

Can Anyone Find a Pre-Tribulation Resurrection?

by Anthony Buzzard

The debate over the pre- or post-tribulation rapture should really be called the debate about the pre- or post-trib *resurrection*. The discussion is about the place of the resurrection in the sequence of end-time events. Will there be a resurrection of the church *before* the onset of the great tribulation of Daniel's 70th week? Pre-tribulationism says that the faithful will be resurrected seven years before Christ's return in power and glory. (This is a new teaching dating from the 1830s, never heard of before that time.)

Both sides of the argument agree that there will indeed be a resurrection of the dead **after** the tribulation. But the pre-trib. camp maintains that this post-trib. resurrection has nothing to do with the church — because *the Christians* will have been resurrected before the tribulation.

The two positions may be illustrated very simply thus:

A	---SEVEN-YEAR PERIOD---	B
Pre-trib. secret coming of Jesus Pre-trib. rapture/resurrection of Church		Post-trib. Second Coming of Jesus Post-trib. Rapture/Resurrection of Church

The question is this: Where in Scripture is there a mention of a resurrection **before** the tribulation period? Consider these facts:

1) The Resurrection in Daniel 12:2 (“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake....”) occurs just **after** the great tribulation described in Daniel 12:1, a verse earlier. This is a **post-trib.** resurrection.

2) The gathering of the elect at the sound of the **trumpet** in Matthew 24:31 happens soon **after** the great tribulation (see Matt. 24:29, “immediately after the tribulation of those days...”). This is a **post-trib.** resurrection.

3) The resurrection promised to the faithful in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54 occurs at the last day — presumably the last day of this age, not seven years earlier. This is **post-trib.**

4) The resurrection of 1 Corinthians 15:23 involves all the Christians and happens “at the coming of Jesus.” Verses 51 and 52 describe this as a mystery which will occur in the twinkling of an eye *at the last trumpet*.

5) The resurrection of Revelation 11:15-18 (“the time came for the dead to be judged”) happens at the **seventh** (i.e., last of a sequence of seven) **trumpet** and this is **after** the time of the Great Tribulation, as both camps agree. This, too, is a **post-trib.** resurrection.

6) The resurrection of the dead found in Revelation 20:4 occurs **after** the arrival of Jesus to destroy the Beast and False Prophet (Rev. 19:20, 21). This, also, is a **post-trib.** resurrection, as all agree.

7) The resurrection described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 occurs at the day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2) when sudden destruction comes upon the unsuspecting world (1 Thess. 5:3). This, too, must therefore be a **post-trib.** resurrection.

8) The gathering of the church to the Lord at the coming of Jesus promised in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 will not occur until after the Man of Sin is revealed (“The day of the Lord will not come until the apostasy comes first and the man of sin is revealed,” v. 3). This, therefore, is a **post-trib.** resurrection.

Where then is the pre-trib. resurrection in which so many place their hope? There appears to be no such event. If the resurrection of the faithful does not occur after the tribulation in Matthew 24:31 (gathering of the elect) where in Matthew 24 does it occur? If the resurrection of the Christians does not occur at the **seventh trumpet** in Revelation 11:15, where in Revelation is it mentioned?

Overlooking the primary evidence above, which establishes the place of the resurrection in the order of events, the pre-trib. argument may attempt a counter-position as follows:

(a) Maintain in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, where the only gathering of the saints mentioned is POST-trib., that there is no mention of the resurrection and gathering of the church. This would mean that in the whole of Jesus’ discussion of the end-time and the Second Coming he omits entirely to say anything about when Christians will be resurrected and gathered! Though he speaks to disciples who are the foundation of the church, PRE-trib. maintains that nothing is said of the resurrection or gathering of the church.

Note: The “elect” whom Jesus instructs are the faithful church as Matthew 22:14 shows (chosen = “elect,” same Greek word).

(b) Maintain that the resurrection and gathering described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 [(7) above] happens before the Tribulation.

Note: This can only be attempted by overlooking the context of the passage. Firstly, 4:13-17, taken without reference to the following context, does not say **when** this event occurs. But the following verses (5:1-4) do tell us that the event in question will take the world by surprise. This means that it is a **post-trib.** event, as are all the other descriptions of the resurrection.

(c) Maintain that Revelation 4:1-2, where John was invited to “come up here,” describes the resurrection and gathering of millions of dead and living Christians. This goes far beyond the evidence. Not a word is said about a rapture or resurrection in this passage.

Final note: 1 Corinthians 15:52 tells us that the resurrection of the faithful will occur at the *last trumpet*. Revelation 11:15-18 says that when the **last (the seventh) trumpet** sounds the “time for the dead to be judged and rewarded has come.” This trumpet sounds **after** the Tribulation, as all agree. Can it seriously be held that the *last trumpet* and the *seventh trumpet* are not the same event? If they are the same they provide absolute proof of the post-trib. resurrection for all the faithful. If 11:15 is not the resurrection of the church where in the whole of the book of Revelation is there a pre-tribulation resurrection? Where in the whole Bible is there evidence of a resurrection occurring before the tribulation?

We should be careful not to place our hopes in an event which the Bible does not promise.

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