

Definition of Terms

Rapture

A few key terms related to this topic and body of research need to be defined as a preliminary understanding of the Rapture of the Church. The first term and central theme of this research is “rapture” itself. Rapture does not appear in the text of the Bible; however, it comes from the Latin word *rapere*, meaning “rapid”¹ and the Latin word *rapiemur*, meaning, “we shall be caught up.”² This word was taken from the Greek verb *harpazo*, meaning, “to seize upon, spoil, snatch away or take to oneself,” especially used of rapture (Acts 8:39; 2 Cor 12:2, 4; 1 Thess 4:17; Rev 12:5). *Harpazo* is translated “caught up” or “caught away” the five times (out of thirteen) it appears in the Bible relating to rapture. The other eight times it is translated, “to forcibly seize upon, snatch away, take to oneself or use force on someone.”³ In Acts 8:39, the Holy Spirit “caught away” Philip after he ministered to the Ethiopian eunuch and placed him in Azotus, some 20-30 miles away. In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul twice describes his experience of being “caught up” to the Third Heaven. In Revelation 12:5, the man child of the Woman (usually interpreted to mean, Jesus) was “caught up” to God and His throne. And in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the primary text for the Rapture of the Church, “we who are alive and remain shall be *caught up* together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air . . .” (together with them refers to the “dead in Christ,” who were resurrected immediately preceding the Rapture). New Testament Greek words that are similar to *harpazo* and are used in related passages are addressed next.

¹Rosenthal, 53.

²George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things, An Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 84.

³Zodhiates, “harpazo,” *Dictionary*, 257.

The noun, *episunagoge*, means, “to gather together, the act of gathering together or assembling together.” This word is only used twice in the New Testament: once in Hebrews 10:25, referring to “not forsaking the *gathering together* of Believers;” and once in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, referring to the “gathering together” of believers to meet Jesus at his coming (the Rapture, previously addressed in 1 Thess 4:17).⁴

The verb, *analambano*, means, “to take up” and is derived from *analepsis*, meaning, “ascension, taking up.” This is the word used in Mark 16:19 and Acts 1:2, 11, 22 to describe Jesus’ ascension (which may also be termed a rapture).⁵ The same word is used in the Septuagint in 2 Kings 2:9-11 to describe Elijah’s being taken to heaven by a chariot of fire in a whirlwind⁶ (another reference to a rapture). It is used once again in the Septuagint to describe Ezekiel being “bodily lifted up” by the Spirit of God for his visions.⁷ Two other words, related to *analambano*, are used by Luke in Acts 1 to refer to the ascension of Jesus. In verse 9, the verb, *epairo*, meaning, “to be taken up, borne upward” is used.⁸ In verse 10, the verb, *poreuomai*, meaning, “went up” is used.⁹ A related verb, *anabaino*, meaning “to ascend into heaven either to have

⁴Zodhiates, “episunagoge,” *Dictionary*, 640.

⁵Zodhiates, “analambano,” *Dictionary*, 153.

⁶J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, “analambano,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, part 1 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992), 29.

⁷George Morrish, “analambano,” *A Concordance of the Septuagint*, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, Ltd., n.d.; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 16.

⁸Zodhiates, “epairo,” *Dictionary*, 611.

⁹Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “poreuomai,” *The Complete Word Study New Testament: KJV* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 391.

communion with God or to dwell there,”¹⁰ is used in Revelation 4:1 when John is told to “*come up here*” by Jesus.

The verb, *metatithemi*, means, “To transpose, put in another place and hence to transfer, translate.” This word is used in both Hebrews 11:5¹¹ and in Genesis 5:24, in the Septuagint,¹² to describe the *translation* of Enoch to heaven (another Old Testament rapture). This word is related to the verb *allasso*, meaning, “To change the form or nature of a thing,” which is used in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 to describe what happens to the believer’s body at the Rapture.¹³ And this word is related to the verb, *metamorphoo*, meaning “to transform, transfigure, or change one’s form,” which is used to describe Jesus’ appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36). “This suggests what the bodies of the righteous may be as a result of the resurrection of our bodies (1 Cor 15:51f.)”¹⁴

The verb, *ekpheugo*, means, “to flee from, escape calamities.” It is used in Luke 21:36 to describe the believers being able to *escape* the “great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people” previously described and to stand before Jesus (another reference to the Rapture). It is also used in Romans 2:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, and Hebrews 2:3; 12:25 in reference to *escaping* the judgement of God.¹⁵ The verb, *sozo*, means, “to save, deliver, make whole or preserve from

¹⁰Zodhiates, “anabaino,” *Dictionary*, 142.

¹¹Zodhiates, “metatithemi,” *Dictionary*, 973.

¹²J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, “metatithemi,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, part 2 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), 301.

¹³Zodhiates, “allasso,” *Dictionary*, 124.

¹⁴Zodhiates, “metamorphoo,” *Dictionary*, 968-9.

¹⁵Zodhiates, “ekpheugo,” *Dictionary*, 558.

danger, loss, destruction.” It is used in Romans 5:9 to describe believers being *saved from* the wrath of God¹⁶ and in the Septuagint to describe the *rescue* of Lot and his family in Genesis 19:17-22; Jacob’s *surviving* the encounter with the angel in Genesis 32:30; and in Daniel 12:1 to describe Daniel’s people being *saved from* the “time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time,” if their name is “found written in the book.”¹⁷ The noun form of *sozo*, *soteria*, means, “safety, deliverance or preservation from danger or destruction.” It is used in Hebrews 11:7 to describe Noah and his family’s *deliverance* from the Flood and in Exodus 14:13; 15:2, in the Septuagint, to describe the *deliverance* of Israel from Pharaoh’s army at the Red Sea and in 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 1:14; 9:28; and 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 3:15 to describe believers being saved from the wrath of God.¹⁸ The reference to the *deliverance* of Noah and his family in the Septuagint uses the preposition, *dia*, with “water” in the accusative case (translated, because of the water) and with “flood” in the genitive case (translated, through the flood). Therefore, the total translation in the Septuagint is, “because of the water of the flood.”¹⁹ This same verse in the Hebrew Bible is translated, “*escaped* the waters of the flood.”²⁰ All of this bears witness to the use of the concept of rapture

¹⁶Zodhiates, “sozo,” *Dictionary*, 1353.

¹⁷Morrish, “sozo,” 235.

¹⁸Zodhiates, “soteria,” *Dictionary*, 1360.

¹⁹Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, Ltd., 1851; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 8.

²⁰John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 15.

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in the Old Testament and as the Old Testament Law states in Deuteronomy 19:15, “on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”