



The Truth Behind The Secret Rapture

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It may sometimes seem to us as if we live in the great "interim"--some strange in-between time between the great prophetic developments of the past and those of the future. But this is not correct. Actually, we live in the time when the population of our planet is being prepared for the closing deception. In recent decades, we've seen more and more of the futurist version of end-time events portrayed in books, videos, and movies. Do you remember the nationwide theatrical release of the production, "Left Behind?" This movie is another vehicle to teach a misguided version of what happens in the end-time. You need to know about it. Yes, for the umpteenth time the secret rapture idea is being injected into the mainstream of contemporary culture. And this is the reason why it is imperative to address this issue. Friends, family, those in the workplace and on the streets may have been subjected to the misguided events portrayed in this film. Someone may ask you your thoughts or beliefs on this subject. How will you answer them?

When you think of this well-known, giantly publicized end-time scenario, what do you think of? Let me ask you, what do we immediately think we are speaking of? What does it mean to be "taken"? If the popular view is true, what is it suggesting to us? That before Jesus comes those who are 'taken,' are taken to heaven. Who then are those, in

this teaching, who are "left"? Those left behind live through a seven year period of tribulation, many are converted, and they preach the message. In this teaching, it is said that two groups remain alive. One, those who are faithful at the time when Jesus comes are "raptured out" and taken to heaven, while those who are "left behind" have to go through the tribulation, but have another chance to get into the kingdom. The implications of such a teaching are many. With this theory in mind, let's focus our attention carefully upon the root passage from whence this movie acquires its name. Let's turn to the pages of God's Word and see what it says, so that we can soundly share with others what He teaches. In contact with others, you may be their life-line against deception.

Let's look now at one of the main Scripture passages given as the basis for a secret rapture theory. Turn with me to **Luke 17:26-36**: **"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."** I asked you to look closely to that passage. Now tell me. What do you see?

First, that we are here dealing with a prophecy; a prophecy pointed exactly at the end-time. "As it was" in the days of Noah, "so shall it be also" just before the second coming of Jesus. To help us then in understanding how it will be at our end of the prophecy, two historical events are called to the front: the stories of Noah and the flood, and of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. What was it like in the days of Noah--the days just preceding the great flood? They ate, they drank, they married, they led a life very much in common with their times. Those times were a time of apparent prosperity, of giddy progress, and of rejection of God. The human population of the whole planet was, with scarce an exception, completely given over to worship. No, it was not a time of atheism; there was worship and to spare. It was just false worship. Great edifices were built for the conduct of their religious services. Groves were grown, preened, teased, carefully landscaped, engineered and designed to provide the optimal in "worship." No expense was spared. We know by holy Scripture that God's Spirit had placed a limit to His striving with those stubborn, wicked hearts (**Genesis 6:3**). We know that their hearts were filled with "violence." We know that they "took for wives" whomever they chose; brute force prevailed.

The whole of human society was polarized into two sharply defined separated groups: the righteous and the unrighteous. There were a few who served God and there were those who served themselves, worshipping gods of their own making, their own reduced spiritual design. Nor did God on His ark provide a gradation of accommodations, some for atheists, some for agnostics, some for polytheists, some for monotheists. There were to be many animals on board, but not many religious groupings of people. One group would go on the ark, another group would remain outside to face the flood. One group would be saved, one group would be lost. Genesis 6: 17-18 outlines this stark situation separating these two groups: **"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."**

The purpose of the flood? "To destroy all flesh." The purpose of the ark? "But with thee will I establish My covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." All outside of the ark would be destroyed; all inside the ark would be left alive, preserved. And what happened? Exactly this. Everyone outside the ark was taken away by the flood. Everyone inside was left alive on the earth to repopulate the earth, and through whom God would establish His covenant.

