

Truths about Rapture (2)

Douglas W. Cho, DRS

*[Genesis 5:21-24] Enoch lived sixty-five years and begot Methuselah. 22 After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years and had sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for **God took him**.*

*[Hebrews 11:5] By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because **God had taken him**”; for before he was taken, he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

3. Enoch’s Rapture

Bible testifies that Enoch, who was Methuselah’s father, was a righteous man who pleased God’s heart because he walked with Him. God translated this righteous person from earth to heaven so that his body could not be found on earth. Enoch was the first person recorded in the Bible that God moved from earth to heaven without dying. The reason for God taking Enoch away from this pre-flood world to heaven is not recorded in Genesis. However, the Ancient Book of Jasher records details of Enoch’s rapture (translation). We will examine how Enoch’s rapture occurred and compare the mode of his rapture with other raptures that occur later. We will also draw conclusions from the study of the three biblically recorded rapture events to come to a correct understanding about the coming rapture of the New Testament church when the Lord returns near the end times.

A. Records of Enoch’s rapture in Bible and Jasher

I believe the writer of the Book of Hebrews must have been familiar with the Book of Jasher. He must have read the record about Enoch’s rapture event in Jasher before writing Hebrews 11:5 because Jasher records the post-rapture search for his body by the people who had watched him being taken up. That is why Hebrews 11:5 says, “and was not found, because God had taken him.” Genesis testifies that Enoch was with God [Gen 5:24] and he had the testimony of walking with God.

Here, we come to wonder why God took him away to heaven. Although Bible does not use the word ‘rapture,’ “God took him.” When we read the account of Enoch’s translation, that is, of his body being taken from earth to heaven, we find no indication that he died physiologically or that his rapture (translation) occurred instantaneously. It is cumbersome to introduce the entire account here. Instead, we summarize what happened during Enoch’s rapture as below:

- 1) While Enoch was teaching the leaders of the people, an angel from heaven came and notified Enoch of God’s plan to take him up to heaven so that he could rule the sons of God in heaven as he had been ruling over the sons of men on earth.
- 2) Having heard of God’s rapture plan of himself, Enoch relayed it to the people who were present. Then, he instructed them how to serve God faithfully using the knowledge and wisdom of God. At this time there came a horse from heaven which would be used for Enoch to ride on at the time of the coming rapture.
- 3) Some 800,000 people journeyed with Enoch toward the rapture site and Enoch was taken up to heaven riding on the horse in a whirlwind on the seventh day.
- 4) The leaders of the people ordered an extensive search of the areas near the rapture site to look for his body or any of the possibly dead people of the witnessing crowd. The result of this post-rapture search yielded no findings.

Enoch was taken up to be with God in heaven in his 365th year. His forefathers all lived to be over 900 years old. So, we may say that he was taken away from the earth at a prime age when he could have ruled the earth as their king for a few more centuries. Jasher records the angel’s message to Enoch that he was taken up so that he could rule the sons of God in heaven as he had been doing on earth. From this account, we come to know that the

wise men of God who are faithful in teaching and ruling God's children here on earth will be given appropriate offices in heaven with responsibilities of governing territories in the heavenly kingdom. Lord Jesus spoke the parable of minas in Luke 19 where the faithful servants who have multiplied what the master has given them will be given the authority of governance of several towns, whether in heaven or on earth during the millennial kingdom. Enoch was given such a privilege before the great flood, perhaps the kingdom of heaven needed his faithful and wise service.

[Luke 19:15-18] "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' 17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' 18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' 19 Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

B. Enoch's rapture was an informed, anticipated event

God's plan to translate Enoch was told to Enoch himself, who then spread the news to his people that he would go to God. Enoch did not doubt that this rapture would take place and wanted to spend the short time given to him, of which length he did not have any idea because we do not read that the angel might have told him when the rapture would take place, in the most profitable way possible by instructing the people he was responsible for as their king about the way of God and conveying God's wisdom and knowledge as much as possible. Thus, Enoch's rapture was not a sudden, unanticipated event like the description of the supposed future rapture as given in the movie "Left Behind." Enoch believed the word of God conveyed to him by an angel and the people wanted to witness the event although they may not have believed it entirely. Also, the rapture events of the prophet Elijah and Lord Jesus all were anticipated events that the persons to be raptured and their acquaintances knew in advance.

