *two* "thief in the night" events in order to hold onto their system of belief. One for the Rapture, and one for the Second Coming. But Peter makes it quite clear *when* this period is and *what* takes place with it: "But 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" (2 Pet. 3:10). If the coming as "a thief in the night" refers to the Rapture, guess what? When the Rapture takes place, the heavens and the Earth are going to be burned up. So what happens to all of their theories after this event? And these people boast "a consistent, literal, and normal system of hermeneutics"?

[37] David Doherty, *Introduction to Eschatology* (Victoria Corner, NB: NBBI, 2005), 10.

6

The Rapture in 2 Thessalonians?

Prior to my having attended Bible College at New Brunswick Bible Institute, I had written to the Theology Professor there in regard to the Rapture. In his letter back to me he wrote, "It may be helpful to read 2 Thess. 2 and to note the chronological order of events. Carefully explore v.3 and the Greek word which is translated 'a falling away.' The word literally means, 'the departure.' All the English translations prior to 1611 translated it as 'the departure.'" He then referenced a book by Wayne House titled *When the Trumpet Sounds*, which I assume is where he received this information.

First of all, it would be helpful if he remembered that the English is a *translation*—so it would be wise if he did not put all his eggs in the basket of assumption based on the English word prior to 1611, and his false understanding of that word, its meaning and application.

Second of all, *none* of the English translations prior to 1611 translate it as "the departure," and *all* of them certainly

do not translate it as "a departing" (what I am sure he meant to refer to). John Wyclif (1380) translates it as "dissension" while the Douay-Rheims (1582) translates it as "a revolt." William Tyndale (1534) was the first to use "a departing" (see also Cranmer 1539 and Geneva 1560, 1599), which clearly refers to "a departing from the faith" in the same way that "a falling away" clearly refers to "a falling away from the faith," as supported by Scripture (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-3, 4:3-4).

Third of all, the Greek word *literally* means "apostasy." One needs only take a good look at the word itself and it is clear – *apostasia* (ἀποστασία). Examine Strong's, Vine's, Zodhiates', or Kittel's work. As much as I respect him, truly, this is poor scholarship on his behalf, especially considering he has apparently studied Greek. I would be embarrassed for this conclusion drawn from an assumption. He should know better.

Once again, Robert Reymond deals exceptionally well with this section. "From Paul's declaration that 'relief' for the church from its troubles and persecutions will come not seven years before but '*when* the Lord Jesus is revealed [ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει, *en tē apokalypsei*] from heaven with his holy angels with blazing fire' (2 Thess. 1:7, emphasis supplied), which 'revelation' he describes only verses later as the 'appearing [ἐπιφανεία, *epiphaneia*] of his coming [παρουσίας, *parousias*]' (2 Thess. 2:8), it becomes quite clear that Christ's coming and the ensuing rapture spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 are neither separate events nor is the rapture a 'secret, hidden event but a [very visible] breaking into history of the glory of God.'"[38]

Paul states clearly in verse 2 that he is speaking to them about "the day of the Lord," and then he continues by saying, "[*That day*] [the day of the Lord, the same one as talked about in the Old Testament] will not come unless the apostasy (*apostasia*, ἀποστασία) comes first, and the man of lawlessness

[38] Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 1024.

is revealed" (emphasis supplied). The Old Testament talks frequently about "the day of the Lord." "The day of the Lord" has not changed in the New Testament. It is the *same* period. It is *one* event! *The Second Advent!*

7

The Rapture in Revelation?

Another verse that Dispensationalists attempt to use in support of the Rapture is Revelation 3:10. “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.” As we pointed out when we were discussing *The Rapture in the Gospel of John*, the word translated “keep” is the Greek *tereo* (τηρήσω), which, again, literally means “to guard, to preserve.”

Not only does the word *tereo* appear twice in Revelation 3:10, but it also appears in John 17:6, 11-12, and 15. In John 17:15 we noted that Jesus prayed, “I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” If the word meant “to take away, to gather, to remove” as the Dispensationalists tell us, we have a severe problem on our hands. In other words, according to the Dispensationalist’s interpretation, Jesus said, “I do not ask that you take them

out of the world, but that you take them out of the world." After all, they tell us that this word teaches the Rapture in Revelation 3:10. John MacArthur insists "this phrase, 'keep…from' supports the pretribulational rapture of the church."[39] I am sorry, but one would have to stretch and twist this verse, and particularly this word, to great extremes in order for it to mean "to take away, to gather, to remove." In fact, the exact same word is used only mere words earlier: "Because you have *tereo* the word…" How should we interpret *it* then?

Furthermore, the phrase "keep…from" that appears in Revelation 3:10 also appears in John 17:15. If *tereo* means what Dispensationalists try to tell us it means, how do we explain its usage in these verses: "If you keep (*tereo*) My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept (*tereo*) My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." (John 15:10); "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept (*tereo*) My word, they will keep (*tereo*) yours also." (John 15:20)?