The second event our Lord gave was the destruction of Sodom. But as in the case of Noah, the righteous were saved at the time of the event, while the wicked were obliterated. Consider briefly the case of Lot. Abraham offered the choice to Lot; which of them would dwell in the mountains and hills, the rugged country; and which would dwell in that enticing valley? Lot chose the fertile green valley, and the cities of the plain, moving his family near; so near that the Bible says that he "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (**Genesis 13:12**). All that happened between that fateful choice and Scripture's next mention of Lot, we know not. But when next Scripture finds him, he and his family are living in Sodom. **"But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly."** (**Genesis 13:13**). The situation was far beyond the moral boundary approved of God. Sodom was about to become an object lesson. God would destroy the city. Just one thing: He had people there: Lot and his family. One day friends, when we're in the kingdom, no doubt we'll hear the story from Lot's own lips. The Bible says that the wickedness of that place vexed his "righteous" soul every day, and calls him a "just" man (**2 Peter 2:7**). Shame covered his name in the end, but as he dwelt in the midst of Sodom, and God ordained destruction for the city, He sent His angels to save Lot and his family out of it. He sought to preserve Lot alive from its destruction. Angels were sent to get him out. You see, In Genesis 18 we find that God Himself came to Abraham, and coaxed him to intercede for Sodom. You'll recall the story, how Abraham bargains downward from 50 until he has evoked from God the promise that if ten righteous people can be found within the borders of that city, He will not destroy it.

And you'll recall how the two angels venture into the town, only to be set upon by a

crowd ready to inflict grievous homosexual crimes upon them. Holed-up in Lot's house as the crowd outside grows more and more violent, the angels urge him and his family to withdraw from the city, warning that God had sent them to destroy it. In the end they and Lot and those whom he can convince to leave flee into the desert night. The angels had to finally take Lot by the hand to start him on his way. Along the fearsome trail, his wife looks back, violating the warnings of the angel visitants, and her life ends. Soon the sky is filled with fire and brimstone. In the growing light of dawn an acrid sulphur stench wafts across the plain; an angry black column of smoke rises from where once Sodom and Gomorrah prospered in the valley. They have been destroyed. Lot escapes, but just barely. A lesson has been written for eternity.

Lot was left alive on the earth. The inhabitants of Sodom were taken in their sins; caught in their guilt. Nevermore again would a righteous man or angel sent from heaven walk its streets. The city is no more, her inhabitants are destroyed. Don't miss the lesson. Two groups. One group left alive. One group caught in its high-handed guilt and destroyed. This is the warning from Jesus Christ to us now living in the end-time. For He has warned us, **"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:37)**. How was it in the days of Noah? Two groups were formed. One was left alive on the earth. One was destroyed in the flood. How was it in the days of Lot? One group was left alive out of that sinful city, the rest of its inhabitants were destroyed, slain, cut-down by brimstone and fire sent down out of the sky.

Right away we see a problem. Consider what they do in the "Left Behind " movie. In the two Bible accounts given to us by Jesus as a pattern for the events immediately before us, we find in each case, two groups. One group remains alive, one group is slain. But in the movie, we have two groups, one of which is "raptured out" and goes to heaven alive, while another remains on earth, "left behind" to go through a seven year period of tribulation. Something is wrong here. For the movie to be true to Scripture, one group should be left alive on the earth, and another group should be slain on the earth. There is no way around this. But the movie follows the thinking popularized by a deceived Christianity, not the Bible. And how many people are today being pitched this tremendous lie, this unfortunate twisting of the words of our Lord!

Strike one. Now let's re-view the word "Taken as used in the Bible. Remember when we began our message, and we realized that if we take our natural flow of thought, we'd think those taken are taken to heaven, and those left are left behind to go through the tribulation? Let's look again now at these things. You see, we would only think that way if we are thinking in the terms of popular, contemporary thought--a mindset mind you, that has already been infiltrated with the 'rapture' theology. We tend to think in the terms of the culture around us, and that culture says the taken are taken out and the left are left behind. What does the Bible say? For example, what does the word "taken" usually mean in the Bible?

