

A World Woefully Unprepared for the Coming Pre-Tribulation Rapture

by Jim Dodge

Part 2 – What can we learn about the Rapture from the New Testament?

The Rapture is unique in all of Scripture and history. The first resurrection, when all-dead believers are resurrected into new, eternal, glorified bodies, takes place in four parts or at four different times in God's plan. Part one was Christ's resurrection as the first fruits of God's promise when He was raised from the dead on Sunday, April 5, 33 AD. *"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"* (1 Corinthians 15:23).

The second part of the first resurrection is the resurrection of believers who died during the Church age (from 33 AD to the Rapture). During this second part of the first resurrection, Paul reveals that true believers, who are alive when the Church-age saints are resurrected, will be taken or raptured and joined together to meet Christ in the air, before the Tribulation ("wrath to come" - Revelation 3:10) begins. Part three of the first resurrection takes place at Christ's Second Coming, at the end of the Tribulation, when the Tribulation martyrs and the Old Testament saints are resurrected. The fourth part of the first resurrection occurs at the end of Christ's 1000 year reign when believers who died during the Millennial Kingdom, along with all the innocents who died throughout history, are resurrected into their eternal, glorified bodies. *"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection"* (Revelation 20:5).

The Rapture is described by Paul: *"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and we shall ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The Rapture is the one-time transformation of living Christian believers into their eternal, glorified bodies at Christ's coming. The Rapture of living believers happens immediately after all who died in Christ during the Church Age are resurrected, and before the Tribulation begins. Nothing like the Rapture has ever happened before nor ever will again. Even Christ, the first fruits, physically died before being raised from the dead into his glorified body.

Who exactly will be taken up in the Rapture? Paul tells us, *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thessalonians 4:14). The sense in this verse is not one of uncertainty, but of declaration. Note that there is only one condition for a believer to participate in the resurrection and rapture: *"to believe that Jesus died and rose again."* This is the Gospel message. Paul confirms this in Romans 10:9: *"...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* Jesus clarifies our salvation by stating *"...you must be born again to see the Kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). Thus, all living "born again" Christians, who repent and believe in the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Christ for their sins, will be caught up to be with Him when He comes. Again, this Rapture of living believers happens immediately after the resurrection of all believers who died previously throughout

the Church Age. Considering the above verses and Christ's confirmation that being 'born again' is a requirement to be saved, it would be wise to consider the updated 2010 Census 'born again' numbers for Evangelicals to estimate more accurately the number of people most likely to be raptured. What more does the New Testament reveal that may help to clarify our estimate for the Rapture population?

The Narrow and Wide Gates

It should be possible to refine the estimate of those who will be raptured from Christ's own words. Jesus said: *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV)). According to Jesus, most people will not be saved, despite His free gift of salvation, available to all who believe and receive it in faith.

The word *few* in this passage is important. In the dictionary, the word *few* is defined as: "a number, more than one; a small number of persons". Interestingly, numbers represented by the word *few* do not necessarily increase in proportion to an increasing number in the population set it may represent. For example, in the statement: "There were only a few survivors in the plane crash", the number represented by the few who survived would remain fairly constant regardless of whether the plane had 10, 160, or 360 people on board when it crashed. A few out of 100, out of 1,000, or out of 100,000 is still just a few. This principle is reflected in the numbers we saw for those saved in the flesh in three of the four Old Testament events described in Part 1. A *few* equates to 8 out of billions in the Flood, 3 out of thousands at Sodom and Gomorrah, and possibly 10+ out of thousands at Jericho.

When *few* represents a percentage (a few percent, for example), the number can be much larger than the dictionary definition, and it can have a significant impact on large numbers, even when changes are made by only one or two percent: 1-3% of 100 = 1-3, 1-3% of 1,000,000 = 10,000-30,000, 1-3% of 1 billion = 10 -30 million. Jesus did not use the term "a few percent" in the 'wide and narrow gate' passage. He used the word *few*. Thus, when analyzing percentages concerning the word *few* we must be careful. If, for example, the 'small gate' in Jesus' story represents those projected to be raptured, does one percent or less of the world population, or 14 percent, more reasonably fit the parable? For now, we will assume that the *few* represented in this passage appropriately applies to the number we would expect to be raptured.

