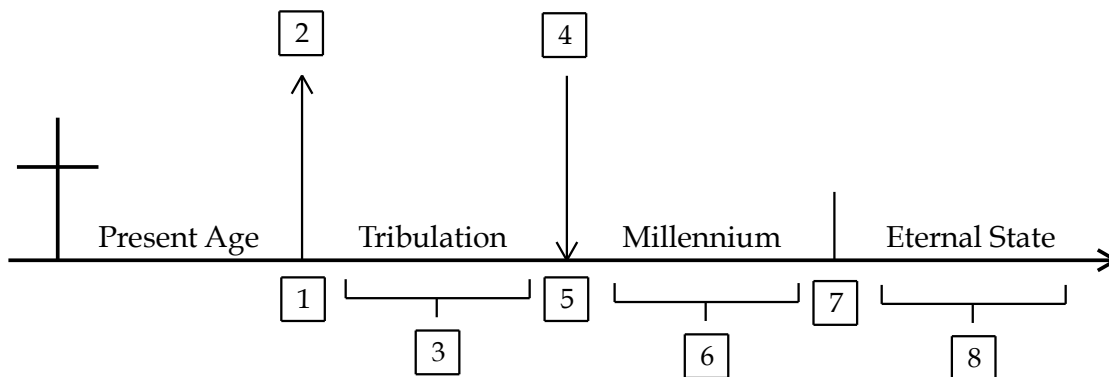


Entrust Eschatology The Pre-Tribulational Rapture 10/19/23

I. Introduction to the Rapture

- This is a doctrine which is intended to do 2 things:
 - Inform where ignorance exists (“But we do not want you to be uniformed, brothers...,” 1 Thess 4:13a)
 - Comfort where anxiety exists (“Therefore comfort one another with these words,” 1 Thess 4:18)



1. **The Imminent Rapture of the Church**
2. The Judgment Seat of Christ
3. The Seventieth Week of Daniel
4. The Second Coming of Christ
5. The Divine Restoration of Israel
6. The Millennial Reign of Christ
7. The Final Judgment of Unbelievers
8. The Final State of Eternity

A. The Promise of the Rapture

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

B. The Meaning of the Rapture

1. The Key Term for the Rapture—ἁρπαζω

- Translated rapturo in the Latin Vulgate (basis of English word "rapture")
- Used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17

"We who are alive and remain shall be caught up [ἁρπαζω] together with them in the clouds"

- Basic Meaning

"to snatch or seize," "to take something away suddenly"

- Two Different Uses in the New Testament

- to make off with someone's property by attacking or seizing it; to steal, carry off, or drag something away (Matt 12:29; Jn 10:12)

- to grab or seize suddenly so as to remove or gain control; to snatch or take away either forcefully (John 6:15; Acts 23:25; Acts 23:10; Matt 13:19; John 10:28-29; Jude 23) or with no resistance (Acts 8:39; 2 Cor 12:2, 4; 1 Thess 4:17; Rev 12:5; Matt 11:12)

2. The Key Components of the Rapture

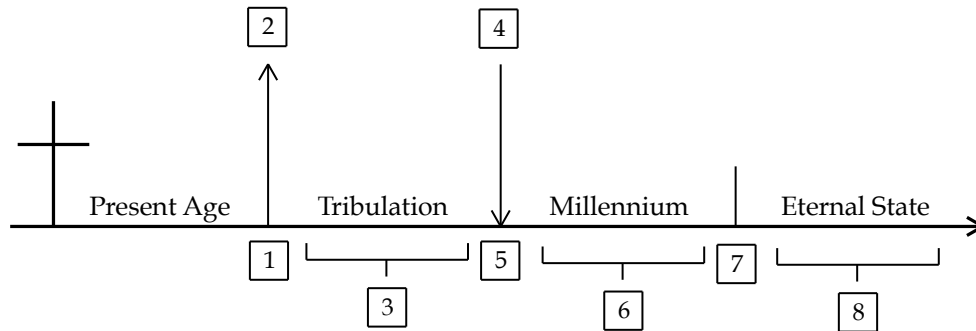
In synthesizing the clear teaching of the three main Rapture passages in the New Testament—John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52—the following sequence of events emerges at the time of the Rapture:

- Jesus will descend from heaven (John 14:3b; 1 Thess 4:16a):
 - with a shout (1 Thess 4:16b)
 - with the voice of the archangel (1 Thess 4:16c)
 - with the trumpet of God (1 Thess 4:16d; 1 Cor 15:52c)
- The dead in Christ will be resurrected and glorified first (1 Thess 4:16e; 1 Cor 15:52d).
- The alive in Christ will then be glorified (1 Cor 15:51-52; cf. Phil 3:20-21)
 - “raised an imperishable body [ἀφθαρσία]” (1 Cor 15:42c)
 - “raised in glory [δόξη]” (1 Cor 15:43b)
 - “raised in power [δυνάμει]” (1 Cor 15:43d)
 - “raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:44b)
 - “will all be changed” (1 Cor 15:51b)
 - “will be raised imperishable [ἀφθαρσία]” (1 Cor 15:52b)
 - “will be changed” (1 Cor 15:52c)
 - “must put on the imperishable [ἀφθαρσία]” (1 Cor 15:53a)
 - “must put on immortality [ἀθανασία]” (1 Cor 15:53b)
 - “put on the imperishable [ἀφθαρσία]” (1 Cor 15:54a)
 - “put on immortality [ἀθανασία]” (1 Cor 15:54b)
- All will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:17b; John 14:3cd).
- They will be always with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17c; John 14:3d).

C. The Timing of the Rapture

The question of the Rapture's timing involves its temporal relationship to the seven-year period of Daniel 9:27, which is described in Revelation 6-18 and often known as Daniel's 70TH Week:

DIAGRAM (#3 on the timeline):



- One of the debates is whether the Rapture will occur before, during, or after this seven-year Tribulation period which immediately precedes the millennial reign of Christ on earth.
- Within premillennialism, two main views exist in an attempt to answer to this question – the *Pre-tribulational Rapture* and the *Post-tribulational Rapture*.

1. The Pre-Tribulational Rapture

The view that the Church of Jesus Christ will be raptured *prior* to the Tribulation period and then *return with Christ seven years later* to rule with Him in the earthly millennial kingdom.

(Will look at weaknesses/objections later in this lesson)

2. The Post-Tribulational Rapture

The view that the Church of Jesus Christ will be raptured *after* the Tribulation period and then *return immediately to earth with Christ* to rule with Him in the millennial kingdom

(Will look at weaknesses/objections later in this lesson)

3. The Mid-Tribulational Rapture

The view that the Church of Jesus Christ will be raptured at the midpoint of the seven years because only the second half of Daniel's seventieth week is considered to be the Tribulation

WEAKNESSES:

- Has difficulty pointing to a clear text that places the Rapture at the middle of Daniel's 70th Week (e.g., Rev 11:15-19; 12:14; 14:14)
- Has difficulty proving that the two witnesses of Revelation 11 are a symbolic representation of the church
- Has difficulty proving that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15 is the "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15:52
- Has difficulty proving that the wrath of God does not begin until the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11 (e.g., see Rev 6:16-17; 7:14)
- Has difficulty proving that the wrath poured out in the first part of the Tribulation is human wrath and Satan's wrath, but not God's wrath
- Is difficult to harmonize with the imminence of Christ's return as taught in the New Testament

4. The Pre-Wrath Rapture

The view that the Church of Jesus Christ will be raptured about three-fourths of the way through the Seventieth Week of Daniel, just after "the Great Tribulation" and just prior to the "Day of the Lord."

WEAKNESSES:

- Is very convoluted and difficult to follow
- Is based on a number of unproven assumptions:
 - that the 70TH Week of Daniel can be divided into three distinct and identifiable periods of time: (1) the beginning of

sorrows, (2) the Great Tribulation, and (3) the Day of the Lord.

- that the wrath of God is only poured out during this third period, the Day of the Lord
- that the Second Coming and the Rapture are one event, lasting about a year and a half, with four comings of Christ within the confines of that one Second Coming

5. The Partial Rapture Theory

The view that only some believers in the Church (those who are specifically watching and waiting for the Lord's return) will be taken in the Rapture – which will be prior to the Tribulation – whereas others (those who eventually begin to live victorious Christian lives) will be raptured during the Tribulation, and still others (those who never live victorious lives) will not be raised until the end of the Tribulation.

