

## “Rapture,” History Through 2,000 Years

*the imminent return of Jesus*

In 10 different centuries before Darby.

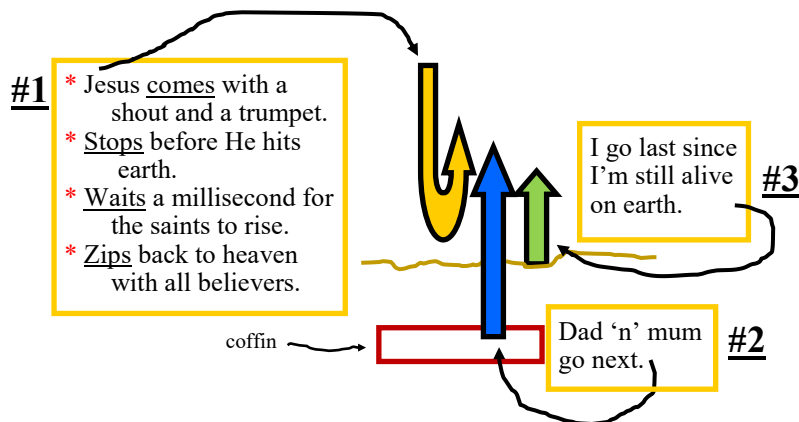
Here is a refutation of the present position of anti-Rapture theologians of the 21st century,

**“RAPTURE” (ITS HISTORY): A TRUTH NOT MADE WIDELY CLEAR UNTIL THE PROPER TIME.** *P. Myers*

*I paraphrase the Amillennial viewpoint from many reformed writers.*

*“There is no record of pre-millennial teaching about a removal of the Church before John Darby taught it in the mid-19th century.” nonsense*

This is the “secret” Rapture of the Church. “The quick & the dead”



- 1st century: Jesus explained to James’ and John’s mother that there would be an actual Messianic Kingdom. ([Matt 20:20-23](#)), her request for her boys to sit on thrones beside Jesus was not denied on the ground that she had a mistaken idea of the kingdom, but rather that the privilege she requested was to be given to those chosen by the Father. Again Christ the night before His rejection and crucifixion told His disciples that they would sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the Kingdom. ([Luke 22.29,30](#)). However, Jesus said nothing about the Church nor the Rapture of the Church.

In [Acts 1:6.7](#), when the disciples wanted to know when the kingdom was going to be restored to Israel, they were not told that they were in error, that the kingdom would never be restored to Israel, but only that it was not for them to know the “times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” Kingdom? Yes. Rapture? No.

- 1st century: Paul explained the Rapture, *catching up*, clearly in AD 51, and used the word **harpazo αρπαζω**, *to be snatched way* as the descriptive term. I Thes 4.13-18
- 1st century: Pre-millennialism had thrived until about 300 AD, concerning a literal Kingdom with the Messiah on earth
- 1st century: Peters in his classic work, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, cites no less than 15 advocates of premillennialism in the first century.
- 1st century: “This testimony unites in one river of evidence that the theology of the Old and New Testament and the theology of the early church was not only premillennial, but that its premillennialism was practically undisputed except by heretics and skeptics until the time of Augustine.” *John Walvoord*
- 1st century: 1,000-year literal Kingdom on earth (Rev. 20), apostle John’s writings were spread by his disciple Polycarp.
- 1st & 2nd centuries: After the time of the apostles, a number of writings indicate belief in the imminence of Christ’s return, which is consistent with pre-tribulationism.
  - Clement of Rome (35-101)
  - Ignatius of Antioch (died 110)
  - The Didache (a late first-century anonymous Christian treatise)
  - The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (circa 70-130)
  - The Shepherd of Hermas (2nd century) all reference Christ’s imminent return.

