

HISTORY OF THE RAPTURE UPDATE, PART 2

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

Last issue I looked at a possible pre-trib rapture find from the *Apocalypse of Elijah*. This month I will be surveying the findings of Dr. William Watson and his pre-trib rapture discoveries of the 1600s from the English-speaking world.¹ Dr. Watson has a M.Div. from Talbot Theological Seminary in California and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside in Early Modern British History (16th–18th centuries). Thus, he is well qualified to research the seventeenth century English-speaking world and their writings on biblical prophecy. Watson has been doing just that for the last seven years and has come up with some interesting finds in relation to pretribulationism. I will simply present what Watson classifies as pre-trib rapture statements without comment.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The 1600s was the greatest period of biblical Christianity in the history of England as the Puritans turned the nation toward a study of the Bible that had not been seen up till their time. With the revival in the Universities of Hebrew and Greek, and the Bible in English available to a large part of the population, many books and tracts were published on various biblical and theological topics. There are a great number of books on Bible prophecy that were published in those days. (I will use the original spelling.)

Robert Maton (1607–1653) in *Israel's Redemption* (1642) says, “why shall the elect onely be gathered together and the rest left behind... they shall be left, either to perish in that great destruction, which shall come upon all Nations that fight against the Jewes, whom our Saviour shall then redeem: Or to bee eye-witnesses of Gods wonders in all Countreys at that time.”

John Archer (1598–1682) in *The Personal Reign of Christ upon Earth* (1642) says, “when he comes from Heaven to set up his Kingdom, he will raise up all Saints who are dead before his coming, ... as Christ had a middle State betwixt his Resurrection and Ascension for forty days; so shall his Saints have who dye before his coming from Heaven; ...but they shall have a middle state betwixt glory and mortality...yet he said then to come from Heaven, although he had come before, therefore he must have gone to heaven again ... and in this place they are kept till this Kingdome of Christ come...”

Ephraim Huit (1604–1644) in *The whole Prophecie of Daniel Explained* (1643) says, “deliverance from outward trials is expressed by the Lords coming in the clouds...in the deliverance of his Church, from Egypt, and preservation in the wildernesse is described by his riding on the heavens... upon, this coming of the Son of Man in the clouds is given to the Iewes ...but upon the Incarnation of our Lord, the kingdom was taken from the Iewes, and given to the Gentiles [until] the summoning of the Elect by the sound of a trumpet... our Lord Mat 24.30. & his beloved disciple Iohn Rev 1.7. do couple this coming of the Son of man in the Cloudes with that holy wailing of the Iewes in their conuersion...Zac 12.10.”

Nathaniel Homes (1599–1678) in *The Resurrection Revealed* (1653) says, “Everyone (or, all mankind) shall rise in their order, Christ the first fruits... afterwards, they that are Christs at his coming... notes a distance of time of above a thousand and a halfe of yeers... the rapture of the Saints into the clouds, to be their present translation into heaven... this our gathering together unto Christ at his coming (so the Apostle calls this rapture, 2 Thess.2.1.) we shall from henceforth never lose his presence, but always enjoy it. Partly on earth, during his reign of the thousand yeers, and partly in heaven, when wee shall be translated thither. [Why] this rapture of

the Saints on high to meet the Lord in the clouds, rather than to wait his coming to the earth. What if it be, that they may be preserved during the conflagration of the earth, and the works thereof, 2 Pet.3.10. That as Noah, and his family were preserved from the deluge, by being lift up above the waters in the Ark, so should the Saints at the conflagration be lift up in the clouds unto their Ark, Christ, to be preserved there from the Deluge of fire, wherein the wicked shall be consumed?”

James Durham (1622–1658) in *A Commentarie upon the Book of the Revelation* (1658) says, “1. Antichrist Rome’s destruction, her people lament, but the Saints sing ‘Alleluja’
2. Preparation for the Bride (Church): the first resurrection, ‘clothed in fine linen’
3. The Lambs order and army...after the Lambs marriage...a flourishing Church, able to send out Armies...not only Angels and Saints glorified; but such of the Church, as are arrayed...”

