

Second Coming & Rapture

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Overview

The discussion of the *Second Coming* is a major theme of modern, *speculative* theology in the sense that the terms *Rapture*, *Second Coming*, and *Pre-tribulation* are not mentioned in the New Testament regarding the *coming of Jesus* at the *final trumpet call*.

The following excursus might be over-technical, or over-detailed for general biblical interpretation, and for that I apologize!

But the principles of sound *inductive exegetical* theology are profoundly important to the study of *the second coming*, *the rapture*, and *a period of tribulation*.

The concept of these “rapture theologies” was originally developed ca 1830-1960, by John Darby, Lawyer in Ireland, then introduced into American theology by Cyrus Schofield, Lawyer and minister, finally by John Walvoord, minister, founder and president of the Dallas Theological Seminary. The following resources provide valuable information on the roots and spread of dispensational theology.

Dispensationalism, John Nelson Darby of Ireland ca 1801,
Cyrus. I. Schofield, *Pre-Tribulationism*, Lawyer, converted to Christianity, *Rapture*, 1830
and *Premillennialism*.

John Walvoord, *Dallas Theological Seminary*, minister, ca 1960,

Hal Lindsey, Preacher, DTS MA, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, “Left Behind,” 1970s

David Jeremiah, Cedarville College, BA, 1963, DTS MA in Theology, 1967, Cedarville University “honorary” doctorate, 1981.

The *Inductive Exegetical* Method and the *Topical Deductive* Approach

An *inductive biblical exegetical* study from *within the text* serves to *limit* or *control* personal theological *presuppositions* from becoming the topic of the examination. The interpreter starts with a Scriptural text and begins to examine it *within its historical, literary, grammatical, cultural, and religious contexts*. The objective is to determine who *the original recipients were*, what was going on in their mind and life, and what the original writer/author intended to convey to his *original audience*. In the process the interpreter tries to surface the primary theological principle the writer/author had in mind within the text so that that principle can be applied to a new audience.

A *deductive study* tends to be *topical* in which a *topic is selected, a presupposed topic*, which might be related in manner to some biblical text. The topic is broadened or defined further by a *biblical concordance search* for text or texts that might be similar or shed light on the chosen topic. The problem with the *deductive* approach is that the topic is *chosen and broadened topically* by *compiling other related topical texts without any attention being given to the original author, recipients, and theological topic being researched*.

The *exegetical biblical critical* approach *inductively* enlarges one's understanding of the original purpose of the writing, of its world-wide careful distribution, and of its safe producing and *preserving manuscript* copies of the original autographs. The normative authority of the text is preserved by *sound exegetical method from biblical texts*.

There are *few checks and balances* provided by the *historical, literary, grammatical, cultural, and religious contexts within the text*. Too often the study is driven by the interpreters' needs or context, e.g. a sermon or bible class which too often becomes *need topical* and not *biblical topical*. Little attention is given to the *original author's concerns*, and to the author's and *original recipients' needs in their own contexts*.

By referring to an *exegetical* method we are stating that *the meaning of a text is ensconced within the text* and needs to *be led out of the text*. The term and concept of *exegesis* is derived from two Greek words, "*ek—out of,*" and "*ago—to lead out.*" The alternative to *exegesis* is *eisegesis*, from "*eis—toward,*" and "*ago—to lead*" meaning *to lead meaning into the text*. *Eisegesis* refers to the process of *deductive* reasoning or **reading concepts into the text**. *Exegesis* provides balance and safeguards against reading presuppositions into the process of interpretation.

“Second Coming”

The expression, *second coming*, is not found anywhere in the New Testament!

The expression, *second coming*, is the outgrowth of *dispensational deductive* theology in which a concept is *introduced* in support of a view favored by preachers who then seek some Scriptural support their view.

The best Biblical theology is grounded in an *inductive* theology where Scripture is studied from within its own contexts [historical, literary, grammatical, cultural, and religious] by *sound exegetical and biblical critical* methods.

An *inductive theological* view is the result of several, or many, *inductive exegetical biblical critical* studies in which *theological principles* are surfaced *from within the text*. The consistent

theological principles are *collated* (collected and combined in consistent order) into an *inductive theological principle*.

Since the concept of the *second coming* is not found in Scripture it cannot be studied *inductively from within* scripture since there is *no Scripture* to examine in an *inductive exegetical biblical critical* approach!

The same principle applies to other dispensational theological views where there is no *Scriptural* precedent for such an inductive study. The words or expressions “*rapture*” and “*period of tribulation*” are simply not mentioned in Scripture, and therefore cannot be studied *inductively from within* Scripture. The *topics have to be imported* into the discussion from external views or positions.

