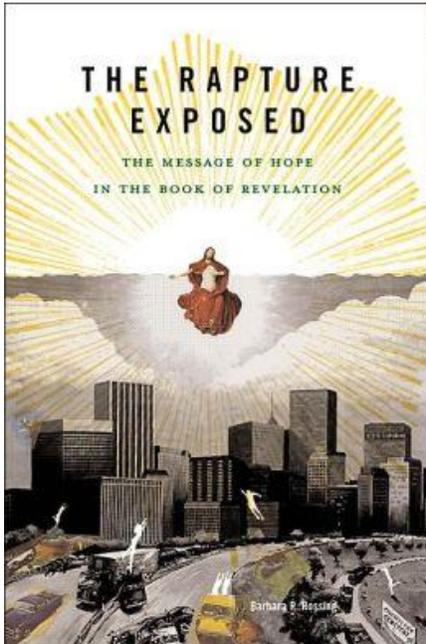


***The Rapture Exposed:
The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation***

By Barbara R. Rossing
(Basic Books, 2005, paperback edition)
222 pages.



One of the most dangerous theological trends (in my humble opinion) is that of the dispensationalist perspective of the end of times. Dispensationalism has been a recent theological development (about 200 years, which, in theological terms is very recent!). I believe that it has provided a very different perspective of eschatology (the study of end times/things) and has distorted the historical understanding of the book of Revelation.

The negative assessment of dispensationalism has been a part of my theological understanding for many years. I wholeheartedly affirm a belief in the physical return of Christ, the ultimate judgment of God and an eternal reward/punishment upon believers and unbelievers.

However, I disagree strongly with the themes of *The Left Behind* series which presents a fictional interpretation of the Book of Revelation and the Seventy Weeks of Daniel. Rossing's book

does great in refuting the theology and imagery of the series and reclaiming a different understanding of the biblical revelation.

The primary theme of the book is that of the victory of the Lamb – a primary emphasis of the book of Revelation that anchors the victory of believers in the sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, on the cross. The best summary of Rossing's understanding is this:

The heart of our difference is this: dispensationalists do not seem to believe the Lamb has truly 'conquered' or won the victory when he was slaughtered. They preach the saving power of the blood of the Lamb in Jesus' crucifixion, but it is not quite enough saving power for them. They need Christ to come back again with some real power, not as a Lamb but as a roaring lion. Jesus has to return so he can finish up the job of conquering. (page 137)

Rossing attempts, in an effective way, to explain what I have always sensed and believed, both theologically and about the book of Revelation. The ultimate victory of Jesus Christ and the believer rests, not in the future return of Christ, but in the completed act of Christ on the cross. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are the ultimate and total victory that implements the reign of the kingdom of God.

I believe that the gospel is correct: We win by losing; we gain our lives, by giving them up. We conquer through seeming defeat. Rossing puts it this way: "Just like the Lamb, God's people are

called to conquer not by fighting but by remaining faithful, by testifying to God's victory in self-giving love." (page 111)

I would encourage any serious student of the end of times (and the book of Revelation) to pick up Rossing's book and read it. You may not agree with her conclusions, but they will challenge your preconceptions and may give you a victorious sense of the message of Revelation that goes beyond the violence, bloodshed, vengeance and the gruesome visuals of the *Left Behind* series.

The book was a blessing and a spiritual pick-me-up as I think of our future as believers in Jesus Christ!