

The Church of the Servant King

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Prophecy Series

(Proph20C_The Coming of the Lord_Lsn3)

The Timing of the Rapture Verses the 2nd Advent
(An Analysis of Non Pre-Tribulation Rapture Views)

Among pre-millennialists, there are different views of when the Rapture will occur. Some adopt a pre-Tribulation view, some adopt a mid-Tribulation view and others adopt a post-Tribulation view. One's view of the relationship between Israel and the Church is inextricably related to one's view of the time of the Rapture. The purpose of this study and set of notes is to provide a brief overview of the major "non" Pre-Tribulation views of the timing of the Rapture. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture position will be examined in a separate lesson.

*Partial Rapture Position*¹

Those who adopt this view believe that only those who are faithful in the Church, i.e. watching for the Lord's return will be translated before the Tribulation. The other believers will be taken as they become ready. The Rapture is viewed as a reward and not a privilege.

Essentially, according to those who adhere to this position, after the initial Rapture of all prepared believers at Christ's return in the air, several groups will experience the Rapture during the course of the Tribulation period as they become spiritually prepared. The Tribulation will, according to this view, purge the remaining believers from their sin and carnality. If such professing believers do not make the appropriate adjustments during the Tribulation, then they will be purged and miss the 2nd Advent and the Millennium and be resurrected at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:5).

This view of the Rapture was first articulated in England during the mid-nineteenth century by a small group of men who promoted their theological positions in a publication titled *The Dawn*. The names of some of those who adhered to a partial rapture position include such men as Robert Govett (1813-1901), G.H. Lang (1874-1958), D.M. Panton (1870-1955), G.H. Pember (1837-1910), and J.A. Seiss (1823-1904). Most, if not all of these men, were associated with the Plymouth Brethren Movement – an evangelical Christian, cross-denominational movement that began in Dublin, London and Plymouth during the 1820's and 1830's. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) is perhaps the most prominent and well-known name in this movement.

The Plymouth Brethren eventually became world-wide and there developed a large disparity of positions and views among those affiliated with the movement. The common bond or thread was simply a desire to study Scripture more deeply (particularly eschatology) and minimize, if not eliminate, all aspects of the traditional worship service that detracted from a focus upon Scripture.

The fact that some of these men developed a view of the Rapture (the Partial Rapture view) that was considered heterodox by many of the other participants in the Plymouth Brethren

¹ Information regarding the "Partial Rapture" theory in these notes represents my composite understanding and the sources consulted include Charles Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Grace Publications, 1994), 598; Mal Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1996), 348; John Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 97-113; and websites at www.newble.co.uk/writers/ and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plymouth_Brethren.

movement illustrates the diversity of beliefs on select topics even though the Plymouth Brethren was dispensational in orientation.

The partial rapture theory also represents a strange mixture of Calvinist influenced soteriology and dispensational eschatology. This is not surprising if one considers the background from which these men came. The Reformation that began in the 15th and 16th Centuries was soteriological (vs. eschatological) in focus, yet came to be associated with John Calvin's writings and thought. The Plymouth Brethren (particularly John Darby) began what is tantamount to a 2nd Reformation focusing upon eschatology – a movement that effectively rediscovered Biblical dispensationalism. However, it is no surprise that they continued to manifest the interpretive influences that carried over from their theological roots, i.e. the Calvinistic influence from the 1st Reformation.

The result was a failure to consistently apply a dispensational hermeneutic to all passages – especially those in the Gospels that apply to an entirely different dispensation and people than the members of the Age of the Body of Christ (a.k.a. the “Church Age”). The result (in the case of these men) was the development of a view that participation in the Rapture is conditioned upon worthy conduct. This theory views the Rapture as a reward for faithfulness rather than an act of grace initiated by a sovereign God. There are two classes of the redeemed according to partial rapturists – those worthy of translation and resurrection and those who are not. (In this, they have certain similarities with those who promote the view that faithful believers of the present age will have an inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom; whereas unfaithful believers will not).²

Just a few of the Scriptures that are commonly used to support this position are Luke 21:36; Matt. 24:40-42; and Heb. 9:28. We'll take a look at these passages first, then we'll summarize with some points regarding the inferiority of this position.