This characteristic of the biblically recorded rapture events is very much like the event of how Noah and his family as well as all of the pairwise animals that came to the ark entered the ark before the commencement of the great flood according to God's instruction. Noah did not know when the flood would commence or how the flood would occur. What is recorded in Genesis was known after the flood, that is after Noah experienced this divine catastrophe that pervaded the entire earth. Just as Noah did not know the exact date and time of the coming catastrophe until he was told by God of His planned timing [Genesis 7:4], Enoch did not know on what day God would take him up to heaven although he was journeying to a destination with a large crowd of people accompanying him. He knew, however, that the event was imminent.

The coming rapture of New Testament Christians will likewise be known in advance, both to the called as well as their families and close acquaintances. Those who are called by God to be raptured will be given a time, perhaps for a few days or hours, to proclaim the gospel message to non-believers. This will be a kind act of grace by God to the unbelieving world. Just as Lot's sons-in-law did not believe his warning and invitation to flee from the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, most non-believers will ignore or even despise our pleas to believe Jesus Christ and thus avoid the coming destruction. After we are raptured, then, they will simply downplay the significance of the global divine act of God by saying, "Oh, they probably disappeared to some retreats and will be back soon."

C. Enoch's rapture was witnessed by a great crowd

The ascension rapture event of Lord Jesus was witnessed by at least eleven disciples of Jesus. The rapture event of Elijah was witnessed by Elisha, who was right next to Elijah when he was lifted off the ground, as well as fifty other disciples across River Jordan, perhaps 100 meters away. In the case of Enoch's rapture, a huge crowd of 800,000 began the journey toward a destination together with Enoch. Enoch pleaded with them to go home because they may get hurt or even die during his rapture event. Enoch had no idea how the rapture would occur because he had no reference to any prior similar event. However, the people wanted to witness their king's

departure with their own eyes and no one left him. In the end, Jasher records that all 800,000 got to witness the remarkable rapture event when Enoch was taken by God while riding on a chariot provided by God, in a whirlwind.

When we are raptured, our unbelieving family and friends will want to witness our rapture and record the event with their cell phones. Some media channel reporters will be at some of the planned rapture sites. The Christian rapture will be a huge global news event. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social networks will carry millions of pictures and video clips of witnessed rapture scenes all over the world. Even then, most unbelievers will not come to repentance but will choose to openly express their disbelief and contempt toward God by spreading all kinds of wicked conjectures and rumors. Big Techs will likely delete postings of true rapture scenes as fake and censor any discussions of the rapture miracle but the news will be too amazing for them to block the spread. The wave of impact from having seen the rapture scenes will spread like a tsunami throughout the world and many will come to believe.

D. The post-rapture search yielded no dead bodies

The leaders of the people left behind after Enoch's rapture wanted to make sure that no one of the huge crowd or Enoch himself died during the rapture event. They ordered an extensive search of the neighboring areas including digging into the ground. However, this search effort yielded no dead or live bodies buried in surrounding areas. They conducted this search because of their unbelief and suspicion although some 800,000 people watched with their own eyes while Enoch was being lifted and disappear into heaven in a whirlwind. They might have thought, perhaps the force of gravity has pulled him down and dropped him nearby, or perhaps they might have seen an image that was not real but what had been conjured up through a magic power instead of the divine power.

Similarly, as the Christian rapture plan is known in advance by the angels, innumerable crowds will gather at the planned rapture sites by locality and watch the scenes of the called Christians being lifted from where they are standing and disappear into the clouds. But then, the disciples of Satan will spread false rumors such as, "We all have been deceived. Aliens came and abducted these people into their spacecraft," or "The rapture scenes had been concocted using computer graphics, so we shall see them return home within a few days or weeks." The so-called experts and false religious leaders will voice their warped views on God's great miracle, which they just witnessed with their own eyes, and the unbelieving people will come to believe that this event was the greatest hoax in the history of mankind. There will even be people who profess to have been abducted into alien spacecraft and now come back. Such views and testimonies will be aired day in and day out until most people will forget the event as a bygone Christian hoax. Satan will be very diligent to deceive people once again.

