

Deep in Scripture

Today's Guest: Dr. Paul Thigpen,
Author of *The Rapture Trap* (Ascension Press)

Today's Scriptures: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Outline of our Discussion:

Intro: Why did you write *The Rapture Trap*?

1: Why did the Apostle Paul write the letter of 1 Thessalonians?

- Probably earliest of Paul's letters;
- Only Scripture they had was Old Testament;
- 2 Thessalonians 2:15 "oral and written" tradition;
- Paul correcting some misunderstandings of what he had taught previously, either orally or in writing.

2: What was he trying to teach in this passage in the context of the letter?

- Reassure Christians that Jesus has not already come, that He is still coming, and that those who have already died are not in danger of not meeting Him when He comes.

3: Did not most of the NT books assume that Jesus was coming soon?

- i.e., Philippians 4

4: What is the origin for the expectation of a Second Coming of Christ?

- Old and New Testament illusions to 2nd coming
- Christians called to watch, be ready

5: Where did the idea for a "secret rapture" come from?

- No reference of any belief in a secret rapture in any of the Early Church Fathers or at any time in the Church on through the time of the Reformation: none of the Reformers believed in a rapture!
- What do we mean by the "rapture"?
- If the Bible is so clear, (*sola Scriptura*) than why was this idea about a secret rapture never mentioned from the beginning of the Church for nearly 1700 years?!

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6: Does this passage teach the rapture? What does it teach?

- First, what is being referred to is hardly a secret event!

- Second, the event being referred to in this passage has parallels in other Scriptures in which even the Rapture believers admit refer to the Second Coming:
 - 1 Corinthians 15:51f: use of same terms as in 1 Thessalonians but clearly refer to Second Coming.
 - Matthew 24:30f (ibid)
- The point, throughout Church history, all commentators have interpreted these verses as referring to the Second Coming of Christ.
- The problem is people become blind to their assumptions, to how they read ideas into Scripture that they've picked up unexamined from others.
 - i.e., book "Late Great Planet Earth"; people read & accepted as true.
- People also forget or ignore the context of a passage & claim a passage means something that makes no sense in the original context.
 - i.e., Matthew 24: 37-41 (those taken up & left behind) Actually the context, "as in days of Noah," implies that those "left" behind are the good guys!

7: Discussion of Paul's book, The Rapture Trap

- Illinois Bishop's statement about false teaching on the "rapture"

8: How did rapture idea get associated with Dispensational theology (Protestant)?

- Rapture ideas began in late 1800s in England;
- This came to US & spread in revivals;
- A non-theologian named Scofield included it in the notes of his famous study Bible which caused it to be assumed true by millions of Protestant fundamentalists.
- Dispensationalism is a brand of Protestant theology that explains that God has dealt with His people differently at different time periods / dispensations of history.
- In Scofield's Bible that these two ideas became connected.
- Both are eccentric ideas.

9: What is the point of this passage for us? What is the real point of this passage?

- Verse 13 is the key: HOPE! People were losing hope and falling into despair because they had misinterpreted things St. Paul had said or because they had listened to false teachers or wandering prophets who were misrepresenting Paul's teachings. (note earlier verse 1 Thes 4:1f, calling them to continue in what they heard earlier from Paul.)
- What we know about the end of the world and about our own end should therefore shape how we now live; in other words, given all the things Paul has discussed earlier in 1 Thes we should live in holiness;
- These verses imply that we MUST remain faithful, because Paul implies that we can fall away, we can lose our salvation if we do not hold faithfully to the teachings, to hope, and to holiness.
- Pray constantly . . . everyday our lives are shaped by what we believe about our destiny.

10: How does belief in the rapture actually undercut our confidence in our future with Christ? How does it provide false hope?

11: Rapture theology undercuts any idea that suffering has value or can be redemptive.

- Rapture theology teaches that the Church will be saved from suffering the tribulation, which is exactly the opposite of what the Scriptures teach about the necessity of suffering.
- 1 Timothy 3:15 . . . reminds us to trust the Church given to us by Christ as the correct guide of Scripture!

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This week's special: The Rapture Trap, \$10 on website: www.deepinscripture.com

Also, Paul is editor of The Catholic Answer magazine.

12: Is the belief in the rapture common throughout the world or only in America?

- Because it has become so universally accepted amongst fundamentalist / dispensationalist Protestants, it has spread wherever their missionaries have gone.

13: What does this passage teach us for our lives today?

- Suffering can be redemptive! As we remain faithful through our sufferings, carry the crosses God gives us, we can have great hope that in the end we will be victorious in Christ.
- What is the purpose of Christ's Second Coming? IN the end, He will be victorious! We will be resurrected to a whole new way of life!
- 1 Corinthians 10 . . . The examples in Scripture are there to give us hope in the end, which is now, but he also reminds us that God gives us the assistance / grace to help us remain faithful in the midst of temptation / suffering.
- Two enemies to hope: despair & presumption! Don't presume that on our own efforts we have no fear!

14: 1 Corinthians 13 emphasizes the trilogy of faith, hope, and love, which he also emphasizes earlier in 1 Thessalonians 1. This emphasizes the importance of all three, What is meant here by hope?

- "Hope is that virtue that attaches us to God because we are so convinced of His character of righteousness and His love and mercy that enables us to place our whole lives in His hands. That firm anchor that is anchored in God Himself. Not a false "eternal security" which takes away any of our responsibility to be obedient to God, but which trusts our future in God.
- Hope is the conviction of who God is in His character.
- If you are suffering or in despair, reach out to God! He is our Hope!

Next Week's Scriptures: Matthew 2:1-23