The Parable of the Sower

In the parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15) Jesus gives us an example of how to estimate the number of true believing Christians in large populations, and thus, determine a percentage for those who might actually be raptured. In the parable, the Sower sowed his seed. Some seed fell by the way, some fell on the rocks, some fell in the thorns, and some fell on good soil. Jesus revealed the meaning of the parable. The seed is the Word of God. The seed that fell by the way represents those who hear the Word, but Satan takes the Word out of their hearts before they can be saved. The seed that fell on the rocks represents those who hear the Word and are filled with joy, but they have no root, so they believe for a while, but in time, they fall to temptation. The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear the Word and go forth, but are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures in this life and they

fail to mature as Christians. The seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and keep the Word, are honest, have a good heart, and bring forth much fruit with patience.

For a given population, if we assume that 25% of the seed falls equally on each type of ground, the simple conclusion is that the 25% of seed that fell in good soil represents 25% of a given population who become true Christians. In the real world, of course, there is not an equal distribution of the seed (the Word) among a given population nor is there an equal response to the seed by the population who receives it. I believe this parable reveals two rates of attrition: one for those who hear the Word and either respond or don't respond, and one for those who do respond and either mature or fail to mature as Christians.

A realistic application of this parable might, for example, be applied to a twentieth-century Billy Graham Crusade to understand the numbers based on the two rates of attrition. Assume a stadium is filled with 40,000 people who hear the Word through Dr. Graham's message. After hearing the message, 39,000 do not respond, but 1,000 come forward at the altar call and make a commitment to Christ. If we apply an equal distribution of the seed to the 1,000 who came forward, we have:

- 250 who responded, but the Word did not dwell in their hearts
- 250 who responded with joy, but the Word had no root
- 250 who responded, but the cares and pleasures of life prevented maturity
- **250** who responded, believed, kept the Word, matured and bore fruit

In this case, the 1,000 who responded to the message represent 2.5% of the total population, but the 250 who actually matured as Christians represent just six-tenths of one percent of the 40,000 in attendance at the crusade.

We know that a sower doesn't intentionally distribute seed equally in the wayside, on rocks, and on thorny ground. He distributes most of the seed on good soil. If we assume 70% of the seed was distributed on good soil and 10% on each of the remaining soils, the distribution for the 1,000 who made the altar call would be as follows.

- 39,000 received but did not respond to the Word.
- 100 responded, but the Word did not dwell in their hearts
- 100 responded with joy, but the Word had no root
- 100 responded, but the cares and pleasures of life prevented maturity
- 700 responded, believed, kept the Word, matured and bore fruit

In this case, the 700 who believed and kept the Word represents about 1.8% of the 40,000 who received the Word. Based on a Billy Graham crusade, we see how these examples provide a more realistic application of Jesus' guidance from the parable because they consider the reality of attrition and it includes Christians who may not be prepared for the Rapture. In both cases, the percentages from the examples in the parable of the sower (.6% and 1.8%) are much closer to the 1% estimate of the updated demographics in Table 1 than the 14% projected by the prophecy experts. Also, these percentages compare well with the Barna estimate for the percentages of Roman Catholics believed to be evangelical and for the Messianic Jews projected to be raptured out of the global Jewish population.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Bridesmaids)

The parable of the ten virgins (bridesmaids) in Matthew 25:1-13 is the most sobering passage about the Rapture in Scripture because it deals with the issue of preparedness. This is a clear Rapture passage, based on the traditional Jewish marriage covenant between a groom and his bride. In the passage, the groom is betrothed to the bride. She remains at home in her father's house, making preparations for the wedding feast until the groom, who departed to go prepare a place for his bride (Matthew 14:1-3),

returns unexpectedly (without warning) at a future time to claim his bride and to consummate the marriage. Jesus represents the bridegroom in the parable, and the Church (body of believers) is represented by the bridal party who await the bridegroom’s return (Revelation 19: 7-10).

The ten virgins (bridesmaids) in the bridal party represent members of the church who anticipate and await the bridegroom’s return and the wedding feast to follow. The bridesmaids know the groom; They know-he will return for his bride, and they know they must be prepared for the groom’s unannounced, sudden return if they are to be included in the wedding party. In the parable, however, five of the ten bridesmaids (one half) were not watchful or prepared when the bridegroom suddenly and unexpectedly returns.