Parousia - παρουσία, parousía - “coming”

The generic words *I come, coming, to come* are found 2,399 times in the RSV Bible. They are never translated “*second coming*.”

The specialized *eschatological* by context, Greek word παρουσία, *parousía*, is found *fifteen* (15) *times* in the New Testament. *It is never translated second coming* in the major Bible translations, e.g., KJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, ESV, NJB (New Jerusalem Bible, the Roman Catholic Bible).

1 Thess 4:15, “*For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until **the coming** [parousía] **of the Lord**, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.*”

1 John 2:28, “*And now, little children, abide in him, so that **when he appears** we may have confidence and **not shrink from him** in shame **at his coming** [parousía].”*

Scripture clearly declares that *Jesus will return, sometime in the future*, an *undefined coming*, but this is in the context of his coming *at the end of the Christian era* in final salvation and judgment at the sound of trumpets.

1Thess 4: 15-18

“*For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that **we who are alive**, who are **left until the coming of the Lord**, shall **not precede** (have an advantage over) **those who have fallen asleep** [κοιμάω, *koimáō*, *have died*].¹⁶ **For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God** [all associated in the Scriptures with a final judgment, 1 Cor 15, 15:52, *passim*, Joel 2:1, Amos 2:2, Zech 9:14]. **And the dead in Christ will rise first;**¹⁷ **then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air** [the final general resurrection, cf 1 Cor 15 *passim*]; **and so we shall always be with the Lord.**¹⁸ **Therefore comfort one another with these words.**”*

This text *nowhere* mentions a *second coming*, only a *coming of the Lord*! Neither does it mention a *Rapture*, or a *rapture* as defied by the Premillennialist “*theologians*”!

In keeping with other texts like Matt 24:36ff and 1 Cor 15:20ff, this text discusses *Jesus’ coming at the end of the age* in salvation and judgment at the general resurrection of the faithful saints to be with the Lord.

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, “κοιμάω, *koimáō*; to lie outstretched, to lie down. To cause to lie down to sleep. In the NT, generally in the mid. *koimáomai* or *koimómai*, with the fut. mid. *koimésomai*, to fall asleep, to sleep, used intransitively, (Matt. 28:13; Luke 22:45; John 11:12; Acts 12:6; Sept.: Ruth 3:8; 1 Sam. 3:15; Is. 5:27). **Spoken of the sleep of death, to die, be dead** (Matt. 27:52; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13–15; 2 Pet. 3:4; Sept.: 1 Kgs. 2:10; 11:43; Is. 43:17).

This brief text was intended by Paul to encourage the saints *to not mourn over death like their pagan neighbors* who had no faith and hope in Jesus. The *coming of the Lord* at the end of time with the *call of angels* and *trumpet blowing*, and the *final general resurrection* is good news! To understand this text one has to sit with the Thessalonians ca. CE 52 who were trying to understand the resurrection, not with the modern pre-retributionists in CE 2025!

That there had repeatedly in the history of Judaism and the Christian faith periods of hardship, trials, tribulation, and that will be so as long as Satan still has power to confuse people. This will last until Satan will be judged and thrown into *the lake of fire* as per John's *Revelation*. There will always be periods of tribulation as Jesus had warned his disciples about the coming tribulation under Rome, Matt 24:1-35.

1 Cor 15:20-26, 51-58

1 Cor 15 is concerned with *faith in the resurrection of Jesus*, and *personal faith* in the *resurrection from the dead at the end of time at the last judgment*.

1 Cor 15:20-26. "*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.* ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, **then at his coming** [παρουσία, *parousía*, *coming*] *those who belong to Christ.* ²⁴ **Then comes the end**, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

1 Cor 15:51-58. "*Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep* [κοιμάω, *koimáō*, *die*] **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 imperishable, and we shall be changed.** ⁵³ For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and **this mortal nature must put on immortality.** ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "O death, where is thy victory?"

O death, where is thy sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Paul had made the resurrection of Jesus a major point of his gospel, 1 Cor 1:18ff, and had assured the Gentile believers that *they would share with Jesus' resurrection when he comes at the end of the age* and gives the kingdom to God, 1 Cor 15. The nature of a resurrection has always been difficult for people to grasp, and still remains a mystery to most of us.

Matt 24:36-51.