Luke 21:36

But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.³

Points relevant to the proper interpretation of this passage:

- 1) The context of the passage is clearly related to the Tribulation, the coming of the Son of Man to the earth, and to the establishment of the visible messianic form of the kingdom.
- 2) The immediate context of the passage is at the conclusion of the Olivet discourse which clearly indicates that the Coming of the Son of Man back to the earth will be at the conclusion of the Tribulation period. (Note the similarity of signs found in Luke 21:25-36 and passages from the Hebrew prophets relating to the coming of the Messiah).

25 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the

² Promoters of this view use passages from the Gospels that are Kingdom oriented to support their position with regard to believers of the present age. See www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/hodgesov.htm and www.withchrist.org/MJS/reign.htm for examples of critiques of this position as well as examples of those who have been accused by some of promoting a type of purgatory during the Kingdom age for unfaithful believers of the Church Age.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 “And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. 28 “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” 29 And He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 “Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. 33 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 34 “Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 “But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Lu 21:25-36)

30 “And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke. 31 “The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (Joel 2:30-31)

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light. (Isa 13:10)

2 For the LORD’S indignation is against all the nations, and *His* wrath against all their armies; he has utterly destroyed them, he has given them over to slaughter. 3 So their slain will be thrown out, and their corpses will give off their stench, and the mountains will be drenched with their blood. 4 And all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as *one* withers from the fig tree. (Isa 34:2-4)

4:1 “FOR behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.” 2 “But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. 3 “And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts. (Mal 4:1-3)

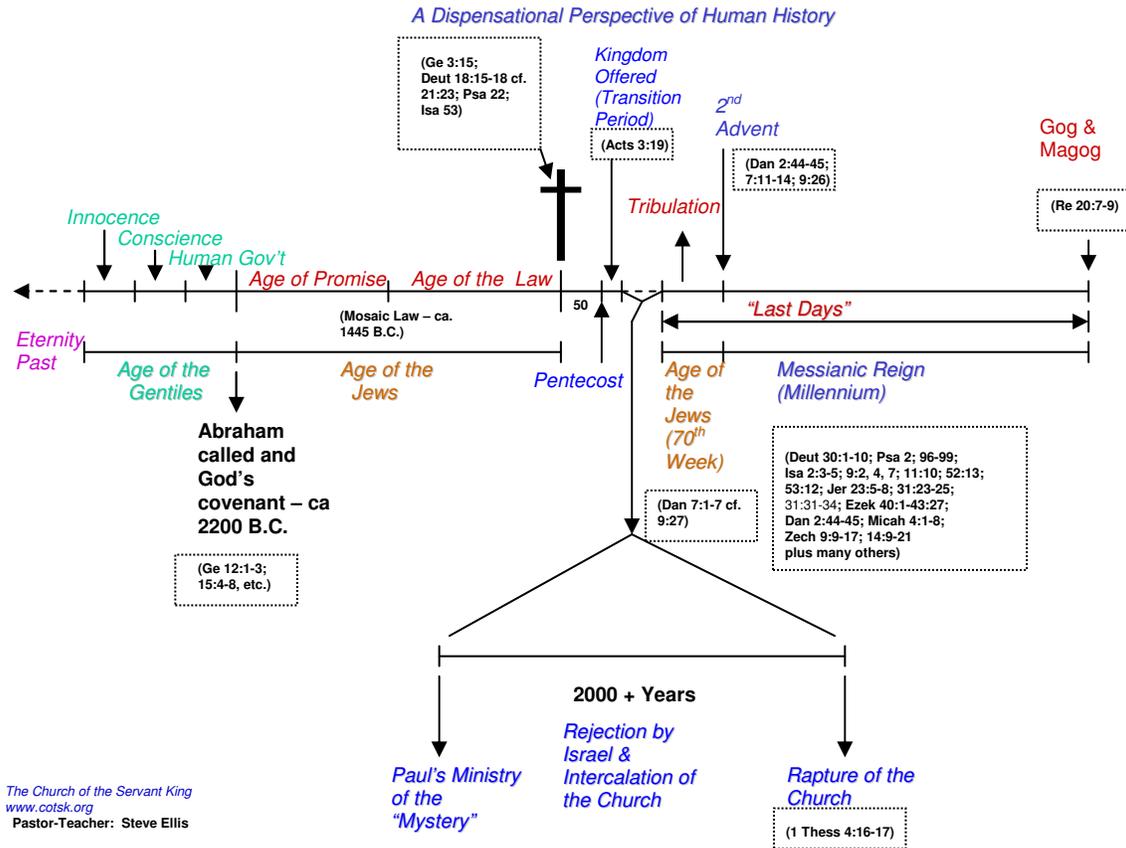
5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 “And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.” (Mal 4:5-6)

