

Is The Rapture Biblical ?

I Thess. 4:13-18

Introduction:

Among Prophecy experts, there is probably no other topic hotly debated as the Rapture debate.

It has in some cases among some evangelicals become so critical, that churches and even seminaries have been defined by it.

Its timing was and is a fundamental tenant of Dispensational Eschatology

Many have however decided not to study the issue, because they have come to the conclusion that there is too much confusion on the issue and way too many views to be able to ascertain the truth.

The most well known of the views are

Pretribulationism

Midtribulationism

Posttribulationism

And a growing populace among evangelicals is the PreWrath view which I affirm

But most shocking is the fact that I have heard in recent years that some preachers don't believe the Bible teaches a rapture at all

In fact they would say it is not Biblical at all

This would be amazing if it true. That one of the most hotly debated issues in prophetic literature doesn't even exist. And that for all these years we have been duped into believing in an event that will not even take place.

Now I will be the first to admit that the church is not perfect and has made its errors in interpreting Scripture from time to time. But to say that the Bible does not even teach an event called the Rapture is an astounding claim.

Well as is the case with every doctrine, the best place to go to determine what is true is the Word of God.

So with that said Lets look at what the Bible says about the event.

I The Reality of the Rapture

II. The Reason for the Rapture.

Lesson

I. The Reality of the Rapture

A. I Thess. 4:13-18

Caught up

harpazó: to seize, catch up, snatch away

Original Word: ἄρπάζω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: harpazó

Phonetic Spelling: (har-pad'-zo)

Short Definition: I seize, snatch, obtain by robbery

Definition: I seize, snatch, obtain by robbery.

HELPS Word-studies

726 *harpázō* – properly, seize by force; snatch up, suddenly and decisively – like someone seizing bounty (spoil, a prize); to take by an open display of force (i.e. not covertly or secretly).

Shall Be Caught up (726) (**harpazo** from **haireō** = take, in NT only in **middle voice** = **haireomai** = to take for oneself, to choose; akin to **airo** = to raise up) means to snatch up or way, to seize or seize upon, to steal (see comparison to *klepto* below), to catch away or up, to pluck, to pull.

Harpazo means to take suddenly and vehemently, often with violence and speed or quickly and without warning. The idea is to take by force with a sudden swoop and usually indicates a force which cannot be resisted. In eschatological terms (future events, prophetically related) as in the present verse, **harpazo** refers to what is often known as the "rapture" (Latin = *raptura* = seizing or Latin = *rapio* = seize, snatch)

Harpazo thus can be translated by the verb to **rapture** which describes the act of conveying or transporting a person from one place to another or from one sphere of existence to another. The English word **rapture** can also convey the idea of ecstasy as with one who is "carried out of" oneself with joy, but that is not the primary sense conveyed by the NT usage here in 1 Thessalonians.

Harpazo is future **passive** (so called "divine passive" in this context - the action is exerted by outside divine force) **indicative** (this is the mood of certainty which describes a real event, stating that this is a future fact which we can count on!) first person plural (implying in context not just individuals but many individuals, specifically the true church composed of all the believers of the church age).

The picture of individuals being snatched up and away is seen in four NT uses (see the verses below)...

- (1) Of the act of the Spirit of the Lord snatching Phillip away ([Acts 8:39](#))
- (2) Of Paul being caught up to the third heaven (Paradise) ([2Corinthians 12:2,4](#))
- (3) Of believers being caught up to be with the Lord ([1Th 4:17-note](#))
- (4) Of the "child" (Jesus) being caught up to God ([Re 12:5-note](#))

Harpazo conveys the idea of force suddenly exercised, and also well rendered by the English verb to **snatch** (to seize, take or grasp something {someone} abruptly or hastily with emphasis on the idea of suddenness or quickness)

The related word **harpage** (724) refers to robbery, plunder or seizing of one's possessions ([Mt 23:25](#) = describing scribes and Pharisees who were "full of robbery" {greediness}, [Lk 11:39](#), [Heb 10:34](#)). The adjective **harpax** (727) is used 6 times in the NT ([Mt 7:15](#) = "ravenous {rapacious} wolves"; [Lk 18:11](#) = "swindlers", "extortionists", "embezzlers"; [1Cor 5:10](#); [5:11](#); [6:10](#) = same meaning as in [Lk 18:11](#))

The uses of **harpazo** in the Gospels refer to robbery or the unlawful snatching away of something or someone (see below - [Jn 10:12](#), [28](#), [29](#); [Mt 11:12](#); [12:29](#); [13:19](#)).