This pericope discusses Jesus' *coming in salvation and judgment* sometime *in the future* without warning. This is in a complex text which begins with Jesus' judgment on Jerusalem and the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 24:1, 3-35), *for which there are signs*, **but, δὲ**, an adversative conjunction indicating a *contrast of message*, referring to *something different*, and ends up with the same warning of judgment for all people at his coming [*parousía*] at the end. This pericope, or *new paragraph*, begins at Matt 24:36, and refers to things *for which here are no signs!*

The nuance of the Greek *conjunction*, **but**, δὲ, and the expression “of *that day*” [τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης] are significant.

“**But**,” δὲ, is an *adversative conjunction*² expressing contrast from the previous thought or statement. In this case, a contrast from the destruction of Jerusalem discussion.

The expression that “τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης,” is interesting and profoundly important to what Jesus was telling his disciples during the closing days of his ministry on earth. The Greek order of words in a clause usually indicates an emphasis or important message! The Greek literally reads “of the day that” meaning “of *that day*”!

Jesus’ expression using the Greek ἐκείνης rather which is a *demonstrative pronoun* referring to something near, meaning “*this day*,” than οὗτος, *hoútos* is significant.

Jesus begins with the *adversative pronoun*, “*But*,” δὲ, which refers *in contrast* to the discussion of the previous day of judgment on Jerusalem. The but, de, refers to another different day, remote in meaning from the previous discussion.

The continuing expression to “**But to that day**, ἡμέρας ἐκείνης” refers to a *day remote* from his previous warnings regarding the destruction of Jerusalem. The pericope beginning “*but of that day*” is referring to *another day more remote from the day of Jerusalem’s destruction*. Understanding Jesus’ shift to *that day*³ is profoundly important to reading this text.

Jesus, therefore, moved on from his warning about the *Roman destruction the Temple* and the *Roman and Jewish opposition to the cause of Christ* [Matt 24:1-35], with a warning that all Christians must be ready for Jesus’ *sudden coming or appearance* at the *trumpet sound for the end of the age*. Matt 24:36-51 introduces a *new discussion* regarding *another different day*.

What is interesting to note here is that *Jesus had given the disciples signs* indicating when the Romans would come *destroying Jerusalem and the Temple*, Matt 24:15,16, “so **when you see the desolating sacrilege coming** [the Roman legions] **run for the mountains!** But regarding that other day, his coming in Judgment of all persons, including the disciples, *there will be no warning signs*, but *be ready, watch* [γρηγορέω, grēgoreúō⁴] **be alert** [watch carefully in mind and spirit], *be ready* for there will be no warning regarding his coming in judgment at the end of the age.

Matt 24:36-51. “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*”³⁷ *As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man.*³⁸ *For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,*³⁹ *and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man.*⁴⁰ *Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left.*⁴¹ *Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.*⁴² **Watch** therefore, **for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.**⁴³ *But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into.*⁴⁴ **Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

⁴⁵ “*Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?*”⁴⁶ *Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing.*⁴⁷ *Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.*⁴⁸ *But if*

² Zodhiates, “δέ, dé; strictly adversative, but more frequently denoting transition or conversion, and serving to introduce something else, whether opposed to what precedes or simply continuative or explanatory.”

³ Zodhiates, “ἐκεῖνος ekeinos, a demonstrative pronoun, there or that, that one or that thing. When in antithesis or opposition it usually refers to the person or thing more remote or absent.

⁴ Zodhiates, “γρηγορέω, grēgoreúō ... to arise, arouse, to watch, to refrain from sleep. The meaning is transferred from the physical to the moral religious sphere (Matt. 26:38, 40, 41). It denotes careful attention.”

*that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,'⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken,⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know,⁵¹ and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites; **there men will weep and gnash their teeth.**"*

The Relevance of Certain Texts to the Discussion of Jesus' Coming

In the major texts discussed above there are references to *Jesus' coming*, but, **there is no mention of a second coming, or a period of tribulation, or of a rapture!**

These topics have to be *introduced* into the discussion, via *deductive reasoning*, not *inductively from sound exegetical studies from within Scripture.*

To put it plainly, there is absolutely no reference in Scripture of a second coming or of a Rapture!

The origins of some of these non-Scriptural Dispensational views?

Dispensational and Premillennial views of a *second coming*, a period of tribulation, and a rapture have to be introduced from other sources than Scrip, from personal persuasions, or often from inerrant literal interpretations of Old Testament prophecy. Such interpretations unfortunately ignore the *historic, political, religious, and linguistic* nature of the *poetic genre of wisdom and prophetic literature.*

Dispensationalism was introduced by John Nelson Darby, 1830, in Ireland. With a university degree in "Classics" and a law degree he sought and gained ordination in the Church of England. Dissatisfied with what he perceived to be a shallow theological commitment he began a theology based on a literal interpretation of Daniel and other prophetic works. Untrained in critical biblical methods he adopted a deductive approach to Daniel into which he inserted millennial view based on an inaccurate interpretation of Rev 20.