WEAKNESSES:

- Is simply not taught in the Bible, and, in fact, consistently appeals to passages that have no bearing whatsoever on the issue of the Rapture's timing
- Appeals to passages that distinguish between true and false believers rather than raptured and non-raptured believers (e.g., Matt 24:40-51; 25:1-13; Luke 20:34-36; Rev 3:3-10)
- Appeals to passages that exhort believers to press on and persevere, without implying that those believers who are less faithful will not be raptured (e.g., Luke 21:36; Phil 3:10-12)
- Appeals to passages that exhort believers to long for the coming of Christ, without implying that those believers who are less zealous in their longing for His return will not be raptured (e.g., 1 Thess 5:6-10; 2 Tim 4:8; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:24-28)
- Fails to recognize that all who are in Christ will be raptured (1 Cor 15:51), whether dead or alive (1 Thess 4:14-17), for Christ has gone to prepare a place for all who believe (John 14:1-3)

II. The Case for a Pre-Tribulational Rapture

1. The Church's Absence from the Tribulation Period (Rev 4-18)

- The Greek word ἐκκλησία ("church") is used 19 times in Revelation 1-3, and once more in Revelation 22, but nowhere in Revelation 4-18 is the term used for believers on earth.
- The most reasonable explanation for this distinct contrast is that a Pre-tribulational Rapture has removed the church from the earth prior to the tribulation period of Revelation 6-18.

Richard Mayhue: "It is remarkable...that John would shift from detailed instructions for the church to absolute silence about the church in the subsequent 13 chapters if...the church continued into the tribulation. If the church will experience the tribulation of Daniel's seventieth week, then surely the most detailed study of tribulation events would include an account of the church's role. But it does not.... How could this be? Because a pretribulational rapture has removed the 'church' from the earth prior to Daniel's seventieth week."

2. The Church's Deliverance from Divine Wrath (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9)

Although the Church certainly experiences trials, persecution, and suffering in this life, God has promised to deliver her from the wrath He will pour out upon the earth during the Tribulation Period, which implies that the Rapture will occur prior to that time:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him."

Several contextual observations provide evidence that the wrath in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 is likely the wrath of Daniel's 70TH Week:

- The larger context of 1 and 2 Thessalonians focuses on the Day of the Lord and the judgment of God that precedes the coming of Christ.

- In referring to the wrath “to come” in 1:10, Paul uses a present participle in a futuristic sense, which “portrays the imminence of the wrath which is already on its way and hence could arrive at any moment” (Thomas). This fits well with the concept of the wrath of the Tribulation period.
- The wrath of 1:10 is clearly connected with the return of Christ, which implies that believers will be rescued from this wrath by means of His return.
- The greater context of 5:9 clearly focuses on the eschatological woes of the Day of the Lord (see vv. 1-8), and the wrath of 5:9 is most likely the same wrath as 1:10.

3. The Thessalonian Disturbance About the Day of the Lord (2 Thess 2:1-2)

After receiving Paul’s instruction about the Rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18) and the Day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:1-11) in his first epistle, the Thessalonian believers had received word from a seemingly authoritative source that the Day of the Lord had already come. In response to this report, Paul sought to comfort them in his second epistle, specifically in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2:

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”

Since Paul had already instructed the Thessalonians thoroughly regarding these matters (1 Thess 4:13-5:11 [esp. 5:1-2]; 2 Thess 2:5), the Thessalonians must have understood clearly the temporal relationship between the Rapture and the Tribulation period. This has significant implications for the debate over the timing of the Rapture because:

- If Paul had previously taught them a Post-tribulation Rapture, their erroneous acceptance of the lie that the Day of the Lord had begun would not have disturbed them, for this would mean that the Lord was coming very soon!
- But if Paul had previously taught them a Pre-tribulation Rapture, their erroneous acceptance of the lie that the Day of the Lord had begun

would indeed have disturbed them, for this would mean they had missed the Rapture!

Therefore, only a Pre-tribulational Rapture makes sense of the Thessalonian disturbance over the possibility that the Day of the Lord had already come.

4. The Church's Exemption from the Hour of Testing (Rev 3:10)

"Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10).