Mr. MacArthur also insists that this is "an event still future that for a short time severely tests the whole world."[40] Although I greatly respect Mr. MacArthur, being a great man of God, he is mistaken once again because this passage was spoken to a church in history, which no longer exists, which, if we read our history, we would know has already come to pass. "This promise was literally and verbatim fulfilled. Philadelphia was the only church in the seven which escaped unscathed from the persecutions of Trajan; and the reason which philosophers assigned and historians have stated is, that Philadelphia was subject to earthquakes; and the Roman emperor, with all his sanguinary cruelty, was afraid to go there himself, or to trust his generals and his armies in a place so dangerous. No doubt this was the secondary cause, which

[39] MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1946.
[40] Ibid.

many modern philosophers worship; but the secret of Philadelphia's safety was the first great and glorious reason that Christians trust in – that Jesus had recorded it as his truth. '*I will keep thee from the hour of temptation, that shall come upon all the world*.'"[41]

"*I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world*; for this faithfulness God promises to keep the ministers of this church from those persecutions which raged elsewhere, and were further, in Trajan's time, to come upon all Christians living under the Roman Empire. *To try them that dwell upon the earth*; to try those Christians that lived within that empire, how well they would adhere to Christ, and the profession of the gospel. This I take to be a more proper sense, than theirs who would interpret this *hour of temptation* of the day of judgment, which is never so called." [42] The historical evidence is overwhelmingly supportive of precisely what the passage says.

There is one key verse that demonstrates most powerfully the Dispensationalist's use of hermeneutical "reaching"–Revelation 4:1. The Dispensationalist latches onto the phrase "Come up here" and says, "See! That is the rapture!" How foolish! That would be no different than latching onto the words "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" and saying, "See! Christ was a vampire! If you drink His blood you will have everlasting life." It is the same silly nonsense. Come on, my Dispensationalist friend, you can do better than that.

In that letter that my Theology Professor wrote in response to me, he also stated that "The church is no where mentioned again in Revelation until ch.19 when Jesus returns at His Revelation as King, with all His holy ones to begin His Millennial Kingdom." I am sorry, but the church is *nowhere*

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[41] John Cumming, *Apocalyptic Sketches* (London, ENG: Arthur Hall, Virtue and Company, 1854), 436-437.
[42] Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 3:958.

mentioned in this chapter. He is *assuming* that the "armies of heaven" (v.14) include the saints, and that if it does, they already have their glorified bodies rather than the souls of dead saints themselves coming to be united with their bodies from the grave. Elsewhere in Scripture Jesus says He could command legions of angels to come to his aid (Matt. 26:53). Matthew 25:31 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7 inform us that Jesus will return *with* His angels.

The fact is, *nowhere* in Revelation is the "church" mentioned. The word "church" appears seven times through chapters 2 and 3, each time in regard to the *specific* church that John was told to write to (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). The word "churches" appears thirteen times; seven of which are in the repetitive warning "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), four of which mention specifically the "seven churches" (1:4, 11, 20 – twice), and the last two of which are plural with no specifics (2:23; 22:16). The term "bride" is used four times (18:23; 21:2, 9; 22:17), two of which are in conjunction with the fact the New Jerusalem is the Bride of Christ, the Church (21:2, 9).

8

The Rapture in History

Until Dispensationalists hijacked the word and began applying it incorrectly to their false doctrine, the word *rapture* meant "ecstatic delight, mental transport; great pleasure or enthusiasm or the expression of it" (Canadian Oxford Dictionary), "a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion; a mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things; an expression or manifestation of ecstasy or passion" (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary). If you look in any Thesaurus, the words associated with the word *rapture* are: ecstasy, bliss, exaltation, euphoria, elation, joy, enchantment, delight, happiness, pleasure. Nothing pertaining to a secret gathering. In fact, even in Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, the word *rapture* did not carry the positive twist Dispensationalists have given it: "a seizing by violence," which it admits is little used. But the other definitions are as follows: "transport; ecstasy; violence

of a pleasing passion; extreme joy or pleasure; rapidity with violence; enthusiasm; uncommon heat of imagination." Based on the surrounding definitions, and on other Dictionaries, I am presuming that by "transport" they are referring to the previously mentioned "mental transport," which fits with an extreme feeling of ecstasy, passion, pleasure, joy, etc. The word *rapture* has always referred to an overwhelming feeling of ecstatic joy—*not* to some secret catching away to be with the Lord. And *if* it referred to some catching away, the catching away would be the destruction of the lost. "A seizing by violence" fits with what we looked at in the Synoptic Gospels regarding those who are taken.

The Rapture is a new doctrine that had its birth in the spring of 1830. "It is a historical fact that Darby's eschatology began with the utterance of [Margaret Macdonald]. This, Tregelles said at the time, was from a false spirit."[43] That same year, in the September issue of *The Morning Watch*, an Irvingite journal, the author wrote that the Philadelphia church would be raptured before a "period of great tribulation," while the Laodicea church would be left behind. Months earlier in their June issue, the author had written that the Philadelphia church would remain on Earth until the final post-tribulational advent. Between these issues, the writers of *The Morning Watch* had visited Margaret, who explained her "revelation," which they quoted without giving her due credit. In an article published in December by John Darby, he was still defending the post-tribulational view. In fact, Darby's writings do not reflect anything pre-tribulational until 1839! Dispensationalists employ selective citing, truncated quotations of text, and creative editing in order to try and prove the Rapture was taught prior to 1830. If you want to know the detailed historical facts, I suggest picking up *The Great Rapture Hoax*, *The Rapture Plot*, and *The Incredible Cover Up* by Dave MacPherson, a historian with

[43] Egerdahl, *The Bible Versus Dispensational Eschatology*, 256. [Original quote reads 'Barbara McDonald' instead of 'Margaret Macdonald'.]

no equal regarding his journalistic detective skills.

