

# The Rapture - Part 25

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My previous articles commenced a series on the rapture of the church. We began with the question, "What is the Rapture?" This question can best be answered by noting ten truths about the rapture from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. We then moved to a second main question, namely, when will the rapture take place relative to the coming seven-year Tribulation period? We offered the contention that believers can develop certainty that they will be raptured before the Tribulation period occurs for at least seven reasons. After dealing with these two questions, we began to explore some of the weaknesses associated with the other competing views that seek to answer the question, "When Will the Rapture Take Place Relative to the Coming Tribulation Period?" At least five differing perspectives exist. We noted at the onset that it is important to understand that all of the non-pre-tribulation positions have a difficult time handling the seven arguments favoring **pre-tribulationism** previously discussed in this series. We have already noted the problems associated with **mid-tribulationism**. In the last few articles we began to scrutinize the arguments favoring **post-tribulationism**. In this article, we will continue to scrutinize **post-tribulationism**.

## Post-Tribulation Rapture

*Post-tribulation* rapture theory contends that the rapture will take place at the end of the coming Tribulation period. This view typically sees no distinction between the rapture and

the Second Advent and thus seeks to harmonize all references to Christ's return as taking place at the end of the future Tribulation period. Those adhering to the **post-tribulation** rapture typically rely on at least one of *four* arguments to support their position. In past articles, we noted that **post-tribulationism** errs in superficially connecting Paul's depiction of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-58) with the events of Matthew 24:30-31 and Revelation 20:4-6. We then moved on to the third argument that **post-tribulationists** use to support their view. In this article, we will complete that discussion.

3. *Although the church is exempted from God's wrath, the church will be on the earth during the entire Tribulation period because the Book of Revelation portrays God's people being supernaturally protected from many of the apocalyptic judgments during this time period.* In our last article, we responded to this assertion by observing that although believers will be exempted from some of the judgments during the Tribulation period, they will still be subjected to many other judgments during this time period. A related subject involves noting that the **post-tribulation** view has particular problems handling Christ's promise of Revelation 3:10, which says, "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."

The Greek preposition translated "from" in this verse is the word *ek*. **Post-tribulationists** often interpret this verse as not an exemption from divine wrath but rather a promise to be sustained through divine wrath. According to **post-tribulationist** George Eldon Ladd, "...the promise of Revelation 3:10 of being kept [from] *ek* the hour of trial need not be a promise of removal from the very physical presence of tribulation. It is a promise of preservation and deliverance in and through it."<sup>1</sup> However, this **post-tribulationist** rendering is not the only interpretive option. Beyond this, the posttribulationist interpretation is an improbable one at that. Ryrie explains the controversy surrounding the interpretation of Revelation 3:10:

Posttribulationists say that "from" (*ek*) refers to protection of the church within the Tribulation.

Pretribulationists understand it to mean preservation by being absent from the time of tribulation. One is internal protection (while living through the Tribulation); the other is external protection (being in heaven during that time). Which meaning does "from" (*ek*) support? The answer is either, if the preposition is considered alone. But for the record, let it be said that *ek* does denote a position outside something without implying a prior position inside and then emergence from within. The pretribulationist understanding of *ek* is supported by a number of verses that

have nothing to do with the rapture and therefore do not beg the question.<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Greek preposition translated "from" in this verse is the word *ek*, which "carries the idea of separation from something."<sup>3</sup> For example, this is the same preposition translated "out of" in Matthew 7:5, which says, "You hypocrite, first take the log *out of* your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck *out of* your brother's eye" (italics added). Thus, by the use of this identical preposition in Revelation 3:10, the idea is clearly conveyed that the church at Philadelphia will be kept entirely out of the Great Tribulation in the same way a log must be completely removed from someone's eye before he has the ability to completely remove the speck that is in his brother's eye. In other words, the idea here is total removal from rather than sustenance or protection in the midst of.

Numerous other verses can be cited in order to solidify this point.<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 21:23 says, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul *from* troubles" (italics added). Here, the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament created close to a couple of centuries before the time of Christ) employs *ek*, which is translated "from" in English. Guarding ones tongue obviously causes him to escape trouble entirely rather than merely sustaining him

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<sup>1</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 85-86.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About the Rapture*, Current Christian Issues (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 114-15.