Consider the case of Achan. When Israel entered the promised land and took the city of Jericho, Achan had disobeyed the Lord's directions about the spoil of the city (**Joshua 6:18**), taking some of those forbidden spoils. When the Hebrews went up to take

Jericho's much smaller neighboring city, Ai, thousands were killed. Prayerful inquiry revealed that someone had transgressed. God commanded that the accursed be removed from among the tribes. His directions? **"In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man. And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel. So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."** Joshua 7:14-21.

And you know the rest of the story. Achan and his family were killed. By casting lots, a process of elimination was conducted, in which the guilty party was eventually "taken," and then slain. Then there is another, a New Testament case that comes immediately to mind too, isn't there? Do you recall the woman who was "taken" in the act of adultery? Here's the Scripture on it: **"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act."** (John 8:3-4). These are not the only examples, but they are helpful. In the Bible, the pattern laid down is that to be "taken" is usually to be captured or caught. So now consider the warnings in **Luke 17: 34-36: "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."** If this warning standing alone seems unclear, it ought not to. It is but one of three parallel passages.

These other passages are located in **Matthew 24:15-28**, and **Mark 13:14-23**. You'll notice in both of those passages, Jesus warns His followers to flee to the mountains when they see Jerusalem surrounded by **armies (Matthew 24:16; Mark 13:14)**. History tells us that this is exactly what happened when the Romans, having surrounded Jerusalem, mysteriously withdrew. The Romans returned in A. D. 70 and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. But the Christians, recalling Christ's warning from a previous generation, fled immediately to Pella. They survived. They were left alive. Did you notice that before the description of the taken and left, we have a warning? **"In that**

day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." Luke 17: 31-33

So why the sharp warning from Christ not even to pause to get any cherished belonging out of your house, but immediately to flee? It seems clear that those not quick enough, or who were indifferent to the warning, would be caught off-guard and "taken" by the invading armies. Those "left" alive and untaken would be gathered in the mountains. But let's pause and make sure we are rightly dividing this Word. Consider now the statement from **Luke 17:27: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all."** After Noah had entered into the ark, the flood came and "destroyed them all" - who was destroyed? Those who were not on the ark. Now consider Jesus' same teaching in the parallel verse in **Matthew 24:38-39: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."**

Did you catch the parallel? In Luke, "the flood came, and destroyed them all." In Matthew, "the flood came, and took them all away." Who was taken away? Those who "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." Those who were in opposition to God. The flood came and took them all, that is, the flood came, and destroyed them all. It is crystal clear. Those who were "taken," were "taken" like Achan was when he was caught! Those who were taken were taken like the woman was when she was caught in adultery. We've already seen in the examples of Noah and of Lot that there are only two groups: those remaining alive and those destroyed. Now we see it here all over again. Plain as day. Those "taken" are caught in the general destruction. Those "left," are those saved or remaining alive. Do I want to be taken, or left? Do you want to be taken, or left? Let us pray that we would want to be left!

By rightly dividing the Word of God is the only way we can discover Truth - God's Truth - **"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."** **Isaiah 28:10.** So Scripture says that those taken are destroyed, those left are saved. Yes, two groups; yes one taken and the other left. But no, not one group taken to heaven while another remains alive on earth. The taken are caught on earth, while those left behind are left alive.

Strike two. The third point offered in Luke 17 is as decisive as the first. After Jesus told His hearers that there would be two groupings, one saved and one destroyed, the disciples asked Him, "Where Lord?" Consider His answer: **"...Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."** (**Luke 17:37**). Some have taken this to mean that God's saints, having been "raptured out," are taken to heaven. Isaiah speaks of God's people renewing their strength, mounting up with wings as eagles (**Isaiah 40:31**). This has been connected with the saints meeting Jesus in the air. In

