



'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' Titus 2:13

Calvary Chapel Distinctives: The Rapture of the Church, Part 5

I do not believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation. But there are certain Scriptures that people use to try to show that the church will be there. One argument is based on the interpretation of the “last trump.” In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul speaks about the Rapture and says, “Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (vs. 51–52, italics added). Some try to link this with the seven trumpet judgments of Revelation and say that the seventh trumpet is the last trump. They see this as proof that the Rapture will not take place until the last trump occurs, which is the final judgment.

I see a couple of problems with this. First, the seven trumpet judgments in Revelation are given to the seven angels to sound and to bring in the corresponding judgments upon the earth. When we examine who is blowing each of these trumpets, we see that they are all angels. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Paul is speaking of the Rapture, “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” (italics added). The trumpet of the Rapture is not that of an angel—it’s the trump of God!

After the fourth angel sounds his trump, a voice shouts, “Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!” (Rev. 8:13b) After the fifth trumpet sounds, the voice says, “One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter” (Rev. 9:12). Clearly, a woe is pronounced to those on earth. But our being caught up isn’t a woe. It’s glory!

Another common argument is presented in Revelation 20, as John views the various groups in heaven. Verses 4–5 say, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which

had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.” The point here is that

at the first resurrection John sees those who were beheaded for their witness of Jesus, who didn’t worship the beast or take the image and receive the mark. They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Some believe this is solid proof that the Church will go through the Tribulation and be martyred.

But we need to go back and read it again. In verse 4, we see that judgment is given to those seated upon the thrones. But, who are these overcomers? Revelation 3:21 tells us, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” John sees the Church as a part of the first resurrec-

tion. Then he sees those who will be martyred during the Great Tribulation period for their refusal to take the mark of the beast. This is the great number described in Revelation 7: 13–14, “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Notice that they stand in His holy temple and serve Him day and night continually. The Church is the bride of Christ. Jesus said, “I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15). So, this second group is comprised of the saints martyred during the Great Tribulation period. They will become a part of the kingdom, but the Church will have already been raptured. That’s a far better way to go than through martyrdom in the Great Tribulation! ☩

In the next issue, we will consider the “elect” of God and the coming of the Antichrist.