

ESCHATOLOGY (26)

It is clear from proper exegesis of these five main passages that they do not support a partial rapture viewpoint. There are many objections to this view which force us to completely reject it:

1. It conditions participation in the rapture and the glorification of the body on our works, which is totally contrary to the whole scheme of N.T. salvation which is pure grace (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 11:6; 13:11).
2. It rejects the sufficiency of the atoning work of Jesus Christ who delivers the believer from any form of judicial condemnation (Rom. 8:30-34).
3. It violates the concept of Church unity for which Christ prayed (John 17:21-22).
4. It misinterprets passages of Scripture to force its position.
5. It neglects to deal with I Corinthians 15:51-52, which plainly says “all” shall be changed.
6. It neglects to deal with I Corinthians 12:13 which says “all” were baptized into one body.
7. It fails to explain why not one rapture passage (i.e. Thess. 4:13-18) makes the rapture a reward for godly living.
8. It fails to explain rewards and loss of rewards.
9. It fails to explain why the Church is never mentioned as being chastened during the Tribulation.

We completely and totally reject the Partial-Rapture view.

Rapture Time View #3 - The Post Tribulation Rapture View.

This is the view that the Lord will return and remove His Church from the earth at the end of the Tribulation period just before or as part of His second coming.

Those who hold to a posttribulation view have three different inconsistent perspectives of the Tribulation:

- 1) Some believe the Tribulation is past and the rapture may occur at any moment.
- 2) Some believe the Church is in the Tribulation right now and the rapture will occur in the future.
- 3) Some believe that the Tribulation is still in the future and the Church will go through it and then be raptured at the end of it.

Those who hold to the posttribulation Rapture view do so based on the following arguments:

1. The word “come” in Matthew 24:27 is the same word used in I Thess. 4:15, therefore they must be the same single event.

This does not prove anything. These words are describing two separate events in two separate contexts—one for Israel and one for the Church. The use of the same word proves nothing other than Christ will come in both instances. They do not prove one event. For example, we may say “we are looking forward to having some family and friends come to visit us this summer.” We may refer to one moment when they all come, or we may refer to different moments of time when family and friends come to visit. One would need more information to determine whether this were one event or two. The same is true with the context of Matthew and I Thessalonians.

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2. The Church is not said to be in heaven, but on earth during the Tribulation period.

To this, we simply ask, where do you see the Church in Rev. 4-19? It is nowhere to be found in these chapters. In observing the facts of Revelation, we see that the word “church” occurs 19 times in Rev. 1-3 and one time in Rev. 22:16. But the word “church” is not found one time in Rev. 4-19, which describes the Tribulation period.

Posttribulationists say the word “saints” really means “church” (Rev. 13:7, 10; 17:6). In each of these uses, John uses an article “the” before the noun saints indicating he wants them specifically identified. Furthermore, the word “saints” is not the word “church.” There were “saints” in the O.T. who were certainly not the Church (Psalm 85:8). There will be saints in the Tribulation who are not the Church. Church Age saints are entirely separate from Tribulation saints.

3. Posttribulationism is the position of the vast majority of ancient and modern scholars; therefore, the position must be correct.

Perhaps the greatest work on Posttribulationism ever written is a work by Alexander Reese entitled, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*. In this book, Dr. Reese, after citing an impressive list of posttribulationists writes, “The fact that so many eminent men, after independent study of the Scriptures, reached similar conclusions regarding the subject of Christ’s coming and Kingdom, creates a strong presumption—on premillennial suppositions—that such views are scriptural, and that nothing plainly taught in Scripture, and essential to the Church’s hope, was overlooked.”

We would agree with Dr. Reese that many maintained pre-millennial suppositions. However, we do not agree that this automatically means a dogmatic adherence to posttribulationism. Dr. John Walvoord, in thinking about this very point, wrote, “It may, therefore, be concluded that while the early church did not teach twentieth century pretribulationism, neither did it clearly teach modern posttribulationism. It is therefore a problem which must be settled on exegesis of the Scriptures rather than by polling the early fathers” (*The Rapture Question*, p. 139). Furthermore, many early Church fathers did believe in the imminent coming of Christ—Clement of Rome (1st century); Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 110); The Shepherd of Hermas (early 2nd century); The Didache (A.D. 120-150); Irenaeus (A.D. 125-202); Tertullian (A.D. 155-225); Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315-387). (To actually read what they said, see Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, pp. 655-657.)

4. The parable of the “Wheat and the Tares” in Matt. 13:24-30 establishes a posttribulation rapture at the end of the Tribulation.

The posttribulationist view ignores the possibility of another interpretation of this text. This passage is not a Church Age passage, it is a text aimed at Israel. The passage is clearly “kingdom” oriented and teaches that there will be a false religious group who will almost look identical to those who are true, who will be uncovered at the end of the Tribulation. This parable in no way proves a posttribulation rapture.

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Rapture Time View #4 - The Mid-Tribulation Rapture View.

This view holds to the position that the Church will be raptured in the middle of the Tribulation period, before the final 3 ½ years of wrath. This view states that the Church saints cannot be exposed to God's wrath and concludes that God's wrath doesn't start until the bowl judgments, which occur approximately 3 ½ years into the Tribulation (Rev. 16:1ff).

The main objection to this view is that the entire seven year Tribulation is classified as being the "wrath of God." For example, in Rev. 15:1, we are specifically told that the remaining things will "finish" or "complete" the wrath of God, indicating that all previous things were also the wrath of God. This is also established early in the book of Revelation—Rev. 6:17. Therefore, the entire Tribulation period may be classified as a time of wrath and the Church is not destined or appointed to wrath (I Thess. 5:9).

Rapture Time View #5 - The Pre-wrath Rapture View.

This view is very close to the Mid-Tribulation view, but is a little more specific in saying that the rapture occurs sometime between the sixth and seventh seal judgments in Revelation (Rev. 6:12-8:1). Pre-wrath proponents maintain a difference between "the Day of the Lord" and "the Great Tribulation." The argument is there is no wrath of God during the Tribulation time and there is no tribulation during the wrath time.

The fact is the entire time period of the Tribulation is classified as a time of wrath and the Church is not appointed to the time of wrath (i.e. Rev. 6:15-16).

The only position which may be solidly defended is the Pre-Tribulation rapture position.

This is the position that we dogmatically believe and defend.

QUESTION #17 – What judgment do N.T. believers face?

New Testament believers face the **Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ** judgment to have their works analyzed to determine the gain of eternal reward or the loss of eternal reward. This is not about heaven or hell, for all who have believed on Christ are guaranteed everlasting life—John 3:16, 18, 36.

Q17a - What are some of the passages of Scripture that deal with this judgment?

- 1) Romans 14:10 ; 2) I Cor. 3:10-15 ; 3) I Cor. 4:1-5 ;
- 4) I Cor. 9:24-27 5) II Cor. 5:10 ; 6) I Thess. 2:19 ;
- 7) II Tim. 4:8 ; 8) Heb. 13:17 ; 9) James 1:12 ;
- 10) I Peter 5:4 ; 11) II Peter 1:10-11 ; 12) II John 8 .