Exodus, the deliverance of the Hebrews is also referred to as being carried by God (**Exodus 19:4**). Sounds good, right? Well, hold on. There is additional evidence we need to consider. For example, the birds spoken of in **Luke 17:37** are actually vultures. Jesus is speaking of where the vultures--the carrion-birds are located. And He says they will be "where the body is." Luke uses the Greek word soma here, literally, "body." But in Luke's writings, a body is not necessarily alive. Remember, Luke was a physician. He sometimes referred to a corpse as a body. For example, when Paul raised Dorcas from the dead. The King James Version translates Luke's use of soma in **Acts 9:40** as "corpse." Furthermore, back in Luke again, we find Jesus' dead body referred to by soma several times. (**Luke 23:52, 55; 24:3, 23.**) Thus, we ought not to make too much of Luke's use of soma in contrast to Matthew's use of the Greek ptoma in his parallel passage. Again, consider where the vultures show up throughout the Scriptures: they are always in places of destruction or where there are a multitude of dead bodies. In **Revelation 19:17-18**, at the end of time, we have a figurative gathering for a great feast of carrion-birds: **"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great."**

Where are the carrion-birds to gather? Where the flesh of those who obey not the gospel has fallen in their final contest against God. In the Old testament, where are the vultures gathered? In **Isaiah 34:15** they are prophesied of as gathered in the destroyed land of Idumea or Edom. In **Genesis 15:11** Abraham tries to keep the carrion-birds off of the carcasses of the animals he has sacrificed to God. Thus, all over the Scriptures we find the vultures gathered where there is death and judgment. But all of this is overkill. Turn to **Matthew 24:28**, the parallel passage to Luke 17:37: **"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."** In Luke we have "wheresoever the body is," but in Matthew, it is "wheresoever the carcase is." As mentioned, when Matthew Levi wrote this out, he used the Greek word ptoma, here translated "carcase." Looking at that word, we find that literally it means, "the fallen," and is translated "corpse" in **Mark 6:29** speaking of John the Baptist's beheaded body, and in **Revelation 11:8-9** of the dead bodies of the two witnesses slain in the streets. Friends, this is conclusive. Where the eagles are gathered, where actually the vultures are gathered, is where the dead bodies, the corpses or carcasses are, of those that are "taken," caught in the destruction, the "brightness of His coming" (**2 Thessalonians 2:8**).

Strike three. The secret rapture is out. We have not explored every passage used to support the rapture teaching; the space for a single sermon is not enough to do all that. But we have looked at two of the key Bible passages presented as teaching this. The result is clear. In the movie scenario - Those TAKEN are taken alive to heaven and those LEFT are left alive to have another chance at salvation. In the "Left Behind" Bible Scenario - those TAKEN are caught in the flaming fire accompanying the second coming of Jesus and those LEFT delivered are instantly to rise and meet Jesus in the

air. There are only two groups when Jesus comes: one group that remains alive, and one group that is cut down in instant destruction. There are two groups: those taken in unpreparation, destroyed on the spot, and those left alive immediately to rise and meet Jesus in the sky. The carrion-birds gather where the dead bodies of the destroyed group are. How sad then, that many sincere Christians are being taught a scenario so different from the real teaching of the Bible. And the truth is so obvious when we take a closer look at it. Oh friends, why don't more people take the Bible seriously when it says, **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15).**

If an opportunity should come to you to share with someone on this teaching, you now have three main points for them. One, there are two groups, the destroyed and the saved; two, the taken are caught unprepared while those left are left alive; and three, where the carrion-birds are is where the corpses are. Show them by the stories of Noah and of Lot that the two groups are the saved and the lost, not those supposedly taken to heaven and those left behind to get a second chance at salvation. You don't really need to wrangle with the Greek to understand this clear truth. Just show them the parallel passages we've just shared. Study this. Ask God to grant you opportunities for sharing it. And then do so. Jesus calls us to present the truth on this point, that if possible, few be taken in this deception. May each one of us desire and decide to be among those Left delivered.