

Bible Reasons for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Text: Rev. 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10

Introduction:

- Amongst Bible believers there are a number of views on the timing of the rapture. There are 5 main views as follows:
 1. The Pre-Tribulation (Pretrib) Rapture View: Pretribulationists believe the Rapture will occur before the seven-year Tribulation.
 2. The Mid-Tribulation (Midtrib) Rapture View: Midtribulationists teach the Rapture will take place halfway through the seven years of Tribulation.
 3. The Post-Tribulation (Postrib) Rapture View: Posttribulationists believe Christ will rapture the church after the seven-year Tribulation.
 4. The Partial Rapture View: Adherents of this view teach Christ will rapture so-called spiritual Christians before the Tribulation, but all others will go through it. This view focuses more on the qualifications of individual Christians to be raptured, rather than on the timing of the Rapture.
 5. The Pre-wrath Rapture View: Proponents of this position, a modified midtribulational view, believe the Rapture will occur sometime during the last half of the Tribulation.
- A careful study of the Scriptures reveals that the Pre-Tribulation view of the rapture is the Scriptural position. In this presentation, we will study **10 Bible reasons for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.**

I. The Purpose of the Tribulation is for Israel, not the Church (Dan. 9:24-27)

A. Jews – “thy people”

1. To try and include the church into this prophecy results in confusion. God is NOT dealing with the church in this prophecy but the nation of Israel.
2. This provides a strong argument against the pre-wrath, mid-trib or post-trib rapture theories. To inject the church into the 70th week of Daniel is confusion. God is dealing with Israel and the ungodly earth dwellers during this time to bring her to repentance, not the church! (See also Dan. 12:7 & Rev. 3:10)
3. The Tribulation is called the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7)
4. Israel is the focus of the Olivet Discourse (See Matt. 24:14-22). Notice the reference to the temple (Vs. 15), ‘Judea’ (Vs. 16) and the “sabbath day” (Vs. 20)
5. Israel is the focus of Rev. 4-19. We have the 144,000 Jewish servants of God are sealed in Revelation 7; the 2 Jewish witnesses prophesying from Jerusalem (Rev. 11) and Israel pictured as a woman in Rev. 12 where she escapes from the dragon.

6. God has 2 programs, 1 for Israel and 1 for the church and the two must NOT be confused. They are like separate trains, running on two separate railroad tracks.

B. Jerusalem – “thy holy city”

1. Jerusalem the focal point of this prophecy.
2. Jerusalem is already becoming the focus of world attention which is setting the stage for Antichrist’s treaty with Israel.

II. The Purpose and Nature of the Church Requires a Pre-Tribulation Rapture

- A. The church was a mystery (Eph. 3:4-6) and is a unique and distinct entity.
- B. The church age must end prior to Israel’s national conversion (Rom. 11:25).

III. The Rapture is a message of Comfort for believers (1 Thess. 4:18)

- A. Which view of the rapture brings comfort to your life?
- B. The message of the rapture would hardly be a comfort if we were going through all or most of the tribulation!

IV. The Doctrine of Immanency

- A. The rapture is a sign less event, it can happen at any time whereas the second coming is preceded by definite signs.
- B. Definition: The word ‘imminent’ combines both certainty and uncertainty. When used of the coming of Christ, it means that his coming is a sure and certain event but the timing of that event is uncertain. An understanding of this truth creates a spirit of anticipation and expectancy. “On the certainty of the event, our faith is grounded: by the uncertainty of the time, our hope is stimulated, and our watchfulness aroused.” (Alford)
- C. The theme of immanency is found numerous times throughout the New Testament (See Rom. 13:11-12; Phil. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:4-9; Titus 2:13; James 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20).
- D. The truth that Christ could come at any moment is a key motivator for godly living (1 John 3:3).
- E. Illustration: EXPECTING THE RAPTURE

A gardener for a large estate in northern Italy was conducting a visitor through the castle and the beautiful, well-groomed grounds. As the visitor had lunch with the gardener and his wife, he commended them for the beautiful way they were keeping the gardens. He asked, “By the way, when was the last time the owner was here?”

“About ten years ago.” The gardener replied.

The visitor asked, "Then why do you keep the gardens in such an immaculate, lovely manner?"

The gardener replied, "Because I'm expecting him to return."

"Is he coming next week?"