Charles Hodge (1797-1878), in his *Systematic Theology*, never mentions a single thing about a secret "Rapture." He mentions the millennium (although he believes in 1000 years of righteousness and peace prior to Christ's coming), but there is not a single mention of the word "Rapture" in his entire Systematic Theology. He says, "When Christ comes again it will be to be admired in all them that believe. Those who are then alive will be changed, in the twinkling of an eye; their corruptible shall put on incorruption, and their mortal shall put on immortality."[44] It is clear he believed that when Christ returned to Earth in the same manner that He left (Acts 1:10-11), believers would be changed. He addresses all sorts of different doctrines in his 3 volumes, but never once mentions the secret "Rapture."

Likewise, if you reference the works of John Owen (1616-1683), Matthew Poole (1624-1679), Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), or a host of any other Christian works prior to the 1800's, including those works of the early church fathers, you will find no such thing as the Rapture. Spurgeon lived well after the inception of the Rapture, yet he never taught any such thing in any of his 3600 sermons, which shows that such a teaching had never reached either his ears or his eyes. Spurgeon amassed a large catalogue of books and read profusely each day. Why would he not have addressed it in one form or another as he had other doctrines? It is also of special note that *neither* Wayne Grudem (*Systematic Theology*) nor Millard Erickson (*Christian Theology*) nor Robert L. Reymond (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*) believes in this so-called "Pre-tribulational Pre-millennial Rapture."

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[44] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 3:858.

Conclusion

We have just examined several of the proof texts quoted by Dispensationalists to be in support of their doctrine of the Rapture. As you have seen with your own eyes, there is no foundation or substantiation to their claims. They are all random, isolated and disconnected verses or passages that have nothing to do with their doctrine. It is an imaginary concept that has been inserted into the Bible wherever they have found a place that seems to hold it best. Dispensationalists have the Rapture backwards. According to Jesus, you *want* to be left behind: "For the coming of the Son of Man will be *just like* the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until *the flood came and took them all away*; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be *taken*, and one will be left. Two women will be

grinding at the mill; one will be *taken*, and one will be left" (Matt. 24:37-41, emphasis supplied).

You have witnessed for yourselves how Dispensationalists are guilty of hermeneutical "reaching:" seeing in a verse or passage what they already desire to find there, whether it is truly there or not. Ezekiel 14:4 gave a warning in this regard:

> Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols.

In other words, if you approach God's Word with idols or pre-conceived ideas in your heart, He is going to *allow* you to see what you desire to see there simply because that is what you *want* to see. Let us allow the Bible to say what it has to say, and use history to substantiate what it has told us—not some false prophet declaring things to occur in the future.

Meditate On This

Here is a verse that Dispensationalists cannot escape, no matter how much theological gymnastics they attempt to perform: "But 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" (2 Pet. 3:10). Two questions for the Dispensationalist: (1) What does "the day of the Lord" refer to? (2) What does the term "thief" signify? What this

verse is telling us is that if "the day of the Lord" and the "thief" are in reference to the "Rapture," then once that takes place the heavens and the Earth will be destroyed. Therefore, there will be *no* "7-year Great Tribulation" *or* a "1000-year Millennial Kingdom." But if "the day of the Lord" and the "thief" are in reference to the Second Coming of Jesus, then once that takes place the heavens and the Earth will be destroyed. Therefore, there will be *no* "1000-year Millennial Kingdom."

In order to try and escape this overwhelming problem that faces Dispensationalists, they resort to claiming that "the day of the Lord" begins at the "Rapture" and continues to the end of the "1000-year Millennial Kingdom." So "the day of the Lord" is 1007 years long. Sorry, but your theological gymnastics do not work, my Dispensationalist friend. You are deliberately ignoring the plain, common sense language of Scripture in order to force it to comply with your bankrupt system of theology. You do not get to make Scripture conform to your beliefs. *You* must conform your beliefs to the truths of Scripture.

If you want to learn more about the various problems with and holes in Dispensational end-times theology, please pick up a copy of my book *The End Times: Letting the Bible Speak for Itself*. I promise you will not be disappointed that you did.

Appendix 1

Turning Believers Into Bereans

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Studying the Bible is *not* coming to it and looking for verses to support your beliefs. It is coming to it with an open mind, allowing it to say what it says, and then to conform your beliefs to it. One might want to read Ezekiel 14:4 and examine himself to see what idols are in his own heart when he comes to God's Word.

> Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols.

If you approach God's Word with idols or pre-conceived ideas in your heart, God is going to *allow* you to see whatever

you desire to see simply because you *want* to see it. You are unwilling to see anything else that He desires to show you. In a sense, you are quenching the Holy Spirit. You are so proud and stubborn that you choose to elevate how you were raised and what you were taught (or worse yet, your subjective opinions and personal feelings) *above* the Word of God. In so doing, you have become unwilling to listen to rational biblical teaching.

Reading only those books that support your position *is not* studying the Bible. It is the *epitome* of being spoon-fed. The reason you stick with books that only support your view is because you enjoy your ears being tickled. You do not want to have to *think*, and you want even less to have to admit that *you were wrong* in the beliefs that you held. This is known as pride, which does not impress the Lord. It is important to study biblical positions *other than your own* position, because:

- You *may* be wrong.
- You need to understand *compassionately* the doctrinal views of Christians who disagree with you.
- Your own position *will be stronger* if it is tested by being exposed to other positions.
- Truth is *never* afraid of light.

I was raised under the beliefs of Dispensationalism. I attended a Dispensational Bible Institute. When I discovered that the Rapture was *nowhere* to be taught in Scripture, I fought hard to hold onto those beliefs. In fact, I tried to take the easy way out by telling myself, "*Whether there is or is not a Rapture, I know where I am going when I die or Jesus returns*." However, because I desired God's truth *over* and *above* the way in which I was raised and what I had been taught, I submitted to the Spirit's leading and to the truth as revealed in God's Holy Word. The more I studied the Bible simply for what *it* had to say, the more I noticed the flaws and holes within the Dispensational system of theology. I had no

choice but to submit to what was revealed in Scripture if I wanted to be obedient to my Lord and be taught His truths.

