



### ***The Whole Word of God on the Rapture***

*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*

— Deuteronomy 29:29

There is a unique caveat as to the reason God’s prophetic Word can only be truly understood by Holy Spirit-filled believers, and that is to motivate them to put the **whole** Bible into practice, not just the parts we’re interested in. That so many Christians don’t grasp the importance of studying and being obedient to the whole Word of God is evident in the vast numbers with a thirst for a weekly “prophecy update” versus so few who are primarily concerned with pursuing righteousness. The only way to truly begin to understand the prophetic portions of God’s Word is to first be thoroughly grounded in the whole of Scripture; it is impossible to understand the advanced without a proper foundation in the fundamentals.

I have observed this phenomenon in the ministry of a personal friend, Marco Quintana, who pastors a small local church which streams and records all of his sermons to YouTube. On Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings he provides excellent expositional teaching from the body of God’s Word. Although his church’s on-site membership is less than 100, within a month each of these sermons will have been viewed on average by about 300 people. That is remarkable to me, one of the positive things about the way the Internet can multiply his audience. But on Thursday evenings he provides a prophecy update which is often attended by more than 100 people online during the live streaming session, and a month after that on average it will have been viewed by 900 people. The majority forgo his expositional teachings which overwhelmingly focuses on righteousness and faithfulness in favor of all things prophetic in God’s Word.

Now I’m quite sure these people have a personal burden that the Lord’s return is near and therefore want to be ready for His return, but the truth is that Marco’s expositional teachings will get them far closer to that goal than the prophecy update alone. I’m not saying prophecy isn’t important, but must be prioritized in the believer’s daily study of His Word so as to not just produce someone ready for the Lord’s return, but who then properly understand what Scripture teaches in a prophetic setting.

This is why, although I’m going to discuss the Rapture, the number one obsession of End Times enthusiasts, I want to point out that this study approach is what I regularly use for all topics and terms. Because those who over-focus on prophecy alone tend to obsess over just one or two passages when it comes to End Times things such as the Rapture, they fail to apply **all** that the Word of God reveals about the subject. Just as I would survey the whole Bible to discuss how the Holy Spirit or some doctrinal issue works, the same approach needs to be pursued here.

## What Does “Taken” Mean?

*“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup>For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup>and they did not understand until the flood came and **took them all away**; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>40</sup>Then there will be two men in the field; one will be **taken** and one will be left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be **taken** and one will be left.*

— Matthew 24:37-41

There are many authors, scholars, and website operators who assert that if the unbelievers in Noah’s day were taken away, then the examples in v.40-41 who are taken are also unbelievers. They derive this from the way English Bible translators employ what appears to be the same word in either case.

First of all, Jesus quoted this text weeks or perhaps no more than a few months earlier. In the Olivet Discourse Christ is answering a question His disciples posed to Him, but in Luke 17 He responds in kind to a different question put to Him by the Pharisees. (Lk. 17:20) But look at what He says about the days of Noah in this earlier teaching.

*<sup>26</sup>“And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup>they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and **destroyed them all**.*

— Luke 17:26-27

By simply checking God’s Word, we have the true meaning of what it means in Matthew 24 as to what “taken” means for unbelievers when compared to what took place in the Flood. So doesn’t that mean the other examples of those “taken” mean they are destroyed and believers are the ones left safely behind? This is where proper students of God’s Word need to dig a little deeper into the original Greek.

In Matthew 24:39 for Noah’s day, the Greek word for “took” is “airo” (Strong’s #142). This is the equivalent in English when “took” means “removed”. Jesus uses this same word to describe what happens to the bad branches when providing the metaphor of Himself as the Vine:

*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He **takes away**; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.*

— John 15:2

It is also the term used to describe how the stone covering the entrance to Jesus’ tomb was removed:

*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already **taken away** from the tomb.*

— John 20:1

“Airo” is the equivalent to one of the meanings of the English word “taken” when it means “removed”.

