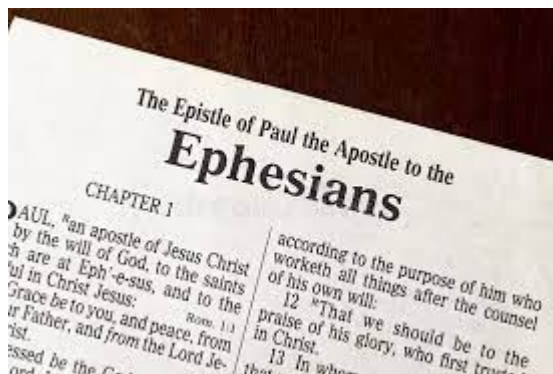


WHY WASN'T PAUL TEACHING OF THE RAPTURE IN EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS?

written by Jan Lilleby | 16. May 2023



WHY WASN'T PAUL TEACHING OF THE RAPTURE IN EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS? JAN LILLEBY

Whether I am addressing readers over in America, or readers here in Scandinavia – and Norway where I live – a majority of Christians believe that one day we shall be ‘raptured’ up into heaven, meeting Jesus Christ in the clouds – and He takes us into heaven. This originates from Paul’s teaching in 1 Thes. 4:13-18 (AMP),

“Now we do not want you to be uninformed, believers, about those who are asleep [in death], so that you will not grieve [for them] as the others do who have no hope [beyond this present life].

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again [as in fact He did], even so God [in this same way—by raising them from the dead] will bring with Him those [believers] who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

15 For we say this to you by the Lord’s [own] word, that we who are still alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede [into His presence] those [believers] who have fallen asleep [in death]. **16** For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the [blast of the] trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain [on the earth] will simultaneously be caught up (raptured) together with them [the resurrected ones] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord!

18Therefore comfort one another and encourage one another with these words [concerning our reunion with believers who have died].”

ACTS EPISTLES HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE CHURCH

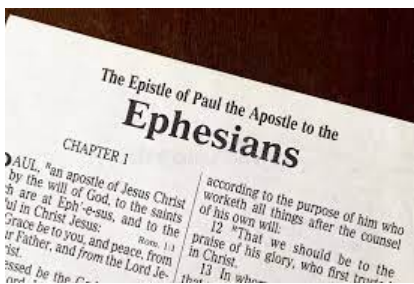
The main reason for the error of teaching the rapture-doctrine of 1 Thes. 4:13-14 to the Church dispensation, is the fact that Paul wrote this to the PREVIOUS dispensation, years before God established what we now call Church, also called ‘One New Man’ in Eph. 2:14, 15.

The previous *oikonomia*, Greek for administration, dispensation, was the time reported by Luke in his book

Acts of the Apostles. A time when God had the apostles offer the (earthly) Kingdom of God to the nation. The background for this offer was that God demanded the entire population to repent and accept Jesus as their Messiah, so He could send Jesus down from heaven to establish the prophesied millennial kingdom in their own time. It never was meant to happen in our time! Almost 2000 years later. No, this was meant to take place in the time of the apostles. It is impossible to escape this Bible truth.

Peter spoke straight to the issue in Acts 3:19-21 (AMP),

“So repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins] and return [to God—seek His purpose for your life], so that your sins may be wiped away [blotted out, completely erased], so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord [restoring you like a cool wind on a hot day]; 20and that He may send [to you] Jesus, the Christ, who has been appointed for you, 21whom heaven must keep until the time for the [complete] restoration of all things about which God promised through the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”



Thus we already, by reading these passages, learn that the doctrine of the ‘rapture’ was never meant for the dispensation of the Church, the ‘One New Man’ – but *only* for the Messianic believing Israel, the assemblies under the apostles. They were ministering under the Law of Moses as well as the New Covenant (Heb. 8-9). But as we come to Eph. 2:14, 15, we find that Christ had abolished the Law, by having it crucified with Him. This was kept back from the believers during Acts, but revealed to Paul after Acts had been closed, as we see in Eph. 2:14, 15. □

Christ died on the cross in 28 CE, but his abolishing of the Law was *not revealed* to anyone at that time. Paul had it told him by Christ shortly before he wrote the epistle to the Ephesians in

63 CE.

The dispensation of the Church could not have started before Paul had the revelation of the 'Mystery' as seen in Eph. 3:1-9, Col. 1:25, 26. We clearly find that in Acts Jew and Gentiles was separated by the 'Wall of Partition' – which was the Law of Moses. The Law was intact in all the time of Acts (Rom. 3:31).

To sum it up: Paul's doctrine of the rapture for believers in Acts period, was a 'Fresh ware' – it had a 'Sell-by-date' connected to the existence of Israel as a nation for God. In the very same instance as Israel fell away from God (as seen in Acts 28:25-28) – that 'Sell-by-date' had expired, and the whole doctrine going down together with the fallen nation. This is why we cannot find the rapture doctrine in the two church epistles written after that fall, Ephesians and Colossians.

THE CHURCH HAS A VERY DIFFERENT CALLING THAN THE ACTS BELIEVERS

You know, the Acts believers under the leadership of the apostles of Christ, they had NOT the same hope of salvation as was given us, the Church, the 'One New Man' – for they had the prophesied/promised Kingdom of God in Israel as their hope. John the Baptist and Jesus in the four gospels used the expression *The kingdom of heaven*, as well as *The kingdom of God*...which never was pointing to the heaven up above, but the earth down here: Israel's Davidic kingdom should be restored to them. Acts 1:6, 7 tells us straight forward,

"So when they had come together, they asked Him repeatedly, "Lord, are You at this time **reestablishing the kingdom** and **restoring it to Israel?**" He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority."

