

The Rapture – Pre or Post Trib?

As one who has never questioned that the Rapture will precede the Tribulation, it is strange to realize that some Bible students find reasons to believe that it will not occur until after the Tribulation. One believer has asked that I show him where in Scripture it seems clear that it is a Pre-Trib event.

Perhaps the best way to start is to examine the Bible verse that speaks of the Rapture, and see if the context of these verses reveals its chronological place. It is in 1Thessalonians where Paul first revealed the mystery of the Rapture. In chapter 4:14-18 we read: *“¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”* Notice Paul says that “...we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...” If this was a post-trib prophecy, why would he speak of the immanency of the act, something that he expected in his lifetime? There was an aire of anticipation that it could occur at any moment.

They were to take comfort that the Lord would come and take up those already dead as well as those that were yet living, and they would hereby escape the Tribulation. It is in 1Corinthians 15:50-59 and also in 1Thessalonians 4:16 where the post-trib idea probably originated. It says that the *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven....”* They see this as His triumphal return, and don’t seem to recognize Paul’s subsequent clarification as found in verse 17 where we are told *“then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...”* In order for this to pertain to His post-trib coming to the earth, than after they meet in the

clouds Jesus must bring with Him back to the earth. That doesn't make sense, not good exegesis.

Paul again speaks of we shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed. This also speaks of immanency of the event within his and their lifetimes. There is nothing in 1Thessalonians or 1Corinthians that even hints that the Great Tribulation must precede the Rapture. Yes, there are likely to be tribulation-like occurrences that will afflict believers, but not the Great Tribulation.

Another statement that our Lord made regarding this matter is found in Revelation 3:10 where He told the Church of Philadelphia that He would keep them "...*from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world,...*" This is generally and compellingly believed to be the Great Tribulation. Then in II Thessalonians 2:2 we have what very many scholars consider to be a translational error in the KJV. They claim the "day of Christ" should read "the day of the Lord". The day of the Lord appears numerous times and always refers to the Tribulation. Here Paul is pointing out that this day will not come until the Antichrist is revealed. Is this a translational error or is it a misinterpretation of that of which Paul was trying to assure them?

This is neither an error nor a basis for concluding that it is suggestive of a post-tribulation Rapture. For the pre-tribulation believer, it is indeed troubling to read what II Thessalonians 2:2 and 2:3 appears to say. To reconcile the issue by simply concluding that this is a translational or a scribal error, is taking the easy "no brainer" way out. Unless this can be rigorously demonstrated as fact, it does now consider what Paul says in 2:3 where he points out... "that" day shall not come except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed..." Here it is clear that the Great Tribulation would not come until Antichrist was revealed. For an in-depth study of II Thessalonians 2:2, 3, see in my commentary called: "*A Commentary on II Thessalonians 2:2, 3.*"

Another possibility for the post-Trib belief may be based on Daniel 12:2. The Resurrection of the Old Testament saints. These will not rise at the time of the coming

Rapture. Only those Christians living, and those, “dead in Christ”, that is the Body of Christ will rise at that time. Isaiah 26:19 alludes to this later resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the time of the restored and converted Israel. Daniel 12:2 speaks of the resurrection of both the Old Testament saints and those who are the eternally condemned. A more literal rendering of this verse in Daniel, according to Dr Fruchtenbaum is as follows: “and (at that time) many (of your people) shall wake or be separated out from among the sleepers in the earth’s dust. Those who awake shall be unto everlasting life, but those (the rest of the sleepers who do not wake at this time) shall be unto shame and contempt everlasting.” These Old Testament saints, along with the resurrected Tribulation saints, will be the “friends of the Bridegroom” (John 3:29) who will be invited to the wedding feast. In the context of Daniel 12:2, Daniel is speaking of events after the Tribulation, and therefore we must conclude this is the time that the Old Testament saints will be resurrected. There are other places in Scripture that allude specifically to their resurrection.

Perhaps the best case for a Pre-Trib Rapture is found in John 14:1-4 “*1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*” This speaks of the second advent of Christ, when He comes toward the earth, but only as far as the clouds. It is to be distinguished from His return in glory to the earth after the Great Tribulation. It’s the first expression in Scripture regarding the “the day of Christ” when Jesus says I will come again and receive you unto myself. What is the purpose of this coming? To bring the apostles and all saved Christian believers to heaven where He had prepared a place for each and every one of them.

This is indicative of the Rapture, because it’s the only time when Jesus will come for them. It is the I Thessalonians 4 event where Jesus calls them as He comes only as far as the clouds. This cannot be a post-tribulation event. As noted above, why would Jesus have prepared a place for them in heaven when right after the tribulation descend from

heaven with them? For them to descend with Him they had to have been in heaven, placed there some time earlier. The second, and only other coming mentioned in Scripture is after the Tribulation when He comes to destroy Antichrist and all who follow him, and then to set up the millennium kingdom. Why would He Rapture the church body up to those prepared homes in heaven, and then within a few days bring them all back to earth if the Rapture was Post-Trib?

In these issues we are to prayerfully apply our God given common sense to the literal Word of God in order to recognize God's purpose and how He has orchestrated it as He has given it to us in the Holy Bible. The Rapture is most certainly for the expressed purpose of keeping the Bride of Christ from suffering through the Great Tribulation. If that is its purpose, and the above references confirms it to be so, then how can one believe that He would delay this until after the fact, when it would be too late to provide the benefits that He had promised? Again, what would be the sense or the purpose of allowing the Body to suffer through the Great Tribulation, then be raptured to heaven, and only a month or less later to be returned to the earth before the beginning of the millennium? No doubt, there are several verses, that in a very limited context seem to suggest a post-tribulation rapture. However in the context of the whole Scripture, the pre-tribulation evidence negates the validity of such a conclusion.