- 3) The “escape” (Lu 21:36) does not come in the form of removal from the Tribulation period; rather, the “escape” is from the judgment associated with the 2nd Advent. (See Lu 21:28. The implicit assumption by Jesus in His teaching is that believers are present during the period leading up to the 2nd Advent.)
- 4) The people at issue in the context is Israel (see Luke 31:32 where the Greek word *genea* or race is used).
- 5) The exhortation is to Jews enduring this time of trouble, not the Church, the Body of Christ.
- 6) The Church is exhorted to be watchful also (see 1 Thess 5:6; Titus 2:13); however, participation in the Rapture is not contingent upon the Church’s watchfulness.

6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. (1 Thess 5:6)

13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. (Titus 2:13)

- 7) In order to properly interpret Scripture, first and foremost, we must consider the dispensational context of the passage. From Genesis 12 through the Gospel narratives and even into the early chapters of the book of Acts, the context is the Age of Israel and the prophetic orientation is the Messianic Kingdom. (The following chart illustrates this point graphically).



Matthew 24:40-42

Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

Points relevant to the proper interpretation of this passage include at a minimum:

- 1) The context of this passage is the same as Luke 21:36 – the Olivet Discourse directed to Jesus' Jewish believing disciples within the dispensational context of the Age of Israel where the focus of the gospel message was kingdom-centric.⁴
- 2) The immediate context of the passage includes a comparison of the coming of the Son of Man to the days of Noah – a judgment in which the righteous were delivered and the unrighteous were killed.

⁴ The interpretation of the parables of Matthew 25 (i.e. the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and the parable of the talents) are also subject to the same hermeneutical principles.

- 3) The emphasis is upon judgment and the ones to be judged (see v. 39 where the one who is removed from earth is removed in judgment).
- 4) Those taken are taken in judgment, not deliverance.
- 5) Those left on the earth enter the messianic kingdom. Jesus is teaching regarding the Messianic kingdom.
- 6) This order of events is corroborated by the greater context (see Matt 24:1ff).

Hebrews 9:28

So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Points relevant to the proper interpretation of this passage:

- 1) This passage is indicating that Jesus Who once paid for sins will appear the second time to deliver (*sodzo* - save) without reference to sin, i.e. for deliverance.
- 2) This second appearance will not be in reference to sin, but to deliverance (salvation).
- 3) Just prior to Jesus' 2nd Advent, the pressure will be such during the Tribulation that believers will be eagerly anticipating His Coming so that they might be delivered from the Tribulation period and enter the earthly Kingdom that Jesus will establish, i.e. the Messianic Kingdom.
- 4) The greater context of the passage is related to the purpose of the book of Hebrews, i.e. a book written to Jewish believers (and even Jewish unbelievers) to convince them that Jesus, even though He died on the Cross, was and is the Promised Messiah Who has and will fulfill all prophecy. (The book of Hebrews is not directed to Gentile believers even though Gentile believers benefit from studying it).