<sup>3</sup> Ron Rhodes, *The End Times in Chronological Order: A Complete Overview to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 2012), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey L. Townsend, "The Rapture in Revelation 3:10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137, (July 1980): 252-66. See also Ryrie, 115-16.

through trouble.<sup>5</sup> Acts 15:29 similarly says, "that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free *from* such things, you will do well" (italics added). Here *ek* translated as "from" conveys to Gentile believers to abstain from these practices, or keep themselves away from them entirely, so as not to create an unnecessary offense for the Jew. According to James 5:20, "let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul *from* death and will cover a multitude of sins" (italics added). Here, *ek* translated "from" is used to communicate that turning someone away from sin will help him entirely escape the consequences of that particular sin, which is death. Colossians 1:13 also says, "For He rescued us *from* the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (italics added). Here, *ek* translated "from" is used to communicate that the believer's citizenship and domain is positionally transferred completely and entirely out of Satan's domain at the point of personal faith in Christ. First John 5:18 buttresses this point depicted in Colossians 1:13 when it describes the believer's complete and total positional escape from Satan's grasp at the point of faith. This verse says, "We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." Once again, the idea expressed in all of these passages through the Greek preposition *ek* is total removal from rather than sustenance or protection in the midst of. Therefore, this is also the same idea found in Revelation 3:10,

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<sup>5</sup> See also Joshua 2:13; Psalm 33:19; 56:13.

As mentioned in the prior article, the notion that the promise of Revelation 3:10 is nothing more than preservation in the midst of the Tribulation fails to harmonize with what the remainder of the Book of Revelation teaches concerning the massive, wide-scale martyrdoms of this future time period (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9, 13-14; 13:10, 15). How can Revelation 3:10 be interpreted as a promise of preservation in the midst of the Tribulation when so many of God's people are portrayed as experiencing a martyr's death at the hands of the beast unleashed upon the world due to Christ's opening of the first seal judgment (Rev. 6:1-2; 2 Thess. 2:9-12)?

Even if the premise is granted, as **post-tribulationism** maintains, that believers will not experience the wrath of God during the Tribulation period, the Church-Age believer still cannot experience any of this Tribulation time period. Note the full import of Christ's promise in Revelation 3:10: "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." Notice that in Revelation 3:10, Christ promises the believer not just an exemption from divine wrath, but rather a removal from the very hour of testing itself. Ryrie explains how understanding this time component of the divine promise significantly undermines **post-tribulationism**:

However, the promise of Revelation 3:10 not only guarantees being kept from the trials of the Tribulation period but being kept from the time period of the Tribulation. The promise is not, I will keep you from the trials. It is I will

keep you from the hour of the trials...But how clear and plain is the promise. "I...will keep you from the hour of testing." Not just from any persecution, but from the coming time that will affect the whole earth. (The only way to escape worldwide trouble is not to be on the earth.) And not just from the events, but from the time. And the only way to escape the time when the events take place is not to be in a place where time ticks on. The only place that meets those qualifications is heaven.<sup>6</sup>

Rhodes also explains the significance of this promise as a refutation to the post-tribulation perspective:

The posttribulation view, expressed in the writings of George Eldon Ladd, Robert Gundry, and others, is the view that Christ will rapture the church after the tribulation period at the second coming of Christ. This means the church will go through the time of judgment prophesied in the book of Revelation, but believers will be kept from Satan's wrath during the tribulation (Revelation 3:10). Pretribulationists (such as myself) respond, however, that Revelation 3:10 indicates that believers will be saved out of or separated from (Greek: *ek*) the actual time period of the tribulation.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the promise of Revelation 3:10, Geisler similarly observes, "In context, the statement about being saved 'out of' (Gk: *ek*) the time of trial does mean saved from it (not

through it). One cannot be saved from an entire hour by being in any part of it."<sup>8</sup>

In sum, having previously answered the question, "What is the Rapture?", we noted at least seven reasons that affirm the pre-tribulation rapture view. We then began interacting with the other positions on the timing of the rapture. In this article, we observed that **post-tribulationism** errs in failing to understand that the divine promise of Revelation 3:10 conveys a complete escape not only from coming Tribulation judgments but also the very time of those judgments.

(To Be Continued...)



Source: [SpiritAndTruth.org](http://SpiritAndTruth.org)

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<sup>6</sup> Ryrie, 116-17.

<sup>7</sup> Rhodes, 50.

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<sup>8</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 4 (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 2004), 654.