The sobering point in the parable is Jesus’ response to the unprepared bridesmaids: *“Later the others came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matthew 25:11-13).* Here Christ reveals that only half of those professing to know him and to believe He will return will be prepared and taken when He returns. Jesus isn’t telling us that half of those who profess to be Christian or claim to know Christ will be raptured. He’s telling us that only half of those who-believe both in Christ and in the coming pre-tribulation rapture will be prepared for this imminent event when it happens. The parable of the bridesmaids calls into question the reliability of not just the prophecy expert’s projections, but those based on the census and demographic data as well. If we apply Jesus’ prediction (50%) from the parable of the bridesmaids to the updated demographic and “born again” Christian numbers in Table 1 (below), the estimate for the number raptured falls to less than one half of one percent of the global population for each category (2 & 3 below).

Table 1 –Estimates for the Global Raptured Population

Source	Est. Number Raptured	Ratio Raptured	Percent Raptured
1. Prophecy Experts	1 billion	1 out of 7	14.0%
2. Updated Demographics	70 million (35 million)*	1 out of 100 (200)*	1.0% (0.5%)*
3. “Born Again” Christians	47 million (24 million)*	1 out of 150 (300)*	0.67% (0.34%)*

**Numbers adjusted for 50% preparedness from the Parable of the Bridesmaids (parentheses)*

The numbers above are a projection for the global population, but what about the numbers for American Christians? We recall from Part 1 that, in 2001, Barna estimated only 9% of adult American Christians were considered to be Evangelical (having a Christian world view), and by 2019, the percentage had fallen to 6%. If we continue to assume Evangelicals are the group most likely to be raptured and that the U.S. Christian population of 170 million in the 2000 census remained constant, then only about 10.2 million (170M x .06) American Christians are estimated by Barna to be Evangelical today. Moreover, if we assume that 100% of this group is both “born again” and believes in the coming Rapture, based on Jesus’ prediction in the parable of the bridesmaids, only half of this group or about 5 million will actually be ready and be taken. This means that only about 2.9% of the American Christian population, or less than 1.6% of the total U.S. population, will likely be raptured. Unfortunately, the Christian population today is notably smaller than it was in 2000.

The parable of the bridesmaids reveals that in addition to knowing about or believing in a pre-tribulation Rapture, believers must be prepared for it. Is the church prepared today? Are you? The Rapture is an imminent, signless event that comes suddenly and without warning. Paul tells us to be “children of light, not of darkness ...”, and to prepare so that the day (the Rapture) should not surprise us like a thief...so then, let us not be like others, who sleep...” (1 Thess 5: 4-6). If Paul was telling this to believers of his day, it is critically important for us to be prepared today, because all the signs point to the Lord’s soon return. There is no sign or prophecy requiring fulfillment for the Rapture to happen. Unfortunately, the church is doing little to nothing to prepare for what’s coming.

In his presentation at the annual 2019 Lamb/Lion Ministries Bible Prophecy conference, titled, - **In Defense of Jesus’ Promise to Return**, Dr. Ron Rhodes, cited a survey of Protestant pastors, saying that “...90% of them do not expect that Christ will really ever return to earth again.” He went on to say that if pastors don’t believe in Christ’s return, they won’t preach or teach Christ’s return. Thus, if 90% of Protestant pastors and virtually no Catholic priests believe in or teach a pre-tribulation rapture, it’s not difficult to understand why as many as 95+% of all Christians are not prepared for an event they either don’t believe in or know nothing about. About two thousand years ago, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day for their failure to recognize His Coming. He told them, “You know how to look at the sky and predict the weather, but you don’t know how to recognize the signs of the times” (Matthew 16:1-3). Even though they knew the Old Testament Messianic prophecies, they failed to recognize the Messiah. In the same manner, today’s religious leaders are failing to recognize the signs or they intentionally ignore them, resulting in the church being woefully unprepared for the Messiah’s soon return.

How can we prepare for the Rapture?