The gardener replied, "I don't know when he is coming, but I am expecting him today." We are to work while we wait for the rapture! Source Unknown

V. The Wedding takes Place before the Second Advent (Luke 12:35-40)

- A. Note particularly Vs. 36 which tells us that Christ will "return from the wedding."
- B. "The wedding of Christ and His church must therefore occur BEFORE the Lord returns so the Bride must be taken to heaven for the wedding BEFORE The end of the tribulation!" (J. Ecob)

VI. The Church Age Believers are Promised Mansions in Heaven (John 14:1-3)

- A. This is the Upper Room Discourse that comes after the Olivet Discourse so is new revelation. It is of interest to note that Judas is now absent John 13:30).
- B. Christ's promise reveals that we are received up into the Father's House (heaven) whereas in the second coming Christ comes to earth (feet stand upon the Mount of Olives) and Christ sets up His earthly kingdom.
- C. Review background of Jewish wedding custom

VII. The Holy Spirit is Removed before the Tribulation and Revelation of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:6-8)

- A. The Restrainer is Someone powerful enough to hold back Satan (Vs. 9). And He is a Person (note personal pronouns).
- B. 'letteth' = To retard; to hinder; to impede; to interpose obstructions (Webster)
- C. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as the restrainer of sin in Scripture (See Gen. 6:3; Isaiah 59:19)
- D. Lewis Sperry Chafer: "To achieve all that is to be accomplished, the Restrainer must be one of the Godhead. Even a casual contemplation of the power required will convince the open mind of this necessity; and, since the Holy Spirit is the active Executor of the Godhead in the world during this age, it is reasonable to conclude that He it is who restrains. Doubtless His restraint operates both directly and through the Church in which He dwells. When His work of gathering out the Church is

completed – that for which He came into the world – He, the Spirit, the Restrainer, will be removed from the world as resident here and reassume His positions as omnipresent only, as He is everywhere. The right understanding of this important Scripture depends upon recognition of the distinction to be observed between the Spirit's relation to the world as resident therein or omnipresent. He who was always omnipresent became resident on the Day of Pentecost; He who is now resident will become merely omnipresent on the completion of that which He came on the Day of Pentecost to achieve. It is as clearly asserted that the believer can never be separated from the Holy Spirit. Christ's prayer that cannot go un-answered was that the Spirit should abide with believers forever (John 14:16); therefore, when the Spirit, the Restrainer, is "taken out of the way," the Church will of necessity be removed with Him." (Systematic Theology Volume IV, Pg. 372)

VIII. The Book of Revelation shows the Church is not on Earth during the Tribulation

- A. The church is mentioned 19 times in Rev. chapters 1-3. The church isn't seen again until chapter 19 when she returns with Christ. The word 'church' does not appear again until the very end of the Book in Rev. 22:16.
- B. Notice the phrase "After this" in Rev. 4:1. After what? After the church age described in chapters 2-3.
- C. It is interesting that when we come to the familiar phrase "If any man have an ear, let him hear" in Rev. 13:9, it does not include the usual "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" as in chapter 2 & 3. This is because the church is not there!
- D. The bulk of N.T. instruction is to the church (e.g. the Epistles). If it was God's will that we go through something as major as the tribulation, isn't it strange that the Bible is silent on instructions to prepare us for such a time? Why the absence of any instruction or warning to the church about the tribulation if it is God's will for us to go through it?
- E. The focus shifts sharply from the church in Chapter 2 & 3 to Israel and the unbelieving world in chapter 4-19.

IX. The Church is Promised Deliverance from God's wrath (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9)

- A. 1 Thess. 1:10
 - 1. "to wait for" = to await, expect, wait up for. It "pictures them as people who were eagerly and expectantly looking forward to the coming of one whose arrival was anticipated at any time; the present tense gives this as their continuing attitude." (Hiebert)
 - 2. 'delivered' = rescued from
 - 3. "the wrath to come" = from the coming wrath
- B. 1 Thess. 5:9

1. Context: Paul has just taught the truth of the rapture (4:16-18) and has spoken of the “day of the Lord” with its “sudden destruction” (5:1-4).
2. We are then given the promise of Vs. 9.
 - a. ‘wrath’ = not the wrath of hell fire but the wrath of the day of the Lord. The word ‘wrath’ is used **10 times** in the Book of Revelation to describe God’s judgments in the Tribulation (Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15)
 - b. ‘salvation’ = the rescue of the rapture (4:16-18). Paul writing to saved believers so the reference is not to justification but to the future glorification we anticipate at the coming of Christ at the rapture.
3. Hiebert: “This negative assertion seems clearly to assure that believers will not have part in the coming Great Tribulation, when God’s wrath falls upon a Christ-rejecting world (Rev. 6:15-17; 14:10; 19:15). They are looking forward not to the coming of that day when God will display His wrath in divine judgment but to the coming of the Lord Himself who will deliver them from the very presence of sin.”
4. As believers we go through tribulations (trials) but not the Great Tribulation. As Andy Woods put it, “we go through tribulations little ‘t’ but not tribulation capital ‘T’.

