

The Rapture - Part 28

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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-pretribulation 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-tribulationism** 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 either the events of Matthew 24:30-31 or Revelation 20:4-6. Moreover, we noted that contrary to the assertion of **post-tribulationism**, 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. Thus, **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. We further observed that **post-tribulationism's** argument from antiquity errs in appealing to historical sources outside the Bible, failing to acknowledge that imminency was embraced by many Church Fathers, and failing to understand the notion of progressive illumination of prophetic truth.

Now that we have responded to the *four* major arguments advanced by post-tribulationists, let us set forward *five* major problems with post-tribulationism. An examination and exploration of the cumulated problems with this view should make unbiased interpreters highly reticent to adopt it. These *five* problems include the mortal population of

the millennial kingdom, the Hebrew wedding sequence, the pointlessness of the preparation of the believers' heavenly dwellings (John 14:2-3), the lack of time for the Bema Seat Judgment, and the pointlessness of the church being caught up only to immediately return to the earth.

1. *Who will populate the millennium?* The Scripture teaches that some people, both believers and unbelievers, will survive the Great Tribulation period (Matt. 24:22). These survivors will be gathered by Jesus upon His bodily return to the earth at the conclusion of Daniel's Seventieth Week (Matt. 24:30-31). What then follows will be the Sheep and Goat Judgment for the surviving Gentiles (Matt. 25:31-46) as well as a parallel judgment in the wilderness for the surviving Jews (Ezek. 20:34-44). The purpose of these judgments will be to ascertain which ones among the surviving mortals are in faith and which ones are in unbelief. Following these judgments, the surviving unbelievers will then immediately be cast off the earth into judgment or Hades while the surviving believers will be allowed to enter into Christ's earthly, millennial kingdom (Ezek. 20:34-38; Matt. 25:34, 41).

No resurrection or translation of these believers into resurrected bodies is described in these verses. Rather, these surviving believers will enter the millennial kingdom in their mortal bodies. They will repopulate the earth as they have children and their children have children, etc...Consequently, the earth will eventually be repopulated with other mortals (Rev. 20:8). The fact that there will be mortals dwelling upon the earth during the earthly kingdom becomes especially apparent when the prophetic Scripture describes the

many activities that the inhabitants of the millennial kingdom will participate in. These many activities are possible only for mortals in non-resurrected bodies rather than for those in a resurrected state. Examples include child-bearing (Isa. 65:20, 23), labor (Isa. 65:21-23), death (Isa. 65:20), sin (Ezek 45:22), and even rebellion against God (Zech. 14:16-19; Rev. 20:7-9). By contrast, marriage and procreation (Isa. 65:20, 23) are not possible for resurrected saints (Matt. 22:30). Nor are those in resurrected bodies subject to death (Isa. 65:20) since they will have already put off mortality and are clothed with immortality (1 Cor. 15:52-56).

Moreover, while sin and rebellion (Ezek. 45:22; Zech. 14:16-19; Rev. 20:7-9) will be impossible for those in a resurrected state, it will remain possible for those in mortal bodies. Although the earth will be cleansed of the debris resulting from the events of the Tribulation period, the sin nature of those mortal believers that began the millennial kingdom will continue to be passed down to their descendants (Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 5:12). This scenario will be similar to what immediately transpired in the post-Flood world. While the earth was externally cleansed by the Flood waters, the sin nature lived on in the post-Flood inhabitants of the earth. Of the eight survivors of the Flood within Noah's Ark (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5), all of them were still beset and contaminated by a sin nature (Gen. 9:20-21; Rom. 3:23). Consequently, as the post-Flood world began to be repopulated through Noah's three sons and their respective wives, the sin nature that all human beings have inherited from Adam continued to be passed down as well (Gen. 9:22-25; 11:4). Like

marriage and procreation, sin and rebellion against God is only possible for persons in mortal rather than resurrected bodies.

