

09-26-10

Series: The Resurrections

# The Resurrections (23)

## What Happens to Christians Who Die?

([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#))

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[Matthew 28:1-10](#)

(Continuation from 09-19-10)

### The Doctrine of the Resurrections

([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#))

The Thessalonians' *ignorance about the Rapture* caused them to grieve. It was to give them hope and to comfort them that Paul discussed that momentous event, giving a fourfold description of it: **1) its pillars, 2) participants, 3) plan, and 4) profit.**

**So far we have looked at: 1) The Pillars of the Rapture: 1.** The Death of Christ, **2.** The Resurrection of Christ, and **3.** The Revelation of Christ. **2) The Participants of the Rapture.** Now let us look at **3) The Plan of the rapture.**

### 3) The Plan of the Rapture

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” believers “will be changed” ([1 Corinthians 15:52](#)), rescued from the grasp of Satan, the fallen flesh, the evil world system, and the coming wrath of God.

**1 Corinthians 15:52 (NASB)**

<sup>52</sup> **in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.**

The time of the **Rapture** cannot be discerned from this passage alone. But when it is read with other **Rapture** texts ([John 14:3](#); [Revelation 3:10](#); cf. [1 Corinthians 15:51-52](#); [Philippians 3:2-21](#)), and compared to judgment texts ([Matthew 13:34-50](#); [Matthew 24:29-44](#); [Revelation 19:11-21](#)), it is clear that there is no mention of judgment at all in the Rapture passages, whereas the others major on judgment.

It is therefore necessary to conclude that the **Rapture** occurs at a time other than the judgment. It is best, then, to separate the two events. That initiates the case for the **Rapture** to occur imminently, before the elements of judgment described in Scripture as leading up to the Second Coming in judgment.

Again, no solitary text of Scripture makes the entire case for the **pre-tribulation Rapture**. However, when one considers all the New Testament evidence, a very compelling case for the pre-tribulational position emerges, which answers more questions and solves more problems than any other **Rapture** position.

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The following arguments present a strong case in favor of the **pre-tribulation Rapture**.

**First**, the earthly kingdom of Christ promised in [Revelation 6-18](#) does not mention the church as being on earth. Because [Revelation 1-3](#) uses the Greek word for church **nineteen times**, one would reasonably assume that if the church were on earth rather than in heaven in [chapters 6-18](#), they would use “**church**” with similar frequency, but such is not the case. Therefore, one can assume that the church is not present on the earth during the period of tribulation described in [Revelation 6-18](#) and that therefore the Lord has removed it from the earth and relocated it to heaven by means of the **Rapture**.

**Second**, [Revelation 19](#) does not mention a Rapture even though that is where a post-tribulational Rapture (if true) would logically occur. Thus, one can conclude that the **Rapture** will have already occurred.

**Third**, a **post-tribulational Rapture** renders the Rapture concept itself inconsequential. If God preserves the church during the Tribulation, as post-tribulationists assert, then why have a **Rapture** at all? It makes no sense to **Rapture** believers from earth to heaven for no apparent purpose other than to return them immediately with Christ to earth. Further, a post-tribulational Rapture makes the unique separation of the **sheep (believers)** from the **goats (unbelievers)** at the return of Christ in judgment redundant because a post-tribulational Rapture would have already accomplished that.

**Fourth**, if God **raptures** and **glorifies** all believers just prior to the inauguration of the millennial kingdom (as a post-tribulational Rapture demands), no one would be left to populate and propagate the earthly kingdom of Christ promised to Israel. It is not within the Lord’s plan and purpose to use glorified individuals to **propagate** the earth during the **Millennium**. Therefore, the **Rapture** needs to occur earlier so that after God has **raptured** all believers, He can save more souls—including Israel’s remnant—during the seven-year Tribulation. Those people can then enter the millennial kingdom in earthly form. The most reasonable possibility for this scenario is the **pre-tribulational Rapture**.

**Fifth**, the New Testament does not warn of an impending tribulation, such as is experienced during Daniel’s seventieth week, for church-age believers.

It does warn of error and false prophets ([Acts 20:29-30](#); [2 Peter 2:1](#); [1 John 4:1-3](#)).

It does warn against ungodly living ([Ephesians 4:25-32](#); [5:1-7](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:3-8](#); [Hebrews 12:1](#)).

It does warn of present tribulation ([1 Thessalonians 2:14-16](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:4](#); all of [2 Peter](#)).

Thus it is incongruous that the New Testament would be silent concerning such a traumatic change as Daniel’s seventieth week if post-tribulationism were true.