

The Rapture

Introduction

Biblical Interpretation – Hermeneutics

Inspired – Meant to be taken literally

Symbolic language is used – Parables, allegories, similes

Even when symbolism is used, there is a literal meaning.

Meaning is found by comparing Scripture with Scripture

The Second Coming of Christ – Gr. *Parousia* – “appearance, presence”

The Rapture of the Church – John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
(A Biblical word – *harpazo* – Meaning “catch away”); 2 Thessalonians 2:3

The Glorious Return of Christ – Matthew 24:27-31; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16

Differences between the Rapture and the Glorious Return of Christ

The Rapture	The 2nd Coming
Christ comes for His own 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Christ returns with His own Revelation 19:11-16
Believers taken to Father's House John 14:1-3	Believers gathered from the Earth Matthew 24:31
Seen only by believers 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18	Every eye will see Him Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30
No reference to Satan	Satan bound Revelation 20:1-3
Earth not judged	Earth judged Revelation 20:4-5
A Mystery 1 Corinthians 15:51 ff.	Foretold in Old Testament Dan. 2:44; 12:1-3; Zech. 12:1-14; 14:3-4

Various Teachings about the Return of Christ

No literal return

Full Preterists – Say all of the Book of Revelation fulfilled in 70 AD, including the spiritual return of Christ.

Spiritual/Idealists – Say prophecy is motivational – calling believers to heroic living, endurance, and showing that good triumphs over evil in the end.

No Rapture of the Church, but a literal Return of Christ

Historicists – Say the Book of Revelation is a symbolic presentation of the entire church age.

Partial Preterists – Say most of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD, or at least by the Roman Empire, but the final chapters still look forward to a future second coming of Christ.

The Rapture of the Church and the literal Return of Christ (Futurists)

Pre-Tribulation Rapture – Say Jesus will return for the Church at (or before) the beginning of the Tribulation period.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture – Say Jesus will return for the Church at the mid-point of the Tribulation, just before the “Great Tribulation” begins.

Partial Rapture – Say Jesus will return before the Tribulation to receive those who are “waiting” for His return. Other believers may be taken during or at the end of the Tribulation.

Pre-Wrath Rapture – Say the Rapture will take place just before the Battle of Armageddon, the ultimate expression of God’s wrath.

Post-Tribulation Rapture – Say Christians have to suffer the trials of the Tribulation, but those who remain will be caught up by Jesus just before He returns to the Earth at the end of the Battle of Armageddon.

Pan-Tribulation Rapture – Say, “We don’t have a clue about the timing, but believe it will all pan out in the end.”

Evidence for a Pre-Trib Rapture of the Church

Any-moment expectation (Imminence)

In every age Christians have been expecting the return of Our Lord. Twice in the last chapter of Revelation He tells us, “I am coming quickly” (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20).

Paul referred to this ever-present possibility of Christ’s return as “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). He also taught that His coming could be at any time (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10), and it will be like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6).

Absence of the Church during the Tribulation

Revelation, Chapters 4 through 21

There are constant references to the church and the seven churches in Revelation chapters 1-3. In Revelation 4:1 John hears a trumpet and is told to “come up here.” The church is not mentioned during the whole Tribulation period. (Revelation 4:1-19:21).

The Centrality of Israel and Jewish People during the Tribulation

There are many “Saints” during the Tribulation. They are believers in Christ--Jews and Gentiles alike, but they are not referred to as the church, nor are any of the usual descriptions of the church attached to them. The apostate church of the period will be corrupt, and will give its influence to Antichrist (Revelation 18), so these Tribulation Saints will not be associated with this apostate church, the great harlot of Revelation 17.

Israel has a preeminent place during the tribulation period.

The tribulation is synonymous with Daniel's 70th Week (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13).

The 144,000 are sealed from the 12 tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:1-8).

The Two Witnesses are probably Old Testament leaders - Moses and Elijah (or, as some think, Enoch and Elijah) (Revelation 11:1-12).

The flight of Israel –(Revelation 12)

The treaty with Israel and defilement of the Temple (Revelation 13)

Deliverance of the Saints from Wrath

Note: Believers are *not* delivered from trials or persecution (1 Peter 4:12-19; Acts 5:40-41; Philippians 3:10; 2 Timothy 3:12) but they are delivered from God's *wrath* See below: **“Christians are not delivered from trials, but through them.”**

Keep on the alert...praying... that you may be worthy to escape all these things ... (Luke 21:34-38).

Delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation (adversity) (2 Peter 2:6-9).

I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world (Revelation 3:10—Church of Philadelphia [Missionary]).

Antichrist not revealed until hindering force is removed

The Day of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy [“departure” - reference to the Rapture] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction... And you know what restrains him now... For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8).

The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin (John 16:7-8).

Events between the Rapture and the Return

Saints in the presence of the Lord (Revelation 5)

24 Elders represent the redeemed saints (Revelation 5:8-10).

The Bema-seat judgment of Christians (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 4:2-5)

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9)

Population of the Millennium by mortal believers

The pre-Tribulation Rapture interpretation best explains this important feature of God's future plan. According to Jesus' teaching on the Mount of Olives, there will be a judgment of the nations (Sheep and Goats - Matthew 25:31-46) just before the Millennium, just prior to the commencement of the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-6). This taking of some and leaving of others is not the Rapture, but it corresponds to the Parable of The Wheat and The Tares (Matthew 13:24-30). In that parable, the tares are collected FIRST, and tied into bundles to be burned (later - The Great White Throne judgment), then the wheat is gathered into the barn. The wheat represents true believers who have survived the Tribulation period, and are thus permitted to enter the Millennial Age.

If the Rapture took place at, or near the end of the Tribulation, all believers would have glorified bodies, and there would be no righteous mortals left to enter the Millennium!

Objections to Pre-Trib Rapture of the Church

“The Rapture is not mentioned in the Olivet Discourse.”

The Church was a mystery, announced by Christ (Matthew 16:13-18), but not described until Paul's writings.

The "mystery" of the church was revealed to the Apostle Paul, and described by Him in numerous passages of Scripture. In Romans 11:25 he used the word to describe

the temporary "hardening" of Israel: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in."

The word "mystery" (Greek *musterion*) meant a "secret," or something formerly hidden, but now revealed.

In Romans 16:25, Paul calls the Gospel, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, a mystery. In Corinthians 15:51-58, he uses "mystery" to describe the resurrection and the glorified body that believers will receive.

Paul taught that it was a mystery (formerly hidden, but now revealed) that all things will eventually be brought together under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10).

In Ephesians 3 the Apostle explained in greater detail that the mystery of the church was part of God's purpose all along to make Gentiles heirs together with Israel.

“Christians are not delivered *from* trials, but *through* them.”

Believers are allowed to suffer trials and persecution (Book of Job; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Timothy 3:12), **but are delivered from God's wrath** – such as the flood, (Genesis 7:1) Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:15-17); Nineveh (Jonah chapter 3), and the 10th plague in Exodus (death of the firstborn—Exodus 12:12-13).

“The Last Trump should be identified with the seventh trumpet in the Book of Revelation.”

This trumpet should be related to the last trumpet blown at the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), The Jewish New Year festival (Leviticus 23:32-32),

Differences between the two trumpets:

Rapture - 1 Thessalonians 4:16 - The trump of God / Revelation 10:7 – Trumpet blown by an angel.

Events at the Rapture – “In the twinkling of an eye” / Events at 7th trumpet take several days

Result at the Rapture – joy and transformation / Result of 7th trumpet – “the third woe” (Revelation 11:14)

“The Church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29) was in danger of going into the Great Tribulation.”

This represents the period of the Dark Ages of the Catholic Church. Representatives of all church ages still exist today. The idolatrous, unfaithful church will indeed exist during the Tribulation, and will give its power to Antichrist. Contrast this with the promise to the Philadelphia church – deliverance of the saints from wrath.

“The Pre-Trib view was not developed until recently.”

Justin Martyr was pre-trib (about AD 100)

Irenaeus and Lactantius of the second and third centuries made apparently or explicitly premillennial statements (Paul Thigpin, “The Second Coming,” Charisma, Feb. 1989, p. 44)

Ephraem of Nisibis, the most important and prolific of the Syrian Church fathers (306-373) taught the pre-trib position in a sermon entitled, “On the Last Times, The Antichrist, and The End of the World.” He wrote, “For all the saints and Elect of God are gathered prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overtake the world because of our sins.” (Chuck Missler, Personal Update, June 1995, p. 12)