But, if you are reading this sermon as one of those left behind after the Christian rapture miracle, remember that what God does is always truthful, with no deceiving, no falsehood, and no revoking. Lord Jesus comes in the clouds with His angels to bring up His faithful believers to the clouds and He will then lead them to heaven where God the Father and the heavenly family will welcome this great throng, the great harvest of centuries of faithful labor by all true servants of God. God does not require any spaceship or artificial intelligence in performing the miraculous harvesting of His faithful people from the earth, even from all the graves of the faithful dead. He does not need to use any chicanery as if His power is short. God is all-powerful and the prophecies about the coming rapture will be fulfilled exactly as spoken. The angels told the disciples of Lord Jesus, "He will come back just as you saw Him going to heaven." You who are left behind! Do not be deceived by the antichrist and false prophets who will attempt to negate the truthfulness and historicity of the rapture miracle and warp the true nature of God's great work. However, that will be like trying to block the sun's bright light with the palm of a hand. It won't work.

4. Misconceptions about Rapture

Through the past two lessons, we examined the manner of the raptures of the three persons God called from earth to heaven, namely Enoch before the great flood, the prophet Elijah and Lord Jesus. From these lessons, we gained an insight into how the coming Christian rapture will occur. I hope this exercise will give you readers sound

reasons for rectifying some of the wrong ideas you have had about the rapture in the end times. Here, let us examine the common misunderstandings that most people, particularly here in America, have about the end time rapture and gain correct understanding based on biblical reasoning.

The most egregious error that most people have about the coming rapture event is that it will occur 'instantaneously.' The concept of 'instantaneous rapture' is that the Christians will be caught up to heaven in an instant without warning, without anticipation, and without anyone knowing of its happening in advance. Like most Christians I also had this wrong concept of the rapture, which had been formed based on the teaching of my church, reading the book 'Left Behind' series by Pastor LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins as well as viewing the movie, 'Left Behind.' However, certain doubts about the biblical truths of this instantaneous rapture concept kept troubling me and I decided to do a thorough study on this question just to prove or disapprove of the biblical veracity of this concept.

After about a year of diligent biblical research and prayerful meditations, I came to be convinced that the instantaneous rapture concept is unbiblical in several ways. Pastor LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins must have made fortunes from their copyrights of the book series and the video series. But, they caused explosive public interest and sales of the books and video series using highly unbiblical concepts about the divine plan of God harvesting the New Testament Christian church. Now, let us examine why the instantaneous rapture concept is biblical wrong.

A. Instantaneous rapture has never happened historically

Through the past two studies, we have come to know that all three biblically recorded rapture events of Enoch, Elijah, and Lord Jesus were known in advance by the persons to be raptured as well as their disciples and the subjects in case of Enoch. Upon the cognizance of their imminent raptures, each of these men prepared for the event and took a journey toward the designated rapture site. Also, the manner of their being lifted upward was not instantaneous but took at least a minute or longer. Another key difference from how LaHaye and Jenkins describe the rapture scene is that, whereas the Christians all disappear suddenly leaving behind all of their clothing including socks and shoes, the three biblically recorded raptures describe them moving up with their clothes on. The witnesses saw these scenes with their own eyes and recorded the events in the Bible. These recorded events were never an instantaneous, unexpected, sudden event that left the people bewildered and confused.

The apostle Paul prophesied that the faithful dead believers in their graves will first be resurrected and lifted to the clouds. This will be followed by the living Christians. When the last trumpet sounds, "we shall all be changed in the twinkling of an eye." This last description indicates the instantaneous nature of our body's transformation into the resurrected bodies. However, nowhere do we see any expression such as "we will all be lifted to the clouds in the twinkling of an eye" or any other similar instantaneous translation of our bodies from earth to the air. The 'last trumpet' indicates that the angels will blow the trumpets a few times to transmit the Lord's commands during the rapture miracle, first to call, then to assemble, and finally to bring up and transform the Christians as they are lifted into the clouds where they will be meeting with their Bridegroom, Lord Jesus.

*[1 Corinthians 15: 50-53] Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

The key point that we must carefully distinguish is to what process 'in the twinkling of an eye' ought to be applied to describe the manner. Is it the entire rapture process that is to be instantaneous or only the bodily transformation at the last trumpet? A careful reading of the scripture points to the latter understanding as to the correct hermeneutics. Examination of Paul's second prophesy about the rapture also does not indicate any instantaneous nature of the rapture process:

*[1 Thessalonians 4: 14-18] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 **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. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

We know that we will hear the shout of an archangel and the trumpet sound when the Lord descends from heaven to the clouds. This will be the first trumpet sound of calling. Thus we will know that we are to be raptured and will need to get ready for our departure. At the designated time, the dead in Christ will be raised from their graves to the clouds. This will be followed by the rapture of those Christians who are still living. At the designated time and place we will be lifted, while our families and friends are watching. And this miraculous event will not be sudden, unanticipated, but will be known in advance, prepared, and informed so that those who are left behind will have shocking remembrances of what they have witnessed and will be persuaded to come to Jesus Christ in repentance.