Harpazo was used of rescuing one from a situation of threatening danger as in "snatching them out of the fire" (see [Jude 1:23](#) below)

Harpazo in secular Greek was used to describe the action of a wolf which entered a flock of sheep and suddenly *snatched up* (harpazo) a lamb. (see [John 10:12](#) below)

Moulton and Milligan note that **harpazo** was often found in secular Greek in petitions complaining of robbery.

Harpazo as noted can convey the sense of "to steal" but it differs from another Greek word **klepto** (English = kleptomania {from

kleptes = thief} refers to a strong impulse to steal) referring to stealing secretly or with stealth whereas **harpazo** denotes robbing with a more violent action.

Harpazo is also used to mean forcibly to seize upon, snatch away, or take to oneself (see below [Mt 11:12](#), [John 6:15](#), [Acts 23:10](#))

Harpazo is used 13 times in the NT...

[Matthew 11:12](#) And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men **take it by force** (grasping in the sense of either resisting or laying claim to the Kingdom as their own - see comment).

Comment: This is a difficult verse to interpret and can mean that evil forces from without sought to violently seize and destroy the kingdom of God or that persons who were ready for the advent of the King responded vigorously to His announcement, "violently" seeking to enter the kingdom of God,. The latter interpretation implies the difficulty with which one enters His kingdom {cp the related passage [Luke 16:16](#) which has the second meaning.} Both interpretations indicate that John the Baptist's initial announcement of the coming King and Kingdom met with a "violent reaction" either by evil opponents or by enthusiastic supporters.

[Matthew 13:19](#) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and **snatches away** (robs, plunders, swoops in and steals away) what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

[John 6:15](#) Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and **take Him by force**, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Comment: This use of harpazo illustrates the violent nature of the seizing - here is a forcibly taking of someone.

John 10:12 He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf **snatches** them, and scatters them.

John 10:28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one **shall snatch** them out of My hand. **10:29** My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to **snatch** them out of the Father's hand.

Comment: Here harpazo underscores the believer's security in Christ, speaking of the impossibility of anyone snatching a believer out of the hands of Jesus or His Father.

Acts 8:39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **snatched** Philip **away** (from the presence of the Ethiopian eunuch and drag off to a different place); and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.

Comment: This "rapture" entails the movement from one place on earth to another, in contrast to the "rapture" in [2Cor 12:2,4](#), [1 Thes 4:17](#), [Rev 12:5](#), all of which refer to one being caught up to a supernatural world.

Acts 23:10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and **take him away from them by force**, and bring him into the barracks.

2 Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was **caught up** to the third heaven...4 was **caught up** into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (note) 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.

Jude 1:23 save others, **snatching** them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Revelation 12:5 (note) And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child **was caught up** (passive voice indicating God did the snatching) to God and to His throne. (**Comment:** This event is described in [Acts 1:9-11](#) {these verses do not use harpazo} where Jesus was taken up into the cloud).

Harpazo is used 34 times in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX) ([Ge 37:33](#); [Lev. 6:4](#); [19:13](#); [Deut. 28:31](#); [Jdg. 21:21, 23](#); [2 Sam. 23:21](#); [Job 20:19](#); [24:2, 9, 19](#); [Ps. 7:2](#); [10:9](#); [22:13](#); [50:22](#); [69:4](#); [104:21](#); [Isa. 10:2](#); [Ezek 18:7, 12, 16, 18](#); [19:3, 6](#); [22:25, 27](#); [Hos. 5:14](#); [6:1](#); [Amos 1:11](#); [3:4](#); [Mic. 3:2](#); [5:8](#); [Nah. 2:12](#)) A number of the uses of **harpazo** in the LXX translate the Hebrew word meaning to tear (*taraph*; 2963) (as of beasts of prey, tear to pieces - [Ge 37:33](#), [Ps 7:2](#), [50:22](#), [Hos 5:14](#), [6:1](#)) which brings out the violent aspect of **harpazo**. None of the LXX uses of **harpazo** convey the same sense of rapture as found here in 1 Thessalonians, although there are **two OT "raptures"**, the first of **Enoch** who "walked with God and he was not for God took him" ([Ge 5:24](#)) and the other of **Elijah** who "went up by a whirlwind to heaven" ([2Ki 2:11](#)).