Reasons for Rejection of the Partial Rapture View

- 1) The partial rapture view necessitates the blending of two dispensations of believers on earth – Israel and the Body of Christ (those not yet raptured) – during the Tribulation period.
- 2) Thus, it fails on the most central tenet of dispensationalism to which its proponents lay claim – the distinction between Israel and the Church in time.
- 3) The partial rapture view absents part of the Body of Christ from the judgment seat of Christ which occurs between the rapture and the second coming to earth.
- 4) Paul makes it clear that there will be a Judgment Seat of Christ for believers (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:9-10) and there will be those whose works are burned, yet they are still delivered or saved (1 Cor 3:12-15).
- 5) Rewards at the Bema Seat Judgment involve the eternal state not priority of position during the Rapture. (See 1 Cor. 3:10ff). (Other passages that provide instruction on the believer's rewards in eternity include James 1:12; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Peter 5:4; 2 Timothy 4:8).
- 6) The partial rapture view is all too similar to the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory – a place where the believer must suffer for his sins before he is ready for heaven.
- 7) To that extent, it denies the finished work of Christ on behalf of every believer.
- 8) The partial rapture theory can find no Scripture to indicate how believers who are a part of the "left behind" contingent are eventually joined to their brethren.
- 9) Participation in the Rapture is viewed as a reward for good works rather than as an integral part of the gracious saving work of Christ (Philippians 1:6 - "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus").
- 10) God has promised believers deliverance from the outpouring of God's wrath in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 - "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath [the Tribulation – see 4:13-18; 5:1-11] to come."
- 11) Scripture teaches that all believers will experience the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 - "Behold, I tell you a mystery; **we** shall not all sleep, but **we** shall **all** be changed, 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** shall be changed.”

- 12) The partial rapture theory violates the doctrine of positional truth, i.e. Church Age believers are placed “in Christ” at the moment of salvation.
- 13) The partial Rapturist is forced to use a logic that is inconsistent with Scripture. If all of the living saints could not be Raptured, then all the dead saints could not be resurrected. This is inconsistent with Paul’s teaching that all those who sleep in Christ Jesus will God resurrect (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:14).

Post-Tribulation Rapture Position

The adherents to this view believe that the Church will be translated after the predicted time of Tribulation and thus will pass through this coming period of trouble in the earth. One of the major, more recognizable proponents of this view is George E. Ladd. According to Millard Erickson, Ladd takes the more acceptable position between the “replacement” type theology of Louis Berkhof and the “separate and distinct” view of Israel and the Church held by dispensationalists.⁵

The post-tribulation rapture view could generally be characterized as non- or anti-dispensational and tends to blur any distinction between Israel and the Church. Other adherents to this position with their own angles include J. Barton Payne, Anthony Hoekema, Loraine Boettner, Alexander Reese and Robert Gundry. Note the following quote from Boettner.

It should be said further in regard to Dispensationalism that while historic Premillennialism has held that the Church will go through the Tribulation, Dispensationalism holds that the Church will be raptured and so taken out of the world before that event...⁶

Early dispensationalists opened themselves to criticism from the ranks of such theologians as those previously mentioned due to the inconsistencies of their positions. Charles Baker makes some good observations of this phenomenon.

The early dispensationalists fell into numerous inconsistencies, chiefly because they read the Body of Christ or the Rapture back into many of the parables of Christ. If the Body of Christ and the truth of this present dispensation were secrets first made known to Paul; if Scofield’s dictum is true that “In his (Paul’s) writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the church,” then to read these truths back into former Scriptures can result only in inconsistency. Scofield himself reads the true Church, the one body, back into the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45, 46). Reese quotes William Kelly to the effect that the Rapture of the true Church is to be found in the parable of the wheat and the tares. If this is the Rapture Reese has clear proof that it will be post-tribulationary,

⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 12th printing, 1995), 1042-1043. Erickson concludes his analysis of the subject of “The Church and Israel” on these pages with an interesting statement that seems virtually identical to the position of the replacement theologians. He states – “*To sum up, then: the church is the new Israel. It occupies the place in the new covenant which Israel occupied in the old. Whereas in the Old Testament the kingdom of God was peopled by national Israel, in the New Testament it is peopled by the church. There is a special future coming for national Israel, however, through large-scale conversion to Christ and entry into the church.*” At the time of the publication of his *Christian Theology*, Erickson was research professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas.