X. The Church is Promised Deliverance from the entire Tribulation Period (Rev. 3:10-11)

A. The Exemption (Vs. 10)

1. The **Temptation** we are delivered from
 - a. ‘temptation’ = means testing and comes from the same root word as ‘try’ in the same verse.
 - b. “keep thee from” = the word ‘from’ is from the Greek word ‘ek’ meaning, out of. Therefore, the promise is that we will be kept out of this time of testing. Vs. 13 makes it clear that this promise was not only for the church of Philadelphia but for all true, Philadelphian churches throughout the church age.
2. The **Time** we are delivered from
 - a. “the hour of temptation” = this is clearly another description of the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob’s trouble, the 70th week of Daniel, the Day of the Lord. It is the time described in detail in Rev. 6-18.
 - b. “shall come upon all the world” = this is not a local persecution but a universal tribulation.
 - c. “to try them that dwell upon the earth” = reveals the purpose of the tribulation period. It is the time of God’s judgment on an

unbelieving world. Its purpose is to try the unbelievers, not the saints.

- d. Walvoord: "It should be noted that this deliverance is not only from trial but from a period of time in which the trial exists, "the hour of temptation." If the expression had been simply "deliverance from trial," conceivably it could have meant only partial deliverance. The expression seems as strong as possible that the Philadelphian church would be delivered from this period, which is the great tribulation, Daniels seventieth week (cf. Dan. 9:25-27).

B. The Exhortation (Vs. 11)

1. "Behold, I come quickly" = "strengthens the view that Vs. 10 promises a rapture before the tribulation." (Wiersbe) "It is an assurance to the church at large that it will be kept from that hour by the Lord's coming in the sky." (Phillips) The word 'come' is in the present tense to describe a future event with great certainty (Linguistic Key). As far as the church of Philadelphia was concerned, they were to be ready for Christ to come at any moment (immanency) prior to the outpouring of God's wrath in the Great Tribulation. Our expectancy is to be the same! The truth is clear! Christ will keep His church from the tribulation by coming for them at the rapture!
2. Thomas: "The placement of this fifth promise at this point is clear implication that deliverance of the faithful will occur in conjunction with His coming. To Philadelphia, this was a word of encouragement and comfort. It is an imminent event that will come suddenly and unexpectedly."

C. What about John 17:15? Post-Tribulationists try and use John 17:15 to prove that "kept from" can mean "preserved through". There use of this verse is incorrect for the following reasons:

1. We are dealing with two different contexts. "Words travel in meaning according to context." Note some key differences:
 - a. In John 17:15 the preservation is from evil, but in Rev. 3:10 it is from a period of time during which judgment will fall on the world.
 - b. In John 17:15 the disciples were already in the midst of evil, but in Rev. 3:10 the plagues of the tribulation period are still future.
2. Other weaknesses with the "preserved through" theory are¹:
 - a. The saints present in the tribulation period are not exempt from harm. Many of them will suffer martyrdom (See Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-14; 11:7; 13:7) The "incentive to persevere is in view. A promise

¹ Adapted from R. Thomas

of preservation is meaningless if the saints face the same fate as sinners during the Tribulation.” (Thomas)

- b. If we were meant to understand that we were promised preservation through then the Bible would have used the preposition ‘in’ or ‘through’.
- c. The immediate context of the church in Philadelphia disproves the “preserved through” interpretation. To a church that was already experiencing persecution and tribulation (Vs. 8-9), they are given the encouraging promise that they would be spared the future outpouring of God’s wrath.
- d. “This would encourage them in their present suffering to persevere a little longer, whereas the other option of preservation while remaining during the Tribulation would furnish no encouragement at all. The latter would be tantamount to a threat rather than a promise, a threat that for the remaining faithful, they would experience worse persecution than they had already. Such is completely inappropriate at this point in the message where a promise to motivate the recipient is required. Rather, they were encouraged to bear their present suffering and continue their faithfulness and endurance, because of the promised deliverance from the time of trouble that would overtake the world, but not overtake them.” (Thomas)

Conclusion:

1. Are you ready for the rapture? Are you saved? Are you serving?
2. Are you committed to the truth of the rapture and defending it as we are commanded in Jude 1:3?