

## Lesson 13

### CONTROVERSIAL CONCEPTS CONCERNING THE RAPTURE

#### The Nature of the Tribulation and the Church

##### Pretribs

The tribulation is a time of the manifestation of God's wrath upon this earth (Rev. 6:17; 14:10, 19; 15:7; 16:1, 19). The church, a distinct body from Israel and the tribulation saints, is specifically told that it is not appointed to wrath (1 Thess. 5:9). Therefore, the church cannot undergo the period of tribulation on this earth, for God would never allow His bride, the church, to go through such a time.

##### Posttribs

Christians who go through the tribulation will experience suffering at the hands of men (antichrist) but they will be supernaturally protected from the wrath of God. There are passages in the Book of Revelation, which promise believers that the plagues will come upon unbelievers only (Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 16:2, 10). Christians will be kept from God's wrath in much the same way the plagues of Egypt did not harm the Israelites (Exo. 8:22; 9:26).

The pretrib assumes that no Christian would even be allowed to experience "God's wrath" because Christ has suffered the wrath of God for them; thus there is no more wrath for the Christian. However, are not the so-called tribulation saints also secured by the death of Christ? If so, why should they be permitted by God to undergo a period of persecution, which is unthinkable for the church to undergo? Are tribulation saints less privileged than church saints? Are tribulation saints second-class citizens to church saints?

#### The Judgment Seat of Christ

##### Pretribs

There is a need for an interval of time between the rapture of the church and the second advent in order for there to be adequate time to reward all of the church saints. At the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10 cf. 1 Cor. 3:14, 15; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 22:12).

##### Posttribs

1 Cor. 5:10 is the only verse a pretrib has to prove the Judgment Seat of Christ is for the church only but in this verse it does not say when this will happen. If it is after a pretrib rapture, this must be inferred.

It seems as though the Bible specifically declares the time the saints will be rewarded is at the second advent (Rev. 11:15 cf. 11:18). Christ said He was going to reward (recompense) every man at His second advent (Matt. 16:24). The rewards are said to be given out at the manifestation, *phino* (1 Pet. 5:4), the revelation, *apokolupsis* (1 Pet. 1:7), the appearing, *epiphaneia* (2 Tim. 4:8) and the coming, *parousia* (1 Thess. 2:19)—all of these words point to the one event of the second advent. If God needs time to reward His saints, he has one thousand years in the historical premil system.

#### The Need to Populate the Millennium

##### Pretribs

There is a need for an interval between the rapture and the second advent in order to give time during which a new generation of believers can be developed to populate the millennium. The rapture of the church will take away all true believers. If this rapture should take place after the tribulation, this would remove every believer in Christ from the earth. The wicked will be judged and cast into hell at the second advent. If believers

are raptured and the wicked are judged, this leaves no one to enter the millennial kingdom to populate it. However, if the rapture of the church occurs before the tribulation, then during the tribulation period many will turn to Christ. Those tribulation saints who make it through the tribulation will be rewarded and taken into the millennial kingdom with physical bodies. These saved saints will populate the millennium.

### Posttribs

Even if there is a rapture of the church after the tribulation, this rapture will occur before the second advent. The Bible states that a great host of physical Israelites will recognize Jesus as the Messiah and be converted at the second advent (Zech. 12:10, 13:9; Jer. 32:37-40; 33:14-16; Rom. 11:26). Therefore, there will be a great host of believing Jews on earth following a posttrib rapture. These Jews will enter the millennium as saved men in physical bodies.

According to Revelation 14:1, the 144,000 sealed ones of Israel are shown standing with Christ on Mount Zion, evidently having survived the tribulation to reign with their Messiah. These, too, shall enter the millennial kingdom.

There will also be some Gentiles who enter into the millennial kingdom (Zech. 14:16). Evidently, certain peoples of the world will survive the second coming of Christ in judgment, since they will have been relatively untouched by Antichrist. When we say that antichrist will be a world ruler, we cannot necessarily mean that he will rule every tribe on every continent.

## **The Typology of the Old Testament**

### Pretribs

Events such as Noah's deliverance from the flood, Lot's deliverance from Sodom and Rahab's deliverance from Jericho, support the thesis that God always removes his children from the time of wrath.

### Posttribs

There is great danger in using the subjectivity of typology to prove any doctrine. While it is true that God removed Lot from Sodom before fire fell, however, in both Noah's and Rahab's case, God protected them in the presence of judgment. Therefore, if anything, these would seem to support the church's protection in the midst of tribulation rather than a complete removal from it. This seems to be the general Biblical principle. This would be true of Israel's protection in the midst of the plagues in Egypt, Daniel's experience in the lion's den, and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.