Paul

15 in 1st cent

Undisputed

Apostle John

Clement  
Ignatius  
Didache

*Ep. Pseudo-Barnabas*  
*Shepherd of Hermas*

- [2nd century](#): It appears that [Irenaeus of Lyon](#) (120-202 AD) was a pre-tribulationist. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp (who was a disciple of the apostle John). Irenaeus
- [4th century](#): [Victorinus of Petrovium](#) (304 AD) was a bishop in modern Slovenia, martyred during Diocletian’s reign. In his commentary on Revelation (6:14), he writes, “The heaven withdrew as a scroll that is rolled up. For the heaven to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away.” Petrovium
- [4th & 5th century](#): Admittedly, the influence of [Origen and Augustine](#) was successful in turning the established premillennial view to a belief in amillennialism by around the fifth century.
- [5th century](#): In a sermon entitled *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World*, Syrian church father [Pseudo-Ephraem](#) wrote, “For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the Tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.” The *gathering* Pseudo-Ephraem mentions appears to refer to a pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church. Pseudo-Ephraem
- [7 centuries, much silence](#): For many years those who continued to hold to a literal Kingdom theology were at odds with the RCC and were banned or sometimes persecuted. They were not published widely so as to avoid persecution. The churches went underground and along with it dispensational teaching.
- [14th century](#): the [Apostolic Brethren](#) in northern Italy. This new (and thus, persecuted) ecclesiastical order eventually numbered in the thousands and evidently held a pre-tribulation Rapture position. In 1316, an anonymous treatise entitled *The History of Brother Dolcino* articulated some of the beliefs of the Apostolic Brethren. Their leader, Brother Dolcino, believed he and his followers would be taken to heaven and protected from the actions of the Antichrist before later descending back to earth, thus holding to a belief in a pre-tribulation Rapture and return of Christ for His Body the Church. Apostolic Brethren  
*History of Brother Dolcino*
- [16th century](#): 1590, the term Rapture, **harpazo ἁρπαζω** = “snatched up or carried away,” seems to be first used by RC priest, [Francisco](#) to refer to believers being taken out of the earth 45 days before the end of a 3 1/2 year Tribulation. Francisco
- [17th century](#): Boston Puritan [Increase Mather](#) (1639-1723) [*father of Cotton Mather*] wrote, “When Christ comes, Believers shall see the King. . .in all his Glory, and shall go with him to the Land that is very far off. Heaven is the Land that is very far off. Christ has assured believers it shall be thus, John 14.2. . . . He will not go back to Heaven and leave them behind him. No, they shall sit with him in Heavenly places . . .[later] they shall come down from Heaven. . . . They shall be with him when he comes to Judge the World.” Increase Mather
- [17th century](#): the same term, **harpazo** was used by the Puritans’ [Cotton Mather](#), [*President of Harvard*] to refer to the “catching up” of believers prior to the Tribulation. Cotton Mather
- [18th century](#): [Morgan Edwards](#) (1722-1795) helped found Rhode Island College, which eventually became Brown University. While a student at Bristol Baptist Seminary, he set forth a very clear pre-tribulation Rapture belief: Morgan Edwards refers to a pre-Trib exodus, 1788. Morgan Edwards
- [19th century](#): Jesuit priest [Manuel Lacunza](#), pre-Tribulation leaning, 1812. Manuel Lacunza

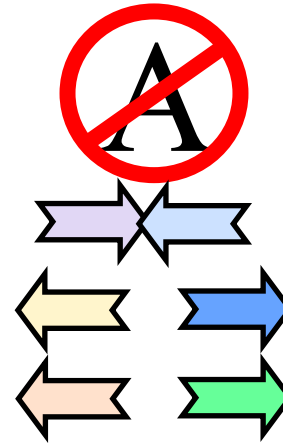
- 19th century: John Darby preached continuously about a pre-Trib Exodus of believers and called it the Rapture of the Church universal. He is the Father of Dispensationalism as we understand it today and by 1836 published his writings, among them *Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant*.  
Darby was one of the first to preach widely about Progressive Revelation, i.e. = Dispensational teaching.

Darby

- The bulwark of his teaching was to proclaim the:

**Four (4) Distinctives to Use When Interpreting Futuristic Portions of the Scripture**

see below.



Darby's 4 Principles  
for understanding  
The Revelation!