The question of the disciples came because of the promise of the Holy Spirit, verse 5.

Jesus did not deny that a restoration of Israel would come, He just told them that they could not know the exact time for this event. Jesus knew that Israel would reject Him fully as a nation, and that judgment from God would consequently fall on them – just like we learn from history. The nation was destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans; but Jesus foretold of this destruction, He even cried over Jerusalem, knowing this destruction would come.

The **kingdom of God** for Israel, was told Virgin Mary by Gabriel, Luke 1:26-33,

"Now in the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, the angel said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly perplexed at what he said, and kept carefully

considering what kind of greeting this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 Listen carefully: you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and eminent and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

This was the calling for the Acts believers. The kingdom of God, with Jesus on His 'father David's throne, to reign over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever...

Can you find the Church dispensation in there? I certainly cannot. I can only find Israel there. Acts period was an epoch when God spoke to Israel only, plus a few proselytes. Peter as well as Paul preached to Israel in the time of Acts. Peter inside the land, while Paul was sent to the diaspora outside the land.

The Second Advent of Christ implies that He arrives Israel in the end time, and establish His throne on Zion. When Paul told of His coming he used a Greek word for this,

Parousia, which means coming down to earth, being present on earth. It does not allow us to say that He will come down right above earth (in the clouds) – and returning back to heaven from there. No, the word *Parousia* is only describing a coming down to stay here. **Mernam-Webster dictionary says:**

Greek, literally, presence, from paront-, parōn, present participle of pareinai to be present, from para- + einai to be...

Paul's scenario in 1 Thes. 4 was: Jesus would come down, and on His reaching the altitude of the clouds He raptures the believers up to Himself, landing them down with Him in Israel, eventually Jerusalem. This is the correct understanding of that passage. It is a local happening, not a world-wide one. Paul taught of the present population of Israel, plus those from outside the land who had come to faith, and Christ would gather them by this rapture and bring all to Israel/Jerusalem by His power. Paul NEVER had in mind a world-wide operation involving millions and millions of people. 2 Thes. 2:1 confirms this as well,

"But relative to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and our **gathering together to Him...**" This coming (*Parousia*) is the very same as told in 1 Thes. 4. Jesus shall gather the believers, who shall all enter into the Kingdom of God on earth, with its capital Jerusalem.

They are not going up to heaven.

It has no relevance after the destruction of Israel in 70 CE.

Imagine what a total chaos it would turn into, if God raised all dead Christians from their graves, and took them up in the clouds with Christ together with all the Christians who were alive on earth, landing this multitude in Israel? How

can one find place/room for way over 1 billion believers to land in Israel? The nation is only at the size of around 29 000 square kilometers.

Because it is entirely correct, from Paul's Greek texts, that Jesus will come from heaven to **stay here**, and not turn around going right back to heaven. Parousia can only mean this narrative, - that of Jesus coming for to stay here.

NO RAPTURE IN EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS

This is fully in line with the fact that the Church dispensation did not exist before Paul wrote these two epistles in 63 CE as he sat jailed in Rome, the Carcere Mamertino jail house, under Nero's rule.

Paul established this dispensation (oikonomia, Strongs 3622) as God revealed to him that Christ had 'littered' the Law. Thus creating the Church: The One New Man by having Jew and Gentile made equal in the faith. No longer 'Jews first, then Gentile'.

OKEY THEN, IT SEEM CREDIBLE FROM THE BIBLE –
BUT HOW THEN SHALL WE GET UP TO HEAVEN?

I can say to you that we will get to heaven. And it is told us in Col. 3:1-4. But be aware that this is not a situation which can be compared directly with the rapture found in 1 Thes. 4, (AMP)

*" 1: Therefore if you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, sharing in His resurrection from the dead], keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. 3 For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 **When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory**"*

We are promised to be appearing with Christ in glory. Such glory is not found here on earth. But up in the heavens above the heavens (Greek, epiouranos).

The context here is already inside this passage: We are to keep our minds on heaven up above, and not on things here on earth! Can it be told clearer than this?



In other words, we shall be supernaturally transferred straight into heaven meeting Christ in His glory. Yes, it may give associations with the rapture – because we will then disappear from earth, so we can appear in heaven with Christ. What then of those who have died as Christians? These dead ones shall be raised up in heaven. Not as if God must 'open graves on

earth' to take them up from there. No, it will be a heavenly resurrection, and I presume it will happen in the same instance as God takes us into heaven. Think not vertical or horizontal. Think 'Another dimension' – we are taken into a heaven which is not a planet...it is a place *outside of the universe*, above the universe.

It shall happen on the very same calendar day, like Paul told in Eph. 4:30:

*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [but seek to please Him], by whom you were sealed and marked [branded as God’s own] for the **day of redemption** [the final deliverance from the consequences of sin]”.*

See also my article here in my site, [“Paul’s Teaching of A Coming Rapture Had A Sell-by-Date”](#). There I have a more complete lecture in this disputed topic.

It is not logically if we think that Paul meant ‘Rapture’ by these words in Eph. 4:30. No resurrection on earth is mentioned. No ‘rapture up in clouds’ is mentioned. No sounding of a trumpet or a loud voice is mentioned. It has no elements in it matching 1 Thes. 4 and the rapture doctrine, as well as 1 Cor. 15.

Only the ‘One New Man’ – the Body of Christ to which He is the Head, has a salvation hope up in heaven. But the Acts body (Jews and proselytes) under the apostles had just the earthly Kingdom of God as their hope. It’s the truth.

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