

Despite Popular Theology, Apologist Says Rapture Movies Are Not Biblical

Many in the evangelical church, including many pastors, have accepted the notion of the so-called rapture. But it is simply not true.

So says William Lane Craig, one of Christianity's most notable modern-day philosophers. Craig's comments are surfacing as the church prepares for what is bound to be a blockbuster hit in the remake of *Left Behind* starring Nicolas Cage.

"The rapture was made up by someone in the 1800s, and the story caught on among some groups who still believe it today," says Craig. "The simple truth is that it is not biblical, nor was it ever the historic position of the Christian church."

According to Craig, the rapture is enormously popular today thanks to several best-selling novels, a recently launched HBO program and upcoming movie, as well as the evangelical church.

"Many people have never known any other view than the rapture," Craig says. "In fact, many who have been raised in Christian homes or Christian churches have so absorbed this viewpoint that they never thought to examine or question its biblical credentials."

Here are four points of Craig's argument:

1. Jesus never discussed the rapture, so where did the idea come from? From Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. The interpretation is Paul is describing a so-called rapture in which the elect will be snatched out of the world, taken up into the clouds to be with Christ, and so will be with him forever. But, Paul is describing something entirely different.

There is nothing in Paul's writing to suggest that he is describing a distinct event from the Second Coming of Christ.

2. The relatively recent origin of the concept of the rapture dates to a man named John Darby in 1827. It's sometimes called Darbyism after the originator of this interpretation.

3. This has been exceedingly influential in the evangelical church because of its endorsement by the famous Scofield Reference Bible. The use of the Scofield Reference Bible in evangelical churches helped to promote this view of the rapture.

4. Moreover, Dallas Theological Seminary, which is one of the flagship evangelical seminaries, is committed to this interpretation. Through the many pastors whom DTS has trained and placed in American evangelical churches, this view has become very widespread.

What's your take? Do you believe in the rapture?