Scripture is quite clear about what we must do to prepare for this “once in history” event. Paul reveals in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, how, as children of light, we are to prepare for the Rapture. We must:

1. “...believe that Christ died and rose again...”(4:14)
2. “...be alert and self-controlled...”(5:6)
3. “...encourage one another and build each other up...”(5:11)
4. “...warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (5:14).
5. “Be joyful always, *pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances...*”(5:16-18)
6. “*Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt*” (5:19)
7. “Test everything. Hold on to the good. *Avoid every kind of evil*” (5:21-22)

Like the seed sown in good soil, mature, born again believers are not surprised by the Lord’s requirements. This is God’s guidance for what true believers in Christ must do to remain strong in the faith and to attain eternal life, regardless of the Rapture. Notice that knowledge of the Rapture is not on Paul’s list as a prerequisite to being raptured. Even so, these requirements describe the group of “born again” believers who know their Savior and who will be prepared and taken when the Rapture suddenly happens without warning. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Christians today have succumbed to the rocks, thorns, and waysides that tempt them away from a focus on Christ in their lives

- thus they fail to mature, they fail to prepare, and they will be left behind at the Rapture. Mature Christians are those who continually live their lives for Christ, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, believe in the gospel, pray and give thanks regularly, read the Bible, believe in and study the prophecies and avoid every kind of evil. They are the children of light who will be prepared and taken whenever Christ returns to claim His bride.

According to Scripture, as the day of the Lord approaches, the population of true believers among non-persecuted Christians will steadily decline. Jesus said that in our time it will be like it was in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:38-39) – a time of increased violence and immorality coupled with a great falling away from the faith (Matthew 24:10); in part because of great apostasy in the church and an increase in the world-wide persecution of Christians (Matthew 24:9) – something we now see happening, even in America. To understand the impact of Christian persecution in the Rapture, we must consider Christ's final warning about the condition of the church at the end of the age and the impact it will likely have on the Rapture estimate. Christ's letters to the seven churches in Revelation 1-3 provide much illumination about the modern end time church and the increase in Christian persecution.

In his article titled, **The Death of the Church**, Gary Stearman clearly describes how modern Christendom has become the Laodicean church of Revelation 3:14-22. Stearman goes on to say that “although the Seven Churches of Revelation do, to some degree, lay out a historical pattern, they don't reveal events that can be used to time the arrival of future events. This is true, but I believe that by considering the condition described for each of the seven churches, and by consolidating and applying those conditions to the modern church, a clear pattern emerges that can be linked to the demographic and census data we've considered thus far. In His review of the seven churches, Jesus had nothing bad to say about Smyrna, the persecuted church (Rev 2:8-11) or Philadelphia, the Evangelical church (Rev 3: 7-13). The five remaining churches were given mostly bad reports, especially Laodicea, the church of our time, of which nothing good was said. For the Rapture analysis, we will consider three Revelation end time churches: Smyrna, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, and attempt to distribute the global Christian population among them to see how the resulting estimate for those likely to be raptured might differ from the Table 1 data developed so far.

1. The Philadelphia church - This will be our end time Evangelical church. In part 1, the world- wide Evangelical population was estimated to be 6% of the global Protestant Christian population of 900 million or 70 million in 2019. This number includes 16 million evangelical Catholics and 300,000 Messianic Jews. If we assume that only about 50% (following the parable of the Bridesmaids) will be prepared for the Rapture, then about 35 million members of the end time Philadelphia church would potentially be raptured.
2. The Smyrna church – This is our end time persecuted church. None of the census or demographic data we've considered breaks out persecuted Christians as a group. Even so, The Voice of the Martyrs and Open Doors USA, who both minister to persecuted Christians, estimate the global population of persecuted Christians to be about 200 million. For our analysis, Open Doors USA estimates that about 13 million persecuted Christians live in the worst eighteen nations for Christian

persecution and about 180 million live in the next 30 Christian persecuting nations. Let's assume that 100% of the persecuted Christians in the worst 18 nations and 50% of those in the remaining 30 nations are the persecuted population most likely to be raptured. Thus, about 100 million persecuted Christians would potentially be raptured (even though most may have no knowledge of the Rapture). Nevertheless, Jesus knows the hearts of men and He has a merciful heart for the persecuted.

