

The Rapture - Part 30

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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 claiming to favor **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** 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 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 from 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.

Having responded to the *four* major arguments advanced by post-tribulationists, we then began to consider *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 this

perspective. 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*. In the last article, we examined the *second* of these five problems, which pertains to the Hebrew wedding sequence. In this article we will briefly examine the *third* problem with **post-tribulationism**, which relates to the pointlessness of the preparation of the believers' heavenly dwellings (John 14:2-3).

3. *The Pointlessness of the Preparation of the Believers' Heavenly Dwelling Places*. In John 14:1-3, Jesus promised, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also." Here, speaking of His ascension, Jesus told His disciples that He would soon return to heaven. While in heaven, He would prepare dwelling places for the disciples. One future day, He would secretly return for all of His disciples and take them out of the world to be with Him in heaven in an event otherwise known as the Rapture of the Church.¹

¹ Some deny that these verses are speaking of the Rapture of the Church. *New English Translation. Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Michael H. Burer, W. Hall Harris, and Daniel B. Wallace (Dallas: NET Bible, 2004), 1985-86. However, for a defense of why these verses represent the Bible's first reference to the future Rapture of the Church, see

If the post-tribulation view is accurate, then the church will be removed from the earth toward the end of the Tribulation period only to immediately return with Christ to the earth at the conclusion of the seven years. Why then did Jesus tell His disciples that He would be preparing a dwelling place for them in heaven? According to the post-tribulation theory, the church will not spend any time with Christ in heaven. Rather, the church will be snatched up to be with Christ only to return a split second later with Him to the earth. Thus, Jesus would be preparing places in heaven for His disciples for no apparent reason. The only way Christ's statement in John 14:1-3 can make any logical sense is if the church is removed from the earth at a much earlier point in time. After spending an extended period of time with Christ in heaven and there enjoying the places that He prepared for His disciples, the church will then return with Christ to the earth at the end of the Tribulation period.

In sum, the post-tribulation view makes Christ's preparation of the heavenly dwellings (John 14:2-3) unnecessary. Hal Lindsey well explains:

Now if Jesus is building a dwelling place for us in the Father's house, and if we are to go there **when** He comes for the Church, how could He be speaking of an event that occurs simultaneously with

George A. Gunn, "Jesus and the Rapture: John 14," in *Evidence for the Rapture: A Biblical Case for Pretribulationism*, ed. John H. Hart (Chicago: Moody, 2015), 99-121. See also Andy Woods, "Jesus and the Rapture," online: www.pre-trib.org, accessed 13 August 2015, 20-48.

the Second Advent? For at that time Jesus is specifically and personally coming to the earth (see Zechariah 14:4-9). If the post-tribulationists are right, then Jesus engaged in a futile building program. For when He comes to the earth in the second coming, He will rule out of the earthly Jerusalem for a thousand years. Since He says He is going to come in order that we may be with Him **where He is**, we would have to be with Him here on earth. Do you see the problem? The dwelling places in the Father's house would be unused. And worse by far, Jesus would be guilty of telling us a lie. For as we have seen, He is coming for the purpose of taking us to the Father's house at that time. Post-Tribulationist Robert Gundry doesn't keep this passage in context when he says, "Jesus does not promise that upon His return He will take believers to mansions in the Father's house. Instead, He promises , '*Where I am*, there you may be also.'" This makes Jesus' whole promise ridiculous. Why would He speak of preparing a place for us in the Father's house if He didn't mean that His return would take us there?²

In sum, in this series, having previously answered the question, "What is the Rapture?" we noted at least *seven* reasons that affirm the pre-tribulationist 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 examined the third of five weaknesses associated with the post-tribulationist rapture position. That is, post-tribulationism, which has a tendency to merge the rapture and the Second Advent, has difficulty explaining the purpose of the heavenly dwellings (John 14:2-3) that Christ is presently preparing for His bride, the church.

(To Be Continued...)



Source: SpiritAndTruth.org

² Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture: Truth or Consequences* (New York: Bantam, 1985), 48-49.