The problem with the post-tribulation rapture view is that it teaches that the church will experience the rapture immediately before the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation period. As discussed earlier in this series, when the church experiences the rapture, all living believers upon the earth at the time will be given resurrected bodies.¹ Post-tribulationism contends that this resurrection will transpire as the church is raptured immediately before Christ's bodily return with His church at the end of the Tribulation period. This sequence creates an insurmountable problem for the post-tribulation rapture theory. If post-tribulationists are correct in their assertion that the rapture and resurrection will occur at the end of the Tribulation period, then there will be no surviving believers in mortal bodies left upon the earth to enter the millennial kingdom, repopulate the planet, and engage in the afore-mentioned prophesied activities that are possible only for mortals. How can there be any mortal, believing survivors present at Christ's Second Advent, if all believers have already been raptured and consequently resurrected just moments before, as posited by the post-tribulation scenario? Who will enter the kingdom in mortal bodies and repopulate the earth if all the believers who survived the Tribulation period have already been raptured and resurrected?²

¹ See part 5.

² Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture* (New York: Bantam, 1985), 169-85.

Beyond this, if the rapture transpires just before Christ returns at His Second Advent as post-tribulationists contend, then we might also ask, "who are the sheep spoken of in Matthew 25:31-46?" At this Sheep and Goat Judgment, Tribulation survivors are evaluated by Christ based upon their favorable treatment of Christ's brethren (probably the believing Jews). As they are found to be sheep or believers as a result of this evaluation, then they are permitted to enter Christ's earthly kingdom (Matt. 25:34-40). However, if all believers are raptured and resurrected and then immediately return to the earth with Christ at His Second Advent as posited by post-tribulationists, then what will be the need for the evaluation spoken of in Matthew 25:34-40? If all believers have already been raptured and resurrected just moments before, then such an evaluation would be unnecessary. A resurrected believer will not need to be evaluated and identified through his treatment of Christ's brethren since his resurrected state will make it obvious to all that he is indeed a believer. The same can be said for the parallel judgment for the Jews who survive the Tribulation (Ezek. 20:34-38). Like the Sheep and Goat Judgment of Matthew 25:31-46, the purpose of this parallel judgment will be to separate believing from unbelieving Israel. However, we once again inquire, "Why have such a judgment if the Jewish believers' resurrected state makes his believing status already conspicuous, evident, and apparent?"

It is only possible to have a view which allows for mortal believers after an evaluation to enter and repopulate the millennial kingdom if the rapture has already taken place and an

extended period of time has elapsed between the rapture and Christ's Second Advent (at the end of the Tribulation period). During this expanse of time, people will be won to Christ during the Tribulation period. Then, these converts will be evaluated, successfully pass through the Sheep and the Goat Judgment to be administered at the Lord's return, and enter the kingdom in mortal bodies. In other words, an expanse of time is necessary for post-rapture converts to be won to Christ during the interim Tribulation period but before the Lord returns at the Tribulation's completion.

This timing problem seems uniquely problematic for post-tribulationism since the other rapture positions allow for the existence of this expanse of time. Pre-tribulationism allows for at least seven years in between the rapture and the Second Advent. Mid-tribulationism allows three-and-a-half years in between these events. Pre-wrath rapture, which places the rapture three quarters into the Tribulation period, allows twenty-one months between these events. Thus, all of these other views permit sufficient time for the winning of the post-rapture converts. They also allow for the possibility that some of these post-rapture converts will survive the Tribulation period and stand before the Lord at the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). By contrast, Post-tribulationism, which places the rapture just before or simultaneous with Christ's Second Advent, allows no sufficient time whatsoever for the winning of post-rapture converts.

Rhodes summarizes this post-tribulation timing problem:

If posttribulationism is correct, then who will populate the millennial kingdom in mortal bodies? That is a very good question. Scripture is clear that people who become believers during the tribulation period will enter into Christ's millennial kingdom *in their mortal bodies*. Scripture says they will be married, bear children, grow old, and die (see Isaiah 65:20; Matthew 25:31–46). This is where the problem emerges for posttribulationism. Obviously, if all believers are raptured at the second coming, no believers are left to enter the millennial kingdom in their mortal bodies. This is no problem for pretribulationism, which teaches that after the rapture, many will become believers during the tribulation.³

In sum, in this series, 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 prior articles, we have answered **post-tribulationism's four** major arguments. In this article, we began examining the *first of five* weaknesses associated with the post-tribulation rapture position. That is, the post-tribulationist has difficulty explaining both

³ Ron Rhodes, *The Big Book of Bible Answers: A Guide to Understanding the Most Challenging Questions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 2013), 276.

the origin and existence of the mortal population of the millennial kingdom.

(To Be Continued...)



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