⁶ Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 5 quoted in Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 608.

for the Lord said, "Let both (the wheat and the tares) grow together until the harvest," and the harvest is without doubt at the end of the Tribulation.⁷

Mention must also be made of the "ultra-dispensationalists" who hold the extreme view that the Body of Christ did not have its beginning until after Acts 28. This view relegates the early epistles of Paul to a former dispensation. Since the Rapture is taught in one of those earlier epistles (1 Thessalonians – ca. A.D. 51), proponents of this view teach that the Rapture is not for the Body of Christ. Therefore, this group associates the passages that teach the Rapture with the 2nd Advent at the end of the Tribulation period – in other words, they are viewed as virtually simultaneous events. Thus, the Rapture is associated with the kingdom ministry and gospel of the Tribulation period in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom.⁸

The Scriptures referenced by the proponents of this position are numerous. Essentially, the refutation of the views of the post-millennialist are found in the examination and explanation of the passages presented elsewhere in this document. The major arguments advanced by those who adopt this position are:

- 1) A denial of the doctrine of the imminency of the rapture based upon the association with the signs of the 2nd Advent of Christ.
- 2) The promise of tribulation for believers of the Church Age.
- 3) Israel and the Body of Christ should be viewed as continuous rather than discontinuous.
- 4) The resurrection of saints of prior ages at the end of the Tribulation is assumed to include the resurrection of Church Age saints as well.
- 5) Certain passages place the return of Christ after the tribulation.
- 6) Historical precedent in the church for this belief.

Response to These Arguments

- 1) Imminency - the evident attitude of the New Testament church was one of imminency, i.e. no prophecy remained to be fulfilled prior to the Rapture of the Church (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 4:16-17; 5:5-9; Tit. 2:13). (Signs ARE associated with Jesus' return to the earth at His 2nd Advent).
- 2) Tribulation for the Church - God has not destined the Church for wrath (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).
- 3) A consistently applied literal hermeneutic will demonstrate that Israel and the Church are distinct in spite of certain similarities.
- 4) The time of the resurrection - there is Biblical support for a 5 different resurrections and there is no reason to assume that all saints from all dispensations will be raised at the same time. (See the list of the 5 different resurrections examined in a subsequent study).
- 5) Certain passages force a distinction between the rapture and the 2nd Advent. We have examined most of these (e.g. Matt. 24-25; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 2 Thess 2:3).

It is important to note that Posttribulationism is based upon a system of denials of the interpretations held by the pre-Tribulation rapturist rather than upon a positive exposition of the Scriptures. The posttribulationist denies dispensational distinctions such as the distinction between Israel and the Church. There is a denial of the distinctions in Scripture relating to the return of Christ. There is a denial of any future fulfillment to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. Finally, major passages of Scripture that outline God's program for Israel are ascribed to the Church (e.g. Matt. 13; Matt. 24-25; Rev. 4-19).

⁷ Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 609.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 607.

The Mid-Trib Rapture Position

The adherents to this view believe that the Church will be translated at the middle of the 70th week of Daniel thereby escaping the last 3½ years of the Tribulation period. According to this system, the events of the first 3½ years cannot be classified as an outpouring of God's wrath. A number of passages are offered in support of this position. Examples follow:

John 21:18, 19

18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He *said to him, "Follow Me!"