Obviously, the first step you need to do in order to have effective Bible study is to pray. Before you open up your Bible, you should pray. Before you read it, before you study it; pray. Never, never, *never* open the Scriptures without the Holy Spirit. Pray for His guidance and His leading. *Do not* ask the Lord to show you what you already perceive to be true. Ask Him to reveal *His* truth to you, and make sure that you are doing so with a willing heart to accept that truth *no matter what it may cost you*. If you ask Him to show you His truths, but are unwilling to humble yourself and submit to them, regardless of whether or not you like what you are shown, then you are merely asking out of insincerity, which is sin. You ask Him to show you His truths but have no intention of humbling yourself and submitting to them in obedience. What you really want for God to do is to verify your pre-conceived pre-suppositions, regardless of whether they contain an ounce of truth or not. So the truth is that you do not really desire the truth. Such an attitude in a professing Christian is tragic.

PREREQUISITES OF INTERPRETATION

You need to be regenerated. If you are not saved, seek Jesus diligently in prayer and ask Him to save you. If you are saved, then avoid sin and allow Him complete control over your life. The unregenerate person is spiritually blind (2 Cor. 4:4) and spiritually dead (Eph. 2:2). He cannot discern things of a spiritual nature (1 Cor. 2:9-16). The Holy Spirit is the Author of truth (John 16:13) and will guide the believer into the truth of God's Word, providing the believer is willing to subject Himself to that truth in humility. As you are guided into the truth, you need to react to the Word in obedience. Disobedience to God's revelation quenches the Spirit's leading, which makes the believer susceptible to error in both interpretation and practical application (James 1:22; 4:17).

The Bible is holy (2 Tim. 3:15), therefore you need a genuine reverence, respect, and hunger for, and interest in, the Bible. Having such will protect you from laziness and carelessness. You need to be willing to study and do research, gaining knowledge of biblical culture, history, and theology so that you can approach God's Word with sound judgment and understanding (2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11). If all God's people had the same principles of hermeneutics and did thorough, accurate study, all the doctrinal conclusions would be the same. Unfortunately, there is much pre-conceived subjective opinions based on personal feelings that dominate the scene. Interpretation based on personal feelings and opinions is the evidence of a disobedient person unwilling to submit to the authority of God and the truth of His Word.

Recognize that even when approached with the greatest care, humility and prayerfulness, no human interpretation is infallible. Watch out for pride! Be teachable by being willing to receive teaching from those God has gifted in the Church to teach others (Acts 2:42). Be careful whom you trust. It is so very important that you test *everything* against the Bible, no matter how great a man of God he may be or the qualifications he may possess. Scripture is the final authority of truth.

ERRORS TO AVOID

As you study Scripture, there are several common interpretational errors that you *must* avoid.

1. Do not make the Bible say what *you* want it to say. You *cannot* come to the Bible looking for what *you want* to find in it. Otherwise you are trying to conform the Bible to *you*. It is *you* who are to be conformed to the Bible. Let the Bible say what God intended it to say. The first rule of hermeneutics is: If the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.
2. Do not think the Bible is all about you or that it was

written to you. There is much that can be applied to you, but you cannot apply something that was meant specifically for an individual of the Bible. There are four gaps that need to be overcome so that you can understand the Bible correctly, the way it was meant to be understood. These are the language gap, the cultural gap, the geographical gap, and the historical gap. They are precisely what their names suggest.

3. Do not try and interpret Scripture through the lens of your customs and culture. For example, just because you benefit from electricity today, do not be ignorant and assume that this is the way it has always been or that this is the way it is for everybody in the world. It is untrue. London, Ontario first turned on its power only 100 years ago. Imagine, 100 years ago they did not have what you have, enjoy, and take for granted today. You cannot interpret the Bible based on your perceptions of life. That is why point 2 is so critical; studying the various gaps that lead to proper interpretation. A further example: Throughout history, and in the majority of the world today, people operated based upon familial units. The self-centered individualistic Western mindset did not exist until the Renaissance. So Westerners *cannot* read and interpret certain aspects of the Bible based on their individualism. They *must* understand those aspects in terms of familial units. When the head of the household converted, the entire household followed instinctively, whether they personally agreed or not. Abraham is a perfect example, as is Adam in being our head and representative.
4. Avoid superficial interpretation. Some examples of this are when individuals will say things like, "I feel…" or "To me, this passage means…" Other examples, such as "collapsing context," are when individuals will take the same term or word and try to

unify them into a singular doctrine or teaching. An example of this can be found in the section *Context* later in this chapter.

5. If you study the New Testament carefully, you will find that Jesus and the Apostles re-interpreted many Old Testament passages, even spiritualizing them. Dispensationalists will tell you that this should never be done, but the evidence clearly demonstrates that Jesus and the Apostles did precisely this. We should interpret these passages the way they did. We *are not*, however, to make up our own spiritualizing of the text. Simply read the text as it was written and allow the Bible to interpret itself. If the New Testament quotes an Old Testament passage, carefully note how it interprets it. If it spiritualizes it, then *that* is how you must understand that passage.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

The wrong way to study the Bible is by relying entirely upon others. Far too many Christians are clothed in spiritual "hand-me-downs," borrowing or stealing conclusions of others (pastor, Bible school professor, commentator, Christian writer, etc.) for the biblical knowledge they possess—or do not possess. Relying solely on others is known as being spoon-fed. If the people you parrot misinterpreted the text to begin with, how tragic it is for you and those you attempt to teach. Secondary biblical knowledge does not produce a genuine heart-felt faith. It never becomes real to you because you have not settled it in your heart and made it your own. This kind of knowledge lacks the deep faith, spiritual power, and intimacy with Christ that all Christians should crave.