John Birchensha (@1630s–1681) in *The History of the Scripture* (1660) says, “The dead shall be raised,... some of them which did slay them, shall behold them when they ascend into heaven in a Cloud,... A tenth part... will leave the great Whore; partly abhorring her cruelties, partly seeing the mighty wonders of God in raising the dead, and partly foreseeing the judgements ready to fall upon the Babylonish and Papal Empire. And...the Lord will put it into their hearts of the Jews (having seen the sign of the Sonne of Man in Heaven, and being convinced that their Messiah is come) to imbodye, in order to a journie into their owne Land. ... All Nations shall be brought against Jerusalem to battle; for Wars will be among the Turks, as well as among those who are called Christians; and the spoile shall be divided in the midst of Jerusalem: and the City shall be taken, and the houses spoiled, and the women defiled... But the Heathen shall not long possess the Holy City: For now the Lord will come to give his Saints possession of their own Land: And he will come with All his Saints...”

William Sherwin (1607–1687) in *Eirenikon: or a Peaceable consideration of Christ’s Peaceful Kingdom on Earth* (1665) says, “the Saints...jointly at the sounding of that last Trumpet at the end of the world shall be changed in a moment, at the twinkling of an eye...be rapt up to meet Christ in the air... the end of the fourth Monarchy...which agree with the times of the seventh Trumpet... Christ by a change before, in an instant delivers the faithful then alive, from that temporal destruction, and the ruine of the Antichrist... The examples of the Flood in Noahs time, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Lots time are instances... he will raise all his people that then sleep in the grave, to reign on earth with him, till the great multitude of their fellow-members be come in. This Doctrine many of the ancient Fathers acknowledged ...Justine Martyr...Irenaeus...Tertullian...even Augustine sometime held it, though by the subtlety of Satan, forgeinglyes to asperse the Millenary opinion, and stirring men up to foist in offensive errorrs...in these latter times hath again discovered it, after so many hundred years of its lying hid for the most part in the Church, to be a doctrine really embraced by his faithful people [who] will doubtless certainly know, that upon their rapture to meet Christ, they shall be perfected in glory evermore in heaven.”

John Mason (1646–1694) in *The Midnight Cry* (1691) says “Watch therefore, for you know not the Day, nor the hour, when the Son of man cometh’... why the doctrine of Christ’s Kingdom hath met with so cold a reception, especially when the time of the End draws near... they who live in the daily expectation of the coming of Christ, are the most lively zealous Christians. When ‘the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled’ Christ... will reign here upon earth... there will be a Tribulation. This goes before the Destruction of Babylon, it comes on the Protestant Churches, Repent Quickly... Immediately after this, the Sun is darkened... This is an Overthrow...of the fourth great Empire, the Papal Empire, the Popes having the Fag-end of the

Roman Empire... the Destruction of Mystical Babylon. Then comes the Conversion of the Jews: the appearance of the Son of Man, the Tribes mourning... 'then shall two be in the Field, the one shall be taken, and the other left.'"

Thomas Beverly (no dates) in *The Dead Raised First* (1691) says, "there must be... a space of Time between the Time of the Saints dead in Christ [martyrs] Rising first, who Answer to the Saints of the First Resurrection; and the Saints chang'd, who Answer to the Partakers of the First Resurrection; and the Time of these Chang'd Saints being Caught up... Both of these Saints Live and Reign with Christ a thousand years."

Sam Petto (no dates) in *The Revelation Unveiled* (1693) says, "The Rise or first State of this Kingdom, will be speedily after the Resurrection of the Witnesses, and the first conversion of the Jews. Rev. 11.12,15. and before the Thousand Years begin. This is the Kingdom of Stone, Dan.2.34,45. Whose beginning will be small, and its way unpeaceable and troublesome, conflicting with Enemies, yet prevailing against and breaking of them, v.45."

Anonymous tract in *A Short Survey of the Kingdom of Christ here on Earth with his Saints* (1699) says, "those saints that are then alive shall not prevent the rising of the Saints that were dead at the coming of Christ... for the dead in Christ shall be raised first; then the Saints alive in the Body, in this mortal state, shall be changed... in the twinkling of an eye, less than a moment, raise all the dead Saints, and change all the Saints then alive into an incorruptible immortal state... They shall be caught up in the Clouds to meet the Lord in the Air... in this appearing of Christ. but here it's another sight of Christ, viz. as their Judg: for so he will be to the Sinner and ungodly, when he shall come the second time in the Clouds of Heaven... coming to enter upon his Kingdom here on Earth, with all his Saints in a glorified State, after having received their gloried bodies, and after meeting their Lord in the air], prepared for this great Assize and Judgment of the World." Maranatha!

¹ Dr. Watson's full paper entitled "Pretribulational Rapture in 17th & 18th Century England" can be obtained at the following: <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Watson-PretribulationalRapt.pdf>.