**Reject**  
Allegorical  
Interpretation

**Marry**  
Daniel & Revelation

**Separate**  
Israel & Church

**Separate**  
Rapture & 2nd Coming

- 19th century: 1878, Dispensationalism gets a big boost at Niagara Bible Conference.  
Book *Jesus is Coming* eventually sold a million copies.
- 20th century: Darby's "secret rapture" been accepted by most conservative, evangelical churches.
- 20th century: the publication of the *Scofield reference Bible*, 1909, containing extensive notes supporting the Dispensational teaching of Darby leads to sales of 2 million copies [first 20 years]
- 20th century: publication of Clarence Larkin's, *Dispensational Truth: God's Plan and Purpose for the Ages* (1918), 118 charts (much conjecture and extrapolation in my opinion).
- 21st century: Today, Dispensational teaching has been widely embraced by American Christianity.  
Pre-Millennial/Pre-Trib, teaching is on the rise internationally.  
*It is also true that Reformed theology's Amillennialism is also growing.*

I'll have to admit that one of the most persistent and troubling questions asked is, "Why do you believe that this system of theology, *Dispensationalism*, hadn't been revealed to God's sharpest thinkers until Darby?"

**Great question.**

**Short answer:** I don't know. I was saved and raised in a church with strong Reformation theology. Leaders accepted the literal reading of the Revelation and rejected the allegorical practice of the Reformation fathers.

Attempted explanation.

**"RAPTURE: A TRUTH NOT MADE WIDELY CLEAR UNTIL THE PROPER TIME."** P. Myers

- A. The "Why did God?" kind of questions are almost always difficult to answer from Scripture.
- \* Why does God love us?
  - \* Why did He take 6 days to Create the world instead of just one day?
  - \* Why did He choose Israel?
  - \* Why doesn't He give unbelievers a second chance, like Purgatory?

\* . . .and our question at hand - Why didn't the Rapture of the Church become widely known until the 19th century after the Church was created?

- B. The overarching answer to each of these many, many questions is evidently summed up in the phrase  
"He hath done all things for His own Glory."

So I give my own opinion. Let me paint a little picture.

1 The Bible is dramatically different from all other religious literature in that it makes many hundreds of predictions about future Messianic events. By and large, these Messianic prophecies fall into the category of very sweet but of lesser important doctrines.

2 Jesus doled out information slowly at first before the Pentateuch.

3 In the Mosaic books, the "anticipation factor" raised the pulse of the average godly OT Jew:

- eternal life with God after death
- the expectancy of seeing David again in a Kingdom of some sort
- a coming Messiah
- seeing the "Tabernacle in Heaven" after which the Tabernacle in the desert was patterned
- being in God's very presence some day
- meeting the One Who would crush the serpent's head
- finding out what "he shall bruise His heel" actually meant
- among many others

4 Then came 800 years of Judges and Kings during which there was a more or less constant stream of information and more Messianic predictions about details: pierced hands, bruising, death for sin, gambling for clothes, etc.

5 When Jesus showed up in the Incarnation, the excitement level ramped way up for the Remnant of godly men and women again!

This brought another wave of enthusiasm that God was going to fulfill all those promises from the BC era.

6 Then came the book of Acts. A major unexpected shift, but along with it came a flood of new information about the new element—the Church.

7 This was followed by a small bundle of doctrinal as well as a futuristic panorama, The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

- Great White Throne
- Lake of Fire
- more info about heaven & hell, as well as the curious statement that hell & death would be thrown into the Lake of Fire
- more info about Satan, angels, the Atonement through Jesus, and Jesus' soon return.
- predictions about the future struggles of the Church, attacks by false doctrine from within the churches themselves, phenomenal sketches of Great Red Dragons, spiritual wars, Bottomless Pits, as well as a New Heaven & a New Earth.

8. Darby . . .and toward the end of the "Church Age" [*dispensational teaching*] comes a clarity and emphasis on the end of the world and the coming king and Kingdom.

- the explanation was there all the time but the Church, as-a-whole couldn't see it just as the Jews didn't see who Jesus was until JB shouted, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

*[The previous pages might assure you that this seemingly new doctrine of the Rapture has been embraced for 2,000 years and only recently—here in the end days—come to light widely throughout the Church universal. Don't be the last to embrace it just because it seems new to you.]*

- a boost for world-wide missions.

- Just as those in Jesus day gained a clearer picture of Moses' writings. . . *the lamb, the sacrifices, the Atonement, and the blood payment for sin*. . . than Moses had.

You and I have a clearer picture of the book of The Revelation than the early Church had. We can understand the end times even more clearly than the apostle John could understand his own writings.

Hope this helps.

See also: <https://truthandtidings.com/>  
John Walvoord's many books on prophecy

www.PhilMyersBlog.com

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*Phil Myers*