

The Last Trumpet

1 Corinthians 15

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Most pretribulationists believe the pretribulation rapture was not taught by Jesus, but was given to Paul as a special revelation. Therefore, it is important for us to see if what Paul taught about the rapture is different from Jesus' teaching. If there are mutually exclusive differences between what Jesus taught about His second coming and what Paul taught about the rapture, we might conclude they were speaking about different events. However, if Paul's teaching about the rapture is compatible with Jesus' teaching about the second coming, there is no reason to suppose that Paul taught a distinct coming of Christ apart from the coming Jesus mentioned.

Posttribulationists believe Paul's teaching concerning the rapture is completely compatible with, and built upon, the teaching of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. There were certainly some new details added by Paul. But the general sequence of events is identical.

In 1 Cor. 15, Paul wrote primarily of the resurrection of believers, and the fact that we will be raised "incorruptible." I would like to point out three things that I believe connect this event to Jesus' posttribulation coming described in Matthew twenty-four.

1. Paul said the reason our bodies will be changed is because; *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15:50). The future "Kingdom of God" to which he referred was Christ's earthly reign, the Kingdom prophesied throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Since the purpose for putting on incorruption is because our old bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom to reign with Christ, this implies that the change would occur at the commencement of that Kingdom. There is nothing here about going to heaven. Heaven is never "the Kingdom of God" anywhere in Scripture. The context also clearly indicates Paul was referring to the Millennium, (see: vss. 22-28).

2. Paul said this transformation of the living and resurrection of the dead will occur *"at the last trumpet"* (1 Cor. 15:52). If we try to impose a pretribulation scenario on this passage, the "last trumpet" could not really be last. Jesus said He will sound the **trumpet** to gather His elect *"immediately after the tribulation"* (Matt. 24:31). In order for this trumpet to be "the last trumpet," it cannot sound before the end of the tribulation described in the Olivet Discourse signaled by the trumpet blast at His coming.

3. When this transformation occurs, Paul said an Old Testament prophecy will be fulfilled at that time.

1 Cor 15:54

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

This is a direct quote of Isaiah 25:8. And, Isaiah's prophecy clearly refers to the coming of Christ's Kingdom to earth. **Paul said that this particular Kingdom prophecy will be fulfilled at the resurrection of the Church.** Therefore, the rapture must occur at the beginning of the Kingdom, which is posttribulational.

These three things connect this passage with the posttribulational coming of Christ. What can pretribulationists point to in this passage that would exclude this connection, or demonstrate the uniqueness of the Pauline "rapture" that they allege? Nothing at all! So far Paul's writings fit seamlessly into Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. And the above three points eliminate the possibility that the events described by Paul could be separated from the posttribulation coming of Jesus Christ.