Below are some representative uses of **harpazo** in the LXX...

Leviticus 6:4 then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he **took by robbery** (Hebrew = *gazal*, 1497; Lxx = *harpazo*), or what he got

by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him, or the lost thing which he found,

Job 20:19 "For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; He has **seized** (Hebrew = **gazal**, 1497; Lxx = harpazo) a house which he has not built.

Job 24:2 "Some remove the landmarks; They **seize** (Hebrew = **gazal**, 1497; Lxx = harpazo) and devour flocks... 24:9 Others **snatch** (Hebrew = **gazal**, 1497; Lxx = harpazo) the orphan from the breast, And against the poor they take a pledge.

Psalm 10:9 He (the wicked man) lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair; He lurks to **catch** (Hebrew = **chataph**, 2414; Lxx = harpazo) the afflicted; He **catches** (Hebrew = **chataph**, 2414; Lxx = harpazo) the afflicted when he draws him into his net.

To meet - This phrase indicates that the Lord will be coming from one direction and we shall be coming from another to meet together in the air! What a glorious day that will be!

Martin Luther said he only had two days on his calendar—today and “that day.”

To meet the Lord - Literally reads "into a meeting with the Lord."

B. II. Thess 2:1-3

C. I Cor 15:51-52

D. John 14:1-6

E. Matt. 24:40-42

F. Revelation 7:9-17

II. The Reason for the Rapture

A. To Escape the Day of the Lord

- "day of the LORD"

Isaiah 2:12 "For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low"

Isaiah 13:6 "Howl; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty."

Isaiah 13:9 "Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it."

Isaiah 34:8 "For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion."

Lamentations 2:22 "You have called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the LORD'S anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up has my enemy consumed."

Ezekiel 13:5 "You have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD."

Ezekiel 30:3 "For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen."

Joel 1:15 "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

Joel 2:1 "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand"

Joel 2:11 "And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executes his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

Joel 2:31 "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."

Joel 3:14 "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision."

Zachariah 14:1-8 "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half

of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yes, you shall flee, like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with you. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be."

Amos 5:18 "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light."

Amos 5:20 "Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"

Obadiah 1:15 "For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto you: thy reward shall return upon your own head."

Zephaniah 1:7 "Hold your peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he has bid his guests."

Zephaniah 1:8 "And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel."

Zephaniah 1:14 "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hurries greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly."

Zephaniah 1:18 "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

Zephaniah 2:2 "Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you."

Zephaniah 2:3 "Seek the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger."

Zechariah 14:1 "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and your spoil shall be divided in your midst."

Malachi 4:5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD"

Acts 2:20 "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come"

1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

- "day of the Lord God of hosts"

Jeremiah 46:10 "For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates."

- "day of his fierce anger"

Isaiah 13:13 "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger."

- "day of vengeance"

Proverbs 6:34 "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance."

Isaiah 61:2 "To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn"

Isaiah 63:4 "For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

- "the day cometh"

Mal 4:1 "For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

- "day of his coming"

Mal 3:2 "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? For he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap"

- "day of God"

2 Peter 3:12 "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

- "day of God Almighty"

Revelation 16:14 "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

- "day of the Lord Jesus"

1 Corinthians 5:5 "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

2 Corinthians 1:14 "As also you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."

- "day of our Lord Jesus Christ"

1 Corinthians 1:8 "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- "day of Jesus Christ"

Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"

- "day of Christ"

Philippians 1:10 "That you may approve things that are excellent; that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ"

Philippians 2:16 "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain."

2 Thessalonians 2:2 "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."

- "day of the wrath"

Ezekiel 7:19 "They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumbling block of their iniquity."

- "day of wrath"

Job 21:30 "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath."

Proverbs 11:4 "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivers from death."

Zephaniah 1:15 "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness"

Romans 2:5 "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"

- "great day of his wrath"

Rev. 6:16-17 "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

B. Romans 3:23-26

C. I Thess 5:1-9

D. Rev. 6,7,8