B. Divine acts of rapture never brought a disaster or harm to the world left behind

LaHaye and Jenkins' book 'Left Behind' describes how over a hundred passengers suddenly disappear during a trans-Atlantic flight. It then leads to the revealing of a global disaster that spans all continents that occur because of the sudden disappearance of millions of Christians. Many aircraft suddenly plunge to the ground because their pilots disappeared. Vehicles collide and cause innumerable pileups of wrecked cars because their drivers suddenly disappear. And there occur many other types of disasters because people who are in the middle of their duties, often critical, disappear without any remedial actions. In the process, millions of unbelieving, innocent people lose their lives and an astronomical amount of physical, financial, and human losses occur because of this sudden, unexpected disaster, supposedly caused by God.

A careful study of the three biblically recorded rapture events, however, shows that there was no human or physical loss or damage as a result of any of the rapture events. Only in the case of Enoch's rapture, due to the great number of the witnessing crowd, there was a concern for any human loss. Because of this concern, the leaders conducted a thorough search of the areas surrounding the rapture site, but it yielded no dead or wounded bodies, either of Enoch or any of the crowd. As such, God will not leave behind any losses to the world after His great harvest work of bringing together His faithful children from the earth. LaHaye and Jenkins, because of their ignorance of how God works, describes the great plan of God as a global disaster caused by God inflicting astronomically large human, physical and financial losses. They owe a serious apology and repentance before God.

C. Instantaneous rapture idea brings bad reputation to Christians

Now, let us suppose that you are an unbeliever and your parents were killed because the airplane they were on crashed and all aboard the plane died because both the pilot and copilot were raptured during the flight. This sudden loss of your parents would most likely cause you to hold the Christian pilots of the aircraft responsible for the deaths of all passengers and the crew. Yes, you would be caused to express your hard feelings toward the pilots. And quite likely, your hard feelings could extend to all raptured Christians for having caused the astronomically huge magnitude of disasters all over the world. And you would very likely hold your grievance against God and come to hate Him for causing this global disaster. Why?

Do you think God will perform His great harvest action in a way to cause the unbelieving world to hate His children? That certainly would not be God's good plan. God is good in all ways He does His work. When He demonstrates His wrath on sinners, the disaster He causes is fully justified. That He will do in the final days of His wrath, which is coming, but not during the rapture event, which is a joyful harvest time. The instantaneous rapture as described by LaHaye and Jenkins is an entirely wrong description of how God does His work.

Christian pilots in the middle of operating an aircraft will hear the first trumpet sound and the archangel's shout of calling them to the imminent rapture event. They will hear the Lord's command to hurry and to make ready for the rapture that would happen in a few days. Upon hearing this command, they will safely land the

aircraft at a nearby airport, notify the airline office that they would not be able to work any longer, return home in the quickest way, and tell their families about the Lord's call. Their believing family members also must have heard the Lord's call. The families will prepare for the imminent rapture in a prayerful spirit. When they hear the second trumpet sound, they will travel to the designated rapture site, where hundreds or thousands of fellow Christians and their unbelieving families and friends are gathered. The resounding hymn singing by all gathered Christians will be very moving and touching the hearts of those unbelievers who are present at the rapture site. When some of them repent and confess Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they will also hear the call of rapture.

When the last trumpet sounds, all Christians who are gathered at the rapture site, whether it is a stadium, a field, or a riverside, or a hilltop, will be lifted toward the clouds while the unbelieving crowd is watching and taking photos. Many will come to repentance on that day. And they will be the left-behind people who must need to go through the tribulation period.

In conclusion, let us forsake the wrong concept we have held about the coming Christian rapture miracle. Instead, let us look forward to that joyful day in living hope, reverent godliness, and true faithfulness. Let us speak our hope for this glorious event of being raptured to be with our dear Lord to all we know so that others may join in our living hope. Amen.