

Concerning the Rapture

A couple of columns back, in talking about God's provision for saving Noah and his family, I made the observation that the arc story might very well present a foreshadowing of a prophesied "end times" event which has been discussed lately in not a few religious circles. It seems that with all the world wide conflicts, famines, pandemics, invasions, pop up disasters, and most of all the spread of terrorism all around Israel, conditions might be right for God to perform a miraculous rescue.

Certainly many of His righteous believers now face immanent destruction by evil forces Satan has stirred up in his last stand to retain control of the world.

Most of this is prophesied in *The Revelation*, in which Jesus gives his last surviving disciple, John, a preview of the dire events preceding the final battle between good and evil—the battle of Armageddon. Avoiding it might indeed call for a *rapture* of believers who have remained faithful.

The best description of the rapture or "catching away" of the Christian church is found in I Thessalonians: 4: 16, 17. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the arc angel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.// Then we which are alive and remain shall be *caught up* together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This prediction has clear probability when we realize there are precedents in our daily lives which help us believe that last minute rescues can happen. Our movies, many directed by brilliant Jewish directors, are

replete with rescues of people facing certain death from tempests, volcanoes, and bands of owl hoots with black hats galloping in to destroy them.

You might have wondered why I specified Jewish directors. After all there are lots of good gentile directors too. But I wrote Jewish directors because their scriptures early on mention a rapture, that of Enoch, Cain's eldest son: "and Enoch walked with God and God took him, and he was not." Gen 6:24.

Many of us also know of friends or relatives who were miraculously rescued from almost certain death. A good friend of mine, Scorch Wiertzema, was a medic in the Air Cavalry, and he was in on many deathly encounters in his job of flying by helicopter into fire fights in the jungles of Viet Nam, patching up wounded and helping air lift them out of harm's way, all while under fire.

Another good buddy of mine and former colleague who taught Econ. at NDSCS, also took part in such rescue missions. He, thank God, came out alive with a bullet wound in what Forrest Gump called "the buttocks." That was Joe, *Fred*, McCurnin. Both of those great survivors were unique in that they came out of that Hell hole without mental issues or addictions.

Scorch, I know was, and still is, given major help by his deep faith. We go to the same church, and our wives are good friends. But he says memories of some of the wounds he had to patch up still haunt him.

Fred McCurnin was, to me, an even more remarkable survivor, because he wasn't particularly religious, but he was always positive, upbeat, happy, and the kind of guy you just liked being around. I still marvel how he could

go into some of the bars he used to drag me into without the least sign of fear. I guess, when you've looked death in the face, dives like *The Nester Bar* in Moorhead, once a hang-out for hoods and dopers, and dead beats, are as safe as a church. Hopefully, Fred, is still with us, and I thank the Lord for putting him in my life. All the best, good buddy! Sorry we lost big Mike.

Another rapture parallel might be noted in *Star Trek*, when Kirk or his shipmates get "beamed up" to pluck them out of harm's way. And finally the many *Left Behind* books that appeared a few years ago, all take the notion of a "rapture" seriously. Most pointed out that the only real insurance against being "left behind," should all hell break loose and the great tribulation begin, is to make sure your name is written in *The Lamb's Book of Life* by asking Him, Jesus, to come into your heart and be your Lord and savior. Do that and suddenly your days of fearing death or disaster will be over. Then you can join the great host of those who are "looking up," convinced that their salvation may well be at hand.

Perceptive readers might be thinking that I'm bending my definitions a bit in saying that rescues and raptures are perfectly similar, but perfect parallels are rare anyway in the world of figurative language. But I can think of at least one mini rapture I've experienced, and that was when I was delivered from the addiction of smoking. All I know is that one morning I told God I was helpless against quitting, and my prayer was, "Lord, I'm giving this thing to you." Three days later, I woke up realizing that my desire to smoke had vanished. My "old man" had died to smoking, and the "new man" I saw in the mirror was totally free of it.

So we can “cast our cares” upon the Lord. I Peter: 5:7.) Then we may discover that “He whom The Lord sets free is free in deed.”(John 8: 36). If your burden is too heavy to bear, give it to the Lord. “His yoke is easy; His burden is light.” (Mt. 11:30.) Some day, believers might be able to say, “Jesus, Beam me up.”For many desperate souls enduring torment, that day can’t come too soon.

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