

7 Reasons This Global Evangelist Believes in a Post-Tribulation Rapture

I came into the kingdom of God during the Jesus Movement era, that phenomenal period when the Holy Spirit swept through the world in a powerful and unique way, changing millions of lives. Like many of that era, one of the first books I read was Hal Lindsay's classic, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. In it, Hal proposes a pre-tribulation rapture, a doctrine I entertained for a brief period without questioning its validity or its scriptural and historical basis. But then, I began studying the Word without any preconceived notions about its interpretation and found, much to my surprise, a totally different perspective.

For almost five decades now, I have believed that the church will instead pass through the tribulation until the last day of this age when the "catching away" (traditionally called "the rapture") will take place. However, as an evangelist, I have not felt impressed to emphasize this view. Far more important issues needed my focus, like true salvation, real discipleship, faith for the miraculous, the infilling of the Spirit and the revelation of our spiritual identity in Christ. Besides, many of my dear, long-term covenant friends and co-ministers in the body of Christ embrace a pre-tribulation view, and I didn't want to jeopardize loving kingdom relationships by emphasizing an issue, not essential to salvation, that might divide us.

Recently, however, I have felt compelled to be more vocal, for the good of the body of Christ, that we might be prepared, as we witness a tsunami of evil crashing over our world. So I invite you to ponder the following points, not to engage in a heated eschatological debate, but as fellow lovers of God who

are humbly searching for the truth of His Word that we might be ready for what is yet to come.

7 Primary Points

A short article like this cannot be a thorough treatment of such a deep and important subject, but there are seven primary points that should help any student of prophecy understand and embrace a post-tribulation view of the coming of the Lord for His people:

- 1. The Issue of "The Church":** I have often heard it emphasized that the word "church" does not appear in the book of the Revelation after the third chapter, so the common assumption is that the church is no longer in the world at that point. However, the word "church" is never used in the book of Revelation as a corporate term for the whole body of Christ. Chapters 2 and 3 are merely messages sent to seven individual churches in Asia (see Rev. 1:4, 11). In chapter 4, when John saw a door open in heaven and heard the words, "Come up here," many propose it to be symbolic of the church being raptured at that point. However, that passage makes no such claim. Besides, you cannot base any doctrine on a parable or some metaphorical comparison in the Bible. Other terms for God's people *are* used in the book of Revelation, like the word "saints." We know the "saints" will be here, for the "beast" will make war against them (Rev. 13:7).
- 2. The Issue of "The Elect":** In Matthew 24 and Mark 13, when Jesus taught about the signs of the last days, he refers to "the elect" six times as present in this world (Matt. 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27). The word "elect" simply means "God's chosen ones," and is a word used for born again, New Covenant believers throughout the New Testament. There is no scriptural reason to assign it any other meaning in the Mount Olivet

discourse on the last days.

3. **The Issue of "Wrath":** In advocating a pre-tribulation view, students of prophecy often quote 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, many assume that we cannot be in this world when the vials or "bowls" of wrath are poured out. However, there is a difference between the "wrath of God" (that is poured out solely on the wicked) and "great tribulation" (that will affect everyone in the world) (Rom. 1:18, Matt. 24:21). We who are saved are no longer "vessels of wrath"; we are "vessels of mercy"—yet we still go through tribulations in life (Rom. 9:22-23; Acts 14:22). The early church did. What makes us any better? Besides, even though the church will never be the object of God's wrath in the last days, it *will* be the object of Satan's wrath when he is cast down to the earth knowing that "his time is short" (Rev. 12:12).
4. **The Antichrist must be revealed:** Paul emphasized that "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and ... our gathering together unto Him" can only take place after the "man of sin" (the Antichrist) is revealed, exalting himself above all religious worship in this world. (See 2 Thess. 2:1-12.)
5. **The word "last":** Concerning the end of this age, Jesus repeatedly prophesied that He will raise up His people on "the last day" (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). If the pre-tribulation view is right, He would have said, "seven years before the last day." There is no day past the "last day." This is a reference to the last 24-hour period of time in this age, often referred to as "the day of the Lord that will come as a "thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). Read that whole chapter carefully. You will discover that day will take the world by surprise, but not the church. The key word "last" is also found in

Paul's prophetic teaching. He taught that the resurrection of the dead and the catching away (and glorification) of living believers will happen at "the last trumpet," not before the seven trumpet judgments of the book of Revelation take place (1 Cor. 15:52). It is only when the seventh and final trumpet sounds that the declaration is made, "The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord" (Rev. 11:15).

6. **The word "first":** One of the strongest points to be made concerns Revelation 20:4-5. John revealed that those martyred during the terror reign of the beast (the Antichrist) will be included in "the first resurrection." There is no resurrection before the "first" resurrection, so the dead in Christ cannot be raised up seven years prior. Remember, the resurrection takes place first, then the catching away (see 1 Thess. 4:13-17).
7. **Focus on the Harvest:** Finally, the overwhelming testimony of Scripture points to the "appearing" of the LORD, not the "disappearing" of the church (an idea that has only been circulated about the last 180 years). Jesus never taught a pre-tribulation rapture in His teachings, but He did teach a great harvest taking place at the end of this age. So, instead of setting our hearts on somehow avoiding the darkness of the last days, shouldn't we be focused on shining our light and winning as many souls as possible into the Kingdom of God? {eoa}

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