But in Matthew 24:40-41, the underlying Greek term for those suddenly “taken” is “*paralambano*” (Strong’s #3880). For the original audience who were fluent in Greek, these two words don’t even sound alike and could never be mistaken for each other in the same way as the English language. “*Paralambano*” is used more than 40 times in the New Testament and always means “one person taking another person or persons to himself”.

*Six days later **Jesus took with Him** Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves.*

— Matthew 17:1

*As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, **He took the twelve disciples aside** by themselves, and on the way He said to them,*

— Matthew 20:17

*They began laughing at Him. But putting them all out, **He took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions**, and entered the room where the child was.*

— Mark 5:40

These are but a few of the examples where “taken” or “took” exclusively describes one person taking another person to him. Greek readership would have unquestioningly understood that it was unbelievers in Noah’s day who were “taken” or removed”, and that those suddenly “taken” were being Raptured so as to be taken unto Christ personally. We see this when Scripture describes the Rapture as meeting Jesus in the air.

## **The Great Meeting**

*And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL **GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.*

— Matthew 24:31

The Olivet Discourse also describes the Rapture as the “*episunagoge*” (Strong’s #1996). This describes an assembly or gathering of people and is the source for the word “synagogue”. It describes how the Rapture will take the entire Church to meet Christ in a single flash of the eye.

Now, wait a minute. How can the Rapture be “*paralambano*”—taking each of us individually unto the Lord, and simultaneously “*episunagoge*”—taking the entire Body of Christ at the same time? It seems contradictory. These are two views ***of the same thing***.

Whereas Christ has promised each of us individually that He will rescue us, He has promised to rescue the whole Church as well. “*Paralambano*” is the fulfillment of the individual promise, “*episunagoge*” the fulfillment to the whole group. This provides a sort

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of guide from here on out, that sometimes Scripture addresses the individual perspective of the Rapture and at other times the group viewpoint, but they **are** one and the same event and **do not** conflict with each other. **Both** are referring to the same divine extraction.

### **The Apostle Paul's Terms**

*<sup>16</sup>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 will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive and remain will be **caught up together** with them in the clouds **to meet** the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*

— 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit to expand our understanding of the group perspective by describing the act itself as a “*harpazo*” (Strong’s #726). It literally means “to snatch violently away”. This is a parallel to the Olivet Discourse when the Rapture is described as taking place, “*as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west.*” (Mt. 24:27) This is another aspect which describes the suddenness by which this event takes place.

But Paul also enhances our understanding of “*episunagoge*” by using the term “*apantesis*” (Strong’s #529) for “*meet*”. This means “to meet coming from different directions” as in “*from the east...even to the west.*” (Mt. 24:27) Paul’s terms are not a replacement of those used by Christ, but an enhancement to our understanding of them. The Holy Spirit provides two more characteristics to broaden our understanding of what will take place.

### **Revelation's Term**

When we arrive at Revelation, we once again find the usage of “*harpazo*”.

*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** to God and to His throne.*

— Revelation 12:5

This shows how Christ’s rapture is our rapture and that the term can be applied to both the individual and group viewpoints.

There are two additional descriptions provided in Revelation: “*erchomai*” (Strong’s #2064) and “*therismos*” (Strong’s #2326)

*<sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”*

*<sup>14</sup>I said to him, “My lord, you know.”*

*And he said to me, “These are the ones who **come out** of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

— Revelation 7:13-14

“*Erchomai*” is used in Revelation to show the perspective of being called out of the “*great tribulation*”, which is the fulfillment of Christ’s promise that “*for the sake of the elect those*

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days will be cut short.” (Mt. 24:22) This is yet another aspect to the earthly viewpoint of the Rapture of the whole Body of Christ.

*<sup>14</sup>Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. <sup>15</sup>And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because **the harvest** of the earth is ripe.” <sup>16</sup>Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

— Revelation 14:14-16

In Revelation 14, we see a reversal of the position of Christ from the Olivet Discourse. Whereas in both cases He is seated in the clouds and He was previously viewed from earth, here we see the same thing as viewed from heaven. The divine perspective views the Rapture as a “*therismos*” or “*harvest*”.

