

22T08g INFER? – Rapture

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table for INFER. I'm a scientist and engineer and in my profession, we use logical deductive reasoning. Another way to say it is, we infer things from other things. But it really is a guess, an educated guess but still just a guess. Believe it or not, many Christian doctrines use this same secular approach to interpret the Bible.

The question you need to ask is does it work? Well, that depends on what "it works" means. What is Right or Correct.

What do you know about weather forecasting? What everybody knows is they are usually wrong. Or at least mostly wrong. Somedays they get it pretty close, others well not so close. Long term forecast change daily and are inconsistent at best. This is because there are lots of factors and models that go into a weather forecast. They use the data and models and experience to infer what the weather is going to be. I won't go through the many many leaps of faith necessary to predict the weather. We know only God can predict the weather because He makes the weather. But we rely on these inaccurate predictions in our daily life. Even if they are wrong most of the time, we still look to the forecast. We mostly believe the forecast.

So, what happens when Christians do this same thing in our philosophy or bible interpretation. Let's talk about the Rapture.

Let's be clear before we start. I believe in the Rapture. 1 Thessalonians 4 clear says there is a rapture. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NKJV) ***17Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.***

To be caught up means rapture. So yes, rapture is biblical. Yes, anyone who believes in the bible, believes in the rapture. So, I will assume if you are listening you believe in the rapture or you do now after listening to the bible scriptures.

Now the contention comes with when does the rapture occur not whether it occurs. There are many theories, PreTrib, MidTrib, PostTrib, etc. etc. Today I'm going to address just one of these doctrines on the when. Most dispensationalist believe in a pretribulation rapture of the church. But there are many different perspectives on this and to be fair, none are clearly stated in the bible. Or at least, not clearly when all scriptures are considered. I don't believe in "proof texting". So, I tend to believe a doctrine is only "truth" if it is supported by all scriptures. It can still be true but just not biblically supported as truth.

Okay, so like I said, I believe in the rapture as stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Let me read you the full text beginning with verse 13 but before I read it to you. I want you to understand the purpose Paul is addressing a problem. The Thessalonians had believed Jesus was returning any moment and they had stopped working and stopped being parts of the community. But, then nothing happened and they started believing Jesus had come and they had been left behind or maybe there was no resurrection. These are

all false doctrines and were causing a lot of problems. So, Paul is explaining Jesus has not come back yet and yes there will be a resurrection. The mention of us being “caught up in the air” or raptured is not the point Paul is trying to get across. Our entire understanding of this comes from this one verse, which was not even the point Paul was trying to make. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NKJV) *¹³But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have **fallen asleep**, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will **descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain **shall be caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

One thing that appears clear from this scripture is a loud public announcement at his coming. Now okay. PreTrib’ers believe this is a secret coming or appearance only in the air to collect the church, not the second coming of Revelation and Matthew 26. The PreTrib doctrine requires several leaps of faith.

1st, 1 Th 4:17 is a secret coming, not the loud announcement the scripture seems to convey. Possible but it requires some large inferences.

2nd leap of faith, the reason this rapture event happens before the tribulation is because the church is not mentioned after Chapter 3 of Revelation, so it is assumed the church is gone.

3rd leap of faith, the resurrection mentioned in 1 Th 4:17 is not the 1st & 2nd resurrections mentioned in Revelation. Possible but again we need some big inferences to get there.

4th leap of faith, reason the church is gone before the Great Tribulation, is God will protect his church from those troubles. Again, possible but requires a lot of inferring.

My biggest problem with this concept is why just the ends time generation, when so many Christians before us and today face extreme persecution for their faith. Even the churches John address Revelation to were facing persecution. Many were martyred. So why do we think we won’t face the troubles Jesus said we would face in this life. Last leap of faith, the saints mentioned in Revelation mean something different than the term means every place else in the new Testament. Could be but I’ll let you decide.

And there are more. But you get my point. Could be but we need to infer a lot to get there. Both the PostTrib and MidTrib Rapture doctrines require inferring as well. Yet we know the rapture is in the scripture. Some even say the rapture is just figurative, that takes some inferring as well.

I have my personal belief which also takes some inferring.

Now I understand why we want to believe this. It takes the pressure off. It sounds good. We like the idea of being whisked away prior to the big trouble and the end of the age. But you have to infer a lot to get there. Now it may well be true. But I see this as a diversion doctrine. It does not help me to be a better follower of Jesus. It does not

help me live a better life. It does not encourage me to work hard to be like Jesus, to act like Jesus, talk like Jesus, to try to be like Jesus. Then what is the value.

If it's true and I work hard to live the way Jesus told us to live. I have a great life and if I'm still alive for the PreTrib rapture, I'll happily say I was wrong. I'm good regardless of whether I believe this doctrine.

If it's not true and I don't work hard to live the way Jesus told us to live. I don't want to be in those shoes who did not prepare for the troubles Jesus promised we would face. If PreTrib Rapture is not true, I fear for those who have not spent their lives preparing. I fear many will doubt their faith just as Revelation predicts with the great falling away.

My real point is does believing this doctrine help me to follow Jesus, help me to do the things Jesus has commanded me to do. Am I a better follower of Christ with this doctrine? The answer is No. This doctrine like all man-made doctrines, they may be true but if they don't help me be a better follower of Jesus, then why? Why are we so focused on these side issues, instead of where our focus should be? On King Jesus.

Let's Pray. Father God, thank you for your word the Bible, Thank you for the holy spirit to guide us, so we don't need to guess. Help us to listen to you and allow you to give us the wisdom we lack such that we can have understanding. Give us the strength and will to evaluate what people say to determine if it is from you Lord or just from men. And Lord I pray if I said anything wrong today the listener would remember only what you wanted them to hear. I pray these things in your name Lord Jesus, Amen

Again, I can't say if the PreTrib Rapture is true or not. I can't say definitively when the rapture will occur. I cannot tell you if any of these viewpoints are valid or not. I'm not God. But you have to ask yourself, does this doctrine encourage you to follow Jesus or not. If it does not, then why do we teach it. If it does not make us better Christians, better followers of Jesus, then what is the point. Should we Infer ourselves to a place that makes us feel better, or should we spend our life following Jesus and preparing for the trouble Jesus told us we would face in this life. I'll leave that answer up to you.

Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table our series INFER? See you next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God Bless.