Explanation – According to the mid-Tribulation rapturist, it is argued that Peter could not have believed in the imminency of the Rapture or even that Jesus would come again within his lifetime since Jesus told him in this passage that he was going to live to an old age and die a martyr's death. However, this argument is based upon the supposition that the new dispensation of the Church Age or the Age of the Body of Christ began on the day of Pentecost and/or that there was no legitimate offer of the Kingdom to Israel after Jesus' resurrection (see Acts 3:19ff). However, when Jesus spoke the words of John 21:18-19 to Peter, He was still referring to the earthly program associated with the Kingdom. In that Kingdom program and at the time Jesus spoke these words to Peter, there was still the possibility that these disciples would go through the Tribulation and be alive when the Lord returned to earth to establish His kingdom. Otherwise, Peter's offer in Acts 3:19ff would have not been legitimate. The Kingdom-centric program was suspended with Israel's rejection of the offered Kingdom in the early chapters of Acts and a new dispensation and Gentile-centric program was inaugurated under Paul's administration. The Rapture was never a part of the Kingdom-centric program. Therefore, the argument about Peter's age and death has no bearing upon the Rapture question.⁹

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 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 shall be changed.

Revelation 11:15

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

Explanation – It is argued that the last trumpet blast of 1 Corinthians 15 and the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11 are the same. Essential to this argument proffered by the mid-Tribulation rapturist is the understanding that the seventh trumpet closes the first 3½ years of the Tribulation period. However, there is no indication in Paul's statement that the trumpet he mentions is a part of a series of trumpets. "Last" can mean last at a point in time rather than last

⁹ This analysis may prompt some to ask the question – "Exactly when did the new dispensation of the Church or the Body of Christ begin?" My answer is that we can pin an exact day or date on the beginning; however, we do note that Paul's first written letter (i.e. Galatians) has truth that is certainly unique and distinct from anything true of the Israel-centric and Kingdom-centric program of the Age of Israel. How long did Paul orally proclaim these truths prior to putting them to writing in this first epistle? We don't really know. My speculation is that he received these truths from the Lord shortly after his conversion.

in sequence. There is a trumpet that is associated with the consummation of the Body of Christ program on earth and there is a series of trumpets associated with Israel's kingdom program. Only through a mixture or confusing of the two programs in one's hermeneutic can the two trumpet passages be equated. Even aside from this, there is no reference to a rapture associated with the sounding of the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15.

Based upon the context, it is clear that the seventh trumpet sounds, not in the middle of the seven year period, but at the end, for it is plainly announced that the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and that the resurrection of non-Church Age saints has come at the end of the Tribulation (see Dan 12:1-2 cf. Rev 20:4-5).

To argue that the trumpets of Revelation 11:15 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 are the same is a very tenuous argument at best. The 7th trumpet of Revelation 11:15 is only the last in that series, not the last of all (see Matt. 24:31). The trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is the last for the Church, not the last of all. The trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is a gracious act toward believers while that of Revelation 11:15 is one in a series of judgments.

Revelation 11:12

9 And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations *will* look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And those who dwell on the earth *will* rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. 11 And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Explanation – Mid-tribulationists argue that the Rapture is represented by the ascension of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:12. This view is untenable. First, this resurrection occurs before the sounding of the seventh trumpet – an event that according to the mid-tribulation rapturist marks the point of the Rapture. Second, these two witnesses are only two individuals and could not represent the entire Body of Christ. Finally, the powers ascribed to these two individuals during their period on earth do not even approximate powers available to a believer of the Body of Christ (e.g. power to kill their enemies, to shut heaven, to turn water into blood, and to smite the earth with plagues). In addition, the bodies of these two witnesses lie in the street for three and one-half days before they are raised from the dead and taken to heaven. There is absolutely no resemblance to the Rapture of the Body of Christ.

Summary

As is true of all positions presented in these notes, there are other passages used in an attempt to defend each respective position. However, suffice it to say for now that in every case that deviates from a pre-Tribulation Rapture position (and perhaps even in the case of some who adhere to that position) there is a strong tendency to ignore or miss certain dispensational distinctions that are essential to proper understanding. In every case where this occurs, there is a blending of the Kingdom-centric program for Israel and the Gentile-centric program for the Body of Christ.