This description of the first harvest of the faithful and the second harvest of the unfaithful conforms to the teaching of John the Baptist at the outset of Christ’s earthly ministry.

*“His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

— Matthew 3:12

These two terms represent both the earthly and heavenly observations of the same event rather than referring to different things. It enhances our understanding of the Rapture by designating precisely when it will take place (when God chooses to cut short the “*great tribulation*” for the elect) , and that after the first harvest or removal of the faithful, the second harvest of the unfaithful who are left behind is described as being placed into “*the great wine press of the wrath of God.*” (Rev. 14:19) Notice how this further reinforces the difference between those who experience “*airo*”—those removed for judgment, and those who experience “*paralambano*”—those who are brought to Christ personally.

### **The Rest of the Study**

This is really only the basics of studying God’s Word for the topic of the Rapture; this is just the launching pad, so to speak. The next step would be to examine all the different usages of these terms throughout the whole of God’s Word. This even applies to the Old Testament using the Greek Septuagint to show how “*paralambano*”, “*episunagoge*”, “*apantesis*”, “*harpazo*”, “*erchomai*”, and “*therismos*” are truly defined by God’s Word.

For instance, the act of Paul’s rescue from a brawl that broke out among the Pharisees and Sadducees is described as a “*harpazo*”.

*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.*

— Acts 23:10

When we have fully studied **every** context in which each of these key terms are used—in other words, when we study the **whole** counsel of God’s Word and do not limit ourselves

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exclusively to His prophetic Word, we experience the assurance of possessing the whole knowledge of God revealed on the subject of the Rapture.

Our next step would then be to examine all the examples of a rapture, rescue, or escape in order to understand what does and does not apply to either our personal removal or that of the group. By no means is this an exhaustive list, but here are the things we might begin with first:

- ✓ The rapture of Enoch (Gen. 5:24)
- ✓ The rescue of Lot (Gen. 19)
- ✓ The rescue of Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 15)
- ✓ The rapture of Elijah (2 Ki. 2)
- ✓ The experiences of Ezekiel (Eze. 3:12; 3:14; 8:3)
- ✓ The experience of Isaiah (Is. 6)
- ✓ The experience of Zechariah and his visions
- ✓ Peter's supernatural escape from prison (Acts 5)
- ✓ The rapture of Philip (Acts 8)
- ✓ The rapture of Paul (2 Co. 12)
- ✓ The rapture of John (Rev. 4)
- ✓ The rapture of the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11)

There is certainly a lot more scriptural ground to be covered when it comes to investigating that which may enhance our understanding of the Rapture and that which does not apply. As we prayerfully meditate on the whole counsel of God's Word, we will become confident in what God has spoken on the subject and immediately recognize when something or someone deviates from Scripture.

There is much confusion on this topic because, first of all, only one or two terms for the Rapture will become the centerpiece for a teaching to the exclusion of all the other terms, and second of all because of a failure to study all of the raptures, rescues, and escapes provided throughout the Bible. Never base your theology on a single verse or term.

## ***In Conclusion***

One of the most interesting aspects of Christ overseeing the harvest from the clouds in Revelation 14 is that it confirms we cannot know the day or the hour of the Rapture, something reserved by the Father alone.

*"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.  
— Mark 13:32*

Notice that although He is seated and ready in the cloud, He still awaits the final word from the Father to commence the harvest.

*<sup>14</sup>Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. <sup>15</sup>And another angel*

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***came out of the temple**, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for **the hour to reap has come**, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." <sup>16</sup>Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

— Revelation 14:14-16

And yet, Revelation 7 reveals the specific time frame when this event will take place, when for the sake of the elect the "great tribulation" is cut short. (Rev. 7:14) Neither of these pieces of information contradict any portion of Scripture, but rather refine our biblical understanding and hone our insight into the Rapture. We clearly have a standard by which we can reject all date-setters' claims based on Scripture.

If we pursued the study of what the whole counsel of God's Word speaks on any given subject—especially those prophetically connected—it wouldn't result in just a clearer understanding of a topic such as the rapture, but expand our biblical understanding of **everything** which is taught in the **whole** of Scripture.

In Him,

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