The right way to study the Bible is the long, thorough and intensive way. Proper biblical study takes a great deal of time and effort. Merely reading your Bible every day *is not* studying the Bible. In order to study the Bible rightly, you

need a guide (Acts 8:30-31). According to John 16:13, our guide *must be* the Holy Spirit, Who is the Author of truth. As I indicated in the opening of this chapter, you must *never* open the Scriptures without the Holy Spirit.

In order to be a successful expositor, you need the proper knowledge and tools to do your job. Before you begin to study the Scriptures, there are three principles/rules that you must apply.

STEP 1—Observation of the text. You need to ask the question, "What does it say?" First, you must observe the internal text, becoming familiar with your selected text by reading over it several times until you can see all of its elements and details. Second, you must observe the external context, realizing that everything in the Bible is tied together, and so locating these other passages of Scripture and becoming familiar with them lest you arrive at some very wrongly divided conclusions. Always start with 1:1, because every text has a beginning. The Bible was not written with the divisions of verses and chapters as we have today; so do not trust them. You can determine the main subject by asking "Who?" or "What?" Note when the main subject changes and mark that place as the end of your text. You might use a mark such as this: ///.

When observing the internal text, you need to be able to answer such questions as: What is God doing in the text? What people are mentioned? What are they doing? Does the text mention a date, a time, or a place? Does the text refer to something else in the Bible? You should be able to answer these questions and more once you have become familiar with your selected text. When observing the external context, you need to examine the surrounding verses (immediate context), the surrounding chapters (sectional context), and other passages (canonical context). You also need to become familiar with the outline, purpose, and themes of the book in which your text resides, looking for similarities to your selected text. You should be studying the grammar, history,

and theology of the text.

STEP 2—Interpretation of the text. You need to ask the question, "What did it mean?" After accomplishing everything in step one, you should be able to make some preliminary statements concerning the meaning of your selected text. You need to be aware of what the original audience understood by the words that were being spoken to them. Remember, contrary to Dispensationalism, Jesus and the Apostles *never* spoke over the heads of their listeners. What they told their hearers had *direct* application to them, and they would have understood it clearly. To claim that Jesus and the Apostles spoke over the heads of their hearers with grand things having to do with millennia in the future, of which they would have no understanding whatsoever, is a cop-out for *poor* biblical study.

When you interpret the text, you need to do so critically in regard to your interpretation, making use of rational and logical sense. Texts *only* have *one* meaning. A text *cannot* mean one thing to me and another to you. God says what He means and means what He says. Exegesis is a taking out of the text based on what it says. Eisegesis is a reading into the text based on how one feels.

After you have studied your selected text thoroughly and conclusively, using some study tools to aid you in the process, and are sure of your interpretation, it is time to verify your interpretation by consulting with others. This is where consulting commentaries should come in. They are the last step in your biblical study and interpretation process. If you examine several, you can see whether or not you have strayed from the general consensus. However, remember that truth *is not* consensus and consensus *is not* truth! If you seem to be out of sorts with a wide variety of commentators, it might be wise to double check your work. You may have made an error along the way. But also remember that the commentators are fallible men, so just because they may all agree *does not* mean they are correct. Study your text

carefully, *thoroughly*, *with humility*, and *under the Spirit's guidance*, willing to submit to His leading and teaching. If the evidence backs your interpretation, it just might be that the other commentators approached the text via a pre-supposition and misunderstanding. None of us are infallible.

STEP 3—Application of the text. You need to ask the question, "What does it mean for me?" After you have verified your interpretation of the text, then you need to believe that interpretation and act accordingly. Remember, James told us that faith without works is dead. Faith needs to be put into action, just as Abraham was justified by offering up Isaac. His faith was put into action, and because He believed God, His faith was counted for righteousness. Scripture aims at changing our lives, and when we have learned a particular truth about Scripture, we need to allow it to change our life. Otherwise we are being disobedient children.

The most important aspect of Bible study is not in the knowledge or application of what you have learned, but in sharing that truth with others. When others have it wrong, we are obligated to correct them as Christ corrected us. If we learn a truth and do not share it, we do our brothers and sisters a disservice. We are not pleasing the Son and glorifying the Father. God wants us to share His truths with the rest of His children. Remember it! Share it!

RULES FOR BIBLE STUDY

When I am studying God's Word, there are three simple rules I abide by:

1. *Context, context, context!* You need to consider the immediate (surrounding verses), sectional (surrounding chapters), and/or canonical (other passages) contexts, as well as the language, cultural, geographical, and historical gaps (or contexts).
2. *Compare Scripture with Scripture!* Even when expositing Scripture verse-by-verse, you need to

consult the whole counsel of God's Word, otherwise isolating a passage to the book it is contained in can lead to some very bad interpretations.

3. *Wrestle with and submit to what the text actually says, and conform your beliefs accordingly*. When you study Scripture openly and honestly, you are inevitably going to challenge some of your presently held beliefs. You need to be obedient to the Lord and conform your beliefs accordingly, regardless of your emotions. Anything less is disobedience, which is rebellion.