3. The Laodicean Church - Laodicea is the modern end time church that contains the remaining global population of Christians, including the non-evangelical populations from the four remaining Revelation churches: Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis. This population includes the seed from Jesus' parable of the Sower that was sown by the wayside, on rocky ground and in thorns, that fails to mature and bear fruit. It includes those who believe in or adhere to non-biblical tenets and doctrines, including a "works" based salvation, Replacement Theology, Amillennialism, New Age and Emergent church theologies, and any other gospel that rejects the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord reveals that because the Laodicean church is neither hot nor cold – He will "...spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev 3:16). Thus, the end time Laodicean church population will likely include about 1.5 billion non-evangelical Catholics and 500 million non-evangelical Protestants, or an estimated 2 billion non-evangelical Christians who populate the end time Laodicean church. Members of this group are the least likely to be raptured and the most likely to be left behind.

The estimate from the combined Smyrna and Philadelphia churches for this end time church of Revelation reflects an increase in the potential Rapture population, primarily because persecuted Christians were not considered as a distinct and separate population in previous analyses. The estimate for the Revelation church is line 4 below:

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3. "Born Again" Christians	47 million (24 million)*	1 out of 150 (300)*	0.67% (0.34%)*
4. Revelation church	135 million	1 out of 50	1.9%

**Numbers adjusted for 50% preparedness from the Parable of the Bridesmaids (parentheses)*

Conclusion

This study began with prophecy experts predicting that more than 1 billion, or one out of every seven people on the planet, will be raptured. Their estimates are believed to be high, in part because the data upon which they were based is 10-20 years old (2000 and 2010 census), and in part because they seem to be significantly out of line with what Scripture actually reveals. If 14% of the global population consisted of true "born again" Christians, there would be no need for a Rapture. There was never a time history when 14% of the global population believed in the God of the Bible.

Interestingly, in Part 1 of this paper, Pete Garcia indicated that it isn't non-believers who so despise and disregard the Rapture. They don't care. It is other Christians. According to Barna, only 6% of American

Christians have a Christian world view and are likely to believe in a pre-tribulation Rapture. Contrast this with a 2014 CBS News poll that revealed 66% of those polled believed in heaven as their eternal destiny and a recent Pew Research poll revealed the number to be 74% for the same question. How is it possible for so many to believe in an eternal heaven, while so few believe in the prophesied Rapture, when the eternal destination and the requirements to qualify for both are exactly the same? The answer should be obvious. It's all about the timing. For most people, heaven is a place to go when you die. 'Since we die when we are old, there will be plenty of time, after living life our way, to prepare for heaven' is the sentiment. The Rapture, on the other hand, is a signless, imminent event that will transform and transport prepared believers of all ages, to heaven, instantly. It will happen without warning, even as this paper is being read. For the generation who experiences the Rapture (and I believe ours is that generation), preparation is not an option. It cannot be put off. It must be prepared for now, just as Jesus shared in His parable of the bridesmaids. The recently released DVD titled **The Coming Wrath** by Brent Miller, Jr. magnificently reveals, through the ancient Galilean wedding covenant, how critical it is for believing Christians to prepare and remain prepared for the coming Rapture of the church.

What's been revealed in this paper cannot be considered conclusive because only God knows the hearts of men and only He knows the precise number of souls who will be raptured. Even so, from this conservative analysis, based on a literal interpretation of Scripture, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. There will not be one billion or more (one out of seven) souls taken from this planet in the Rapture.
2. All children on the earth will not be taken in the Rapture.
3. Based on a literal interpretation of Scripture, it is reasonable to conclude that less than 1% of the world population will be raptured (and it may be significantly less).
4. The requirements to qualify for eternal life and for the Rapture are exactly the same.
5. The Rapture will happen suddenly and without warning, so only those alive who are 'born again' and have matured or are actively maturing as Christians will be raptured.
6. God has a heart for the persecuted, thus, the largest population of souls to be raptured will be persecuted Christians.
7. All those alive who believe in Jesus Christ, that He rose from the dead on the third day, and who repent of their sins, commit their lives to Him and grow and mature in their faith in Him will have eternal life and will be Raptured.

Given the above points, this student of Bible prophecy concludes that **THE WORLD IS WOEFULLY UNPREPARED FOR THE COMING PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE**. My sincere prayer is that this paper is broadly disseminated, critically reviewed and openly discussed among religious leaders, prophecy experts and especially those who believe in a pre-tribulation Rapture, so that a unified, Scripture supported message will emerge to clearly and truthfully inform and prepare our woefully unprepared world for what is coming. May the Lord bless and use this work for His purposes and glory. Amen