

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XL: Understanding The Rapture When We Christians Get Our Spiritual Bodies

(1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

I. Introduction

- A. In countering the view of some in Corinth that there was no resurrection, the Apostle Paul anticipated the question of what would happen to those believers who did not die, how they could get a glorified body.
- B. That question is answered in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, and we view this passage for our edification:

II. Understanding The Rapture When We Christians Get Our Spiritual Bodies, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

- A. At the event we theologically call "the rapture of the Church," Christian believers in the Church era who have died as well as living Christians will be physically changed into their spiritual bodies, 1 Corinthians 15:50-51.
- B. This change for both groups will occur in an instant, in a "twinkling of an eye," 1 Corinthians 15:52a.
- C. It will also occur **before** the seven-year Great Tribulation Period begins, in contrast to other opposing views:
 1. Various groups believe the 1 Corinthians 15:52b "last trump" sounds **after** the Great Tribulation **starts**:
 - a. Midtribulationists who hold the rapture occurs in the middle of the Tribulation claim the 1 Corinthians 15:52b trumpet is the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15; J. D. Pentecost, Things To Come, 1972, p. 188.
 - b. Then, posttribulationists who teach that the rapture occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation assert that the 1 Corinthians 15:52b trumpet is the one that sounds in Matthew 24:31 at Christ's Second Coming.
 2. However, Scripture reveals that the 1 Corinthians 15:52b "last trump" sounds **before** the Tribulation **starts**:
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9 claims Christians will **not face** God's **wrath** (Ibid., Pentecost, p. 189-190), and there is no hint in the context of 1 Corinthians 15:52b that its "last trump" sounds in the Great Tribulation!
 - b. Conversely, the **contexts** of Revelation 11:15 (at Rev. 8:1-11:15) and Matthew 24:31 (at Matt. 24:29-31) show their respective trumpets sound **after** the **expression** of God's **wrath** has **begun** (Ibid.), so no **Church era** believer should then exist on the earth since he is not supposed to have to face God's wrath!
 - c. Thus, the "last trump" of 1 Corinthians 15:52b sounds **BEFORE** the Great Tribulation Period **BEGINS** for God to save the Church out of the Tribulation Period, and the phrase "the last trump" alludes to the Old Testament expression of the sounding of the trumpet in Numbers 10:5-6 that called for God's people to travel, which, in this case, is the Church's last earthly journey -- its journey to heaven, Ibid., p. 191-192!
- D. When the trump of God then sounds, all dead believers of the Church era will be raised, and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 reveals that they will be raised first and ascend up to the clouds to meet the Lord, 1 Cor. 15:52c.
- E. Then, living Christians will be changed and ascend to meet the Lord in the air, 1 Cor. 15:52d; 1 Thess. 4:17a.
- F. From that point onward, the Church, the Bride of Christ, will accompany Him forever, 1 Thessalonians 4:17b.
- G. Returning to address his readers who needed an explanation of the change of the physical body into the spiritual body, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:53-57 stressed our victory over sin and its bad effects on our bodies:
 1. Our corruptible bodies affected by sin must put on incorruption, and mortality immortality, for bodies that can be corrupted and die are laced by sin and cannot qualify to be in a holy God's presence, 1 Cor. 15:53.
 2. When our corruptible and mortal bodies have put on incorruptibility and immortality, then will be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 25:8 that death has been swallowed up in victory! (1 Corinthians 15:54)
 3. Paul then cited Hosea 13:14 that asked where was the sting of death and where was the victory of the grave, explaining that the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law, 1 Corinthians 15:55-56.
 4. However, Christ through His substitutionary death for our sin on the cross has freed us from the condemnation of God's Law so that in Christ we have positional victory over sin, and hence we must partake of the blessings of the rapture where that positional truth becomes our experience, 1 Cor. 15:57.
- H. This explanation of the rapture and its great victory over sin, corruption and death leads to the encouragement for believers always to abound in the work of the Lord, for they know their labor in Him is not in vain! (v. 58)

Lesson: *Before the seven-year Great Tribulation Period begins, the Church will be raptured as dead believers are raised and living believers are changed from mortal, corruptible, sin-effected bodies into holy, immortal, incorruptible ones, and together they join Christ in the clouds of the air and proceed back to heaven away from the Great Tribulation of God's expression of wrath on the world!*

Application: *May we hold to the Blessed Hope of the Pretribulation Rapture, and in view of its great victory over sin and death. Then, in view of this hope, may we always abound in the work God has assigned us, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord!*