- ✓ Jeffrey Townsend: "Equally sincere and devout students of the prophetic Scriptures hold differing views on the time of the rapture of the church in relation to the tribulation. This is due in large measure to the fact that no verse of Scripture specifically states the relationship. But Revelation 3:10 comes close."

➤ The Basic Argument:

- Revelation 3:10 contains the promise of Jesus to keep the church out of the time period known as the Tribulation.
- Therefore, although Revelation 3:10 does not describe the Rapture itself, it clearly implies that the church will be physically removed prior to the Tribulation, which is the view of pre-tribulationalism.

Jeffrey Townsend: "Since the church is to be preserved outside a period of time which encompasses the whole world, preservation by a pretribulation rapture is...a logical inference from the context."

➤ The Crux of the Debate: The Nature of the Promised Protection

Douglas Moo: "It is probable that the reference is to the Great Tribulation, and all agree that the Philadelphian church is promised protection from it. The question is how: through physical removal in a pretribulational or midtribulational Rapture or through divine safekeeping during the period of distress?"

Jeffrey Townsend: “The great pretribulational/posttribulational debate over this verse concerns the nature of the protection promised. Pretribulationists maintain that the church is here promised preservation outside the hour of testing by means of the rapture (external preservation). Posttribulationists, on the other hand, argue that the church is preserved in the hour of testing (internal preservation).”

- **Pre-Trib View:**

Preservation *outside* the hour of testing by means of the Rapture (external preservation).

- **Post-Trib View:**

Preservation *in and through* the hour of testing (internal preservation)

- The Pre-Tribulational Case

- The most natural reading of the verse is that Jesus’ promise of protection involves *external* preservation:

- The Verb τηρέω: “to keep”
- The Preposition ἐκ: “out of, away from”
- The Combination τηρέω ἐκ: “to keep out of the hour of testing”

Thomas Edgar: “Much of the post-tribulational explanation depends on interpreting ‘keep out’ to actually mean ‘keep in.’”

- The Post-Tribulational Responses

Various post-tribulational arguments have been made in response to the pre-tribulational argument from Revelation 3:10.

Response #1 – The promise of Revelation 3:10 was given only to the Philadelphian church – which no longer exists – and therefore it must refer to an historical trial endured by this specific assembly when Christ kept them from harm.

HOWEVER:

- The recurring refrain “let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) expands the application of Christ’s words in Revelation 3:10 to the other churches of Asia and through them (as representatives) to the church throughout the world.
- Furthermore, because Revelation 3:10 refers to believers being protected from the hour of testing “which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth,” this tribulation (and therefore the protection from it) must be universal rather than local.
- The designation “those who dwell on the earth” in 3:10 is used throughout Revelation as a technical term to refer to unbelievers during the Tribulation (6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [2x]; 13:8, 14; 17:8), which further strengthens the case that 3:10 refers not to an historical trial but rather to the period of eschatological testing described throughout chapters 6-18.
- According to Jeffrey Townsend, the use of the Greek article in the designation “the hour of testing” indicates that Jesus was speaking of the well-known time period just prior to the return of Messiah (Isa. 13:6-13; 17:4-11; Jer. 30:4-11; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; Zech 14:1-4; Matt 24:9-31), a time period graphically portrayed in Rev 6-18 and known as “the great tribulation” (7:14) and “the hour of His judgment” (14:7).

Response #2 — In John 17:15 — the only other place in classical or biblical Greek where the verb *τηρέω* is combined with the preposition *ἐκ* — this combination refers believers being enabled to stand successfully within Satan’s presence rather than being kept out of his presence:

John 17:15: “I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from [*τηρέω ἐκ*] the evil one.”

This supports the idea of the church being protected within the hour of testing in Revelation 3:10 (the post-trib view) rather than being kept out of that hour altogether (the pre-trib view).

HOWEVER:

In John 17:15b, Jesus is praying that the Father would keep them out of the power of the evil one, not that He would protect them while they are in his presence.

In other words, Jesus' use of τηρέω ἐκ refers to God keeping them out of the spiritual realm of Satan's power altogether (as promised in 1 John 5:18-19) rather than protecting them within that realm.

Therefore, if the combination τηρέω ἐκ is used in the same way in Revelation 3:10 – as both sides of the debate agree it is – this indicates that the church will