When a preacher/teacher preaches/teaches the Bible expositorily verse-by-verse, they need to remember these three rules. As they go verse-by-verse, the tendency is to isolate the current verse or passage from its immediate (surrounding verses), sectional (surrounding chapters), and/or canonical (other passages) contexts. This can lead to false interpretations and doctrinal errors that can have grave consequences. Preaching/teaching the Bible expositorily is the best method, but the above three rules *must* remain in place the entire time.

So, when you are preaching through Matthew and you arrive at 5:31-32 or 19:3-9, or you are preaching through Mark and you arrive at 10:2-12, Rule #2 ensures that you consider the *whole counsel* of God's Word on the matter, which includes Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, 39; Hebrews 13:4; Malachi 2:13-16; Deuteronomy 22:13-21; 24:1-4; and the narrative of Jesus' birth regarding the state of His parents. Remember, there is *no* room for experiential interpretation. All your work *must* be exegetical. Do not force the text to say something it does not, just because that is what you desire it to say even though you have just been confronted with the fact it says something completely different.

Rule #3 acknowledges that if you are doing proper Bible study, you are going to encounter things that go against how you have been raised and/or what you have been taught, whether by your parents, your pastor at your church, or

professors at Bible institutes. At this point, you seriously need to wrestle with what the text has just revealed and then you need to submit to it and conform your beliefs in accordance to what the text actually says. To do anything less is rebellion. Remember, children of the King delight in the truth. Better to swallow your pride and correct your beliefs than to proudly and stubbornly continue preaching/teaching false doctrines and lies.

Confessions, creeds, denominations, systems of theology, and traditions may help to guide us, but they are in no way the be-all and end-all of faith. They are not infallible, inerrant, or inspired. All of these must be compared with, scrutinized against, and submitted unto Scripture. Scripture is our only authority. Even the godliest of men can err if they are not careful. That includes you and me.

Regardless of what traditions we hold to, regardless of what system of theology we follow, regardless of what denomination we belong to, we *must* subject and compare *all* teachings with the Scriptures and hold the Scriptures as the *only* authority. How we were raised, what we were taught, and what we presently believe *must* conform to Scripture.

Adhere to those three rules and you should never go wrong. Keep in mind these quotations, too:

> "One word of truth outweighs the whole world."
> –Alexander Solzhenitsyn

> "Our only rule of faith and practice is the Word of God. We have . . .
> no *creed* to defend,
> no *denomination* to maintain, and
> no *confession* to bind our minds.
> '*What do the Scriptures teach?*' This is and must be our only concern. If the plain teachings of Holy Scripture appear to destroy or contradict *our understanding* of any doctrine, then let us relinquish the doctrine, or acknowledge the fact

that our minds are both depraved and miniscule, and bow down to the revelation of God."

–Don Fortner

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answered him, *"What is written in the Law? What do you read there?"* Luke 10:25-26

Notice in this passage, *the high honor which our Lord Jesus Christ places on the Bible.* He refers the lawyer at once to the Scriptures, as the only rule of faith and practice. He does not say in reply to his question, "What does the Jewish Church say about eternal life? What do the Scribes, and Pharisees, and priests think? What is taught on the subject in the traditions of the elders?"

He takes a far simpler and more direct course. He sends his questioner at once to the writings of the Old Testament, *"What is written in the Law? What do you read there?"*

Let the principle contained in these words, be one of the foundation principles of our Christianity. Let *the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible,* be the rule of our faith and practice. Holding this principle, we travel upon the king's highway. The road may sometimes seem narrow, and our faith may be severely tried--but we shall not be allowed greatly to err. Departing from this principle, we enter on a pathless wilderness. There is no telling what we may be led to believe or do. Forever let us bear this in mind. Here let us cast anchor. Here let us abide.

It matters nothing *who* says a thing in religion--

> whether an ancient father, or a modern bishop, or a learned theologian.
> Is it in the Bible? Can it be proved by the Bible? If not, then it is not to be believed.
> It matters nothing how beautiful and clever sermons or religious books may appear. Are they in the smallest degree contrary to Scripture? If they are, they are rubbish and poison, and guides of no value!
> *What does the Scripture say?* This is the only rule, and measure, and gauge of religious truth. "To the law and to the testimony," says Isaiah, "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20
>
> –J. C. Ryle

> "It is a small and narrow mind that is afraid to change; it is a sign of greatness that one is prepared to admit at times that one has been mistaken, and that therefore you have had to change your position."
>
> –D. Martyn Lloyd Jones

CONTEXT

When you read 1 Thess. 4:13-18, it *sounds* like it teaches what the Dispensationalist wants to convince you of, but what does it say when you read it in the context of the entire chapter? What about in the context of the entire letter or book? Ah! Now it takes on an entirely different understanding. About the only book in the Bible where you can quote random, isolated verses and still have them reflect their original context is the book of Proverbs. There are three things you should always remember when interpreting the Bible: Context, context, context!

Remember, start with 1:1. Examine the surrounding verses (immediate context), the surrounding chapters

(sectional context), and other passages (canonical context). If you make sure you do this consistently, you will prevent yourself from performing what is called "collapsing context," where you take two separate passages (Proverbs 8:1-17 and 1 Corinthians 1:30) and connect them as if they are related.

Some genuine Bible preachers will mistakenly preach a sermon wherein they teach that because Jesus is the wisdom of God, Proverbs 8 must be referring to Jesus. However, certain cults, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, also teach this because in this passage it says that wisdom is created, and they believe Jesus to be a created being—not God Himself. The biggest evidence that Proverbs 8 is *not* speaking about Jesus as being the Wisdom of God is that Proverbs calls wisdom "she." Jesus is not a she. The wisdom spoken of here is the attribute of wisdom and is contrasted against the harlot throughout the entire book of Proverbs. So the two passages have *nothing* to do with each other. Even John Calvin mistakenly associated Proverbs 8:15 in relation to Christ Jesus being the eternal wisdom of God in his commentary on Daniel, even though Jesus is such.