An American Lawyer, Cyrus Ingersol Schofield, 1934-1921. As a lawyer he was untrained in biblical inductive theology, but being influenced by J. N. Darby, also a lawyer, Schofield embarked on an interpretation of the Bible based on Darby's dispensational views, hence, the *Schofield Study Bible* of ca 1900.

Schofield's dispensational theology became the theology of two bible institutes, the *Moody Bible Institute* of Chicago, a predominantly Baptist school, and the *Dallas Theological Institute* in Dallas.

This view was popularized among Southern Baptist churches by the writings and preaching of Hal Lindsey and David Jeremiah⁵, both graduates of the DTS with master's degrees in ministry and theology. Neither Hal Lindsay nor David Jeremiah adopted an *inductive critical exegetical* biblical model in the development of their theology.

Examples of the *deductive* model of Scriptural interpretation adopted by Jeremiah and Lindsay are seen in their speculative dispensational interpretations of some of the Wisdom Literature of Israel and of the Hebrew Old Testament canon, as in the Psalms, Daniel, Ezekiel. These interpretations are mostly not examined in their Scriptural historical and theological

⁵ David Jeremiah earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from *Cedarville College* in 1963, a small college where his father was a professor. He went on to receive a Master's degree in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, 1967, and completed additional graduate work at Grace Seminary, 1972. Cedarville presented Jeremiah with an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in 1981. James T. Jeremiah, David Jeremiah's father, was Cedarville College's seventh president. He began his tenure in 1954 and served until 1978. Under James Jeremiah's leadership, Cedarville College transformed to an accredited Baptist institution of higher learning.

contexts. The results of such *deductive* theology are inserted into New Testament Christian contexts. Such *deductive* approaches often tend to ignore *sound historical, literary, and biblical principles of inductive exegesis*.

There is the popular tendency of reading ancient texts out of context and inserting deductively determined theological view into modern post Israeli Restoration 400 BCE Judaism and Christian applications, not considering either the *original context* of the historical, political, and sociological contexts and the original life in ancient Israel and the New Testament church.

The abuse of Daniel's "historical future dating" and projection of umbers in most dispensational theology is simply egregious and unbiblical!

The Old Testament certainly does have a significant role in understanding the origins of Christianity, of Jesus Christ, of the kingdom of God, and of the church, but not out of literal interpretation and theological misapplications of much Wisdom Literature and the Prophetic genre.

The Rapture

Like the expression *second coming* the word *rapture* does not appear in the major translations of the English Bibles.

Rapture is an expression imported by dispensationalist premillennialist to build their theology of a thousand year kingdom on earth before the final second coming.

It is claimed that the Greek word **ἄρπάζω, *harpázō*** which occurs in **1 Thess 4:17** means "*to snatch away*" or "*to seize*". Paul wrote to the Thessalonians "*Then we who are alive, who are left, will be **caught up** [ἄρπάζω, *harpázō*] in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.*" [The concept of *rapture* has to be *imported* into the meaning of **ἄρπάζω, *harpázō*** since *rapture* is not supported from *entomological* or *contextual* sources.]

The *event* or *action* of *seize up* or *caught up* implies *the power of God and Christ, not the excitement of the event* which is not inherent in the word **ἄρπάζω, *harpázō***.

One alert theologian, a professor of *church history and Bible*, once observed that the word ***rupture*** is more appropriate to the event than *rapture*!

Concluding thoughts to the Thessalonian Christians

1 Thess 4:1-18, 5:1-11

Fornication and Marriage Fidelity

“¹ **Finally**, brethren, we **beseech and exhort** you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you **abstain from unchastity**; ⁴ that each one of **you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor**, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God; ⁶ that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”

Love one another and benevolence

⁹ But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to **love one another**; ¹⁰ and indeed you do **love all the brethren throughout Macedonia**. But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more, ¹¹ to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to **work with your hands, as we charged you**; ¹² so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.

Concerns over dying and the resurrection

¹³ But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, **concerning those who are asleep**, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that **Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep**. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that **we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep**.

The coming of Jesus at the angel's call and sound of the trumpet

¹⁶ For **the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first**; ¹⁷ then we who are alive, who are left, shall 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. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."