EXEGESIS VS. EISEGESIS [45]

The word "exegesis" comes from the Greek verb ἐξήγησις (from ἐξηγεῖσθαι "to lead out"), which means "to draw out." Simply put, exegesis is about *drawing out from* the text the true meaning of a biblical verse or passage. "Exegesis does not take a quote from the Bible to prove the Bible. It scientifically scrutinizes the text according to historical context, cultural context, literary context and usage, multiple languages that might have been used, archeological finds, etc. A good way to support your thesis is to ignore all evidence to the contrary." [46] Exegesis, then, is an investigation. It attempts to determine the historical, cultural,

[45] Parts of this section were contributed to by Alex Haiken.

[46] Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 293.

and geographical context within which a particular verse exists. The questions we always have to be asking are: Who is doing the speaking? Who is being spoken to? What is being said? What is going on here? When observing the external context, proper exegesis examines the surrounding verses (immediate context), the surrounding chapters (sectional context), and other passages (canonical context). It lets the Bible speak for and interpret itself. Today's reader must try to enter the world of the biblical author and seek to understand what the author was saying. If we fail to pay attention to the world in which the Bible was written, we will simply read biblical texts and infuse them with meaning from our social world and conclude that the Bible does not speak directly to our circumstances. "The interpreter must come to the Bible as open as possible, without any theological bias or presuppositions."[47] Exegesis utilizes "hermeneutics," which means "the art and science of biblical interpretation."

In contrast to this, what many do instead is what some theologians refer to as "frontloading"; i.e., they read their own personal, political, or ideological beliefs back *into* the Bible instead of reading *out from* the Bible what the original authors were saying. This process of reading one's own presuppositions, agendas, biases, and/or ideas into the interpretation of the Bible is called "eisegesis," from the Greek εἰς, which means "into." "It is the interpreter's job to represent the text, "not the prejudices, feelings, judgments, or concerns of the exegete. To indulge in the latter is to engage in eisegesis, 'a reading into' a text what the reader wants it to say." "[48] Eisegesis occurs when a reader imposes her/her interpretation *into* and *onto* the text. There is *only* ever *one* interpretation to a text; but there may be *many* applications to a text.

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[47] Mal Couch, *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 169.
[48] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 45.

Personal experience *does not* interpret or determine what the Word of God says. Personal feelings and opinions *do not* interpret or determine what the Word of God says. Presumptions, inferences, assumptions, and conclusions drawn from assumptions *do not* interpret or determine what the Word of God says. Personal presuppositions, prejudices, agendas, biases, and/or ideas *do not* interpret or determine what the Word of God says. The practices and acceptances of our day and age *do not* interpret or determine what the Word of God says. All of this is to engage in eisegesis. Eisegesis is at best unwise, and at worst extremely dangerous.

Exegesis and eisegesis are conflicting approaches to interpreting the Bible. Why? Exegesis is *reading out from* the Bible what the original authors were saying. Eisegesis is *reading into* the Bible one's own ideas or prejudices. Exegesis is about *drawing out* the true meaning of a Bible passage. Eisegesis is about *putting into* the text something never intended by the author. Exegesis tends to be *objective* when employed effectively while eisegesis is regarded as highly *subjective*. The Bible gives us a clear example of exegesis: "They read from the book...translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading" (Neh. 8:8). Exegesis, however, is not an easy task and is not for the faint of heart. Like most things of value, it requires some work on our part.

TOOLS TO BE ASSIMILATED

Remember that *only* the Bible is infallible, inerrant, and inspired. While they are helpful indeed, we are never to view the concordances, dictionaries and commentaries in this light. The wise student will choose his tools (and teachers) *very* carefully, making sure they line up with Scriptural truths.

There are several excellent tools for study available these days, which represent the selfless efforts and labour of many gifted servants of God. Assimilating the right tools into your trade will benefit you immensely and greatly enrich your efforts. These tools must *never* replace your own personal

efforts, otherwise you are falling back into the realm of being spoon-fed. Remember, not all tools are equal. If you are unsure of the author and what they believe or teach, find someone trustworthy to receive godly counsel from. There have been several heretics who have released their own tools under the guise of being "Christian" material. One such man was Charles Finney who, in his "Systematic Theology," attacks every historically-held doctrine of the Bible.

Concordances:

Concordances are handy little tools that allow you to look up a specific word and find where else in Scripture that same word has been used, enabling you to observe the progression of a particular idea or doctrine. They allow you to develop distinctly biblical theology through the study of specific words, allowing you to trace an author's emphasis of a particular word while learning the various shades of meaning behind that word. They are also handy for helping you to locate a particular verse that seems to be evading you. Some will even help you identify the word in Hebrew or Greek, ascertaining the usage of that word so that you can better understand its meaning. It is a good idea to be sure your concordance is based on the Bible translation that you are studying from. Three English concordances are:

- *Strong's Strongest Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*
- *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*
- *Cruden's Complete Concordance*

As my Theology professor was fond of saying, "Strong's for the strong, Young's for the young, and Cruden's for the crude." There are also original-language concordances that allow you to trace the use of a particular Hebrew or Greek word throughout the Bible:

- *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament*
- *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the*

New Testament

Another great book that would fit in this category is the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, a colossal cross-reference volume.

Word Studies:

There are several word study books that may be *very* helpful to you because they examine the specific meanings of words within the context of a passage (and of the Bible itself), offering an enriched perspective and an in-depth understanding of the text and how it should be communicated. As you know, the Bible was not written in English, but in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It is a good practice to get familiar with the original words and how they were used and what they meant, because *no* translation from the original manuscripts is perfect. Some of the more trustworthy word studies are as follows:

- *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* – Joseph Thayer
- *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* – Francis Brown, C. Briggs, S. R. Driver
- *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* – Kittel, Friedrich, Bromiley
- *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old & New Testaments* – Spiros Zodhiates, editor
- *Word Pictures in the New Testament* – A. T. Robertson
- *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* – Kenneth Wuest
- *Vincent's New Testament Word Studies* – Marvin Vincent
- *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* – W. E. Vine

Dictionaries/Encyclopedias/Handbooks:

Bible dictionaries list and explain words and subjects

found within the Bible. There are even some Hebrew and Greek dictionaries. Bible encyclopedias provide historical, doctrinal, cultural, geographical, and bibliographical background information. Bible handbooks provide historical and cultural background information, usually with comments on particular books and passages. A few sources in this area are:

- *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* – Merrill Unger
- *Encyclopedia of Bible Words*
- *Encyclopedia of Bible Characters*
- *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* – J. I. Packer & M. C. Tenney
- *New Unger's Bible Handbook* - Merrill Unger
- *Wilmington's Bible Handbook* – Harold Wilmington
- *Halley's Bible Handbook* – H. H. Halley
- *Ryken's Bible Handbook* – Leland Ryken, Philip Ryken, James Wilhoit
- *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* – Leland Ryken
- *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* – Millard Erickson

Some of these, such as *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, and *Wilmington's Bible Handbook*, will reflect the author's pre-suppositions, so be careful. Remember, these works are not inspired—only the Holy Bible is.

Commentaries:

These should *never* be your first line of defence. Commentaries are your *last* resort in your study. Commentaries give the author's opinion in regard to how a text is to be interpreted. They provide helpful background, introductory, and summary information on the books of the Bible. There are many excellent single-volume and multi-volume works. Some may be devotional in style while others may be analytical or exegetical. Choose your commentaries

carefully and wisely, reading with great discernment and comparing their opinions against Scripture. Some of the more trustworthy commentaries are as follows:

- *Calvin's Commentaries* – John Calvin
- *Hebrews* – John Owen
- *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* – Matthew Poole
- *Matthew Henry's Commentary*
- *Bible Commentary* – Jamieson, Fausset & Brown
- *Treasury of David* – Charles Spurgeon
- *Commentary on the Old Testament* – Keil & Delitzsch
- *New Testament Commentary* – Hendriksen & Kistemaker
- *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* – Wiseman, editor
- *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* – Morris, editor
- *Reformed Expository Commentary* – various authors
- *The Lectio Continua Expository Commentary* – various authors
- Various commentaries by James Montgomery Boice
- *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* – Beale & Carson, editors

Commentaries to be *extremely cautious* with (and perhaps safer to avoid): J. Vernon McGee, Warren Wiersbe, John Phillips, John MacArthur, William MacDonald, Merrill Unger, H. A. Ironside, and John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, editors.

Systematic Theologies:

"Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, 'What does the whole Bible teach us today?' about

any given topic."[49] It is the gathering of verses and passages that are specifically relevant to any given doctrine or teaching of Scripture so that we can better understand the whole of that doctrine or teaching in order to know what we should believe about it. Some of the more trustworthy systems of theology are as follows:

Reformed (or Presbyterian):

- *Institutes of the Christian Religion* – John Calvin
- *Biblical Theology* – John Owen
- *The Works of John Owen* – John Owen
- *The Words of Jonathan Edwards* – Jonathan Edwards
- *Systematic Theology* – Charles Hodge
- *Reformed Dogmatics* – Heinrich Heppe
- *Dogmatic Theology* – William G. T. Shedd
- *Systematic Theology* – Robert Lewis Dabney
- *Outlines of Theology* – A. A. Hodge
- *Biblical and Theological Studies* – B. B. Warfield
- *The Doctrine of God* – Herman Bavinck
- *Reformed Dogmatics* – Geerhardus Vos
- *Systematic Theology* – Louis Berkhof
- *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* – J. Oliver Buswell
- *Collected Writings of John Murray* – John Murray
- *An Old Testament Theology* – Bruce K. Waltke
- *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* – Robert L. Reymond
- *Foundations of the Christian Faith* – James Montgomery Boice
- *Systematic Theology* – John M. Frame
- *A New Testament Biblical Theology* – G. K.

[49] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 21.

Beale

- *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* – Michael Horton

Baptist:

- *Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* – John Gill
- *Abstract of Systematic Theology* – James P. Boyce
- *Systematic Theology* – Augustus Strong
- *Christian Theology* – Millard Erickson
- *Systematic Theology* – Wayne Grudem

Systematic Theologies to avoid: Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles Ryrie, Henry Thiessen, Norman Geisler, and Thomas Oden.

Systematic Theologies to avoid containing *great* heresies: Charles Finney.

CONCLUSION

The Bible tells us that the Bereans were more noble because "they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). God's Word tells us to study "to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Interestingly enough, Scripture shows us how we are to do just that: "They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading" (Neh. 8:8). *That* is proper biblical study. *That* is exegesis. Read from God's Word; translate in order to give the sense. I hope that is what I have taught you in this chapter.

"*Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to*
Thy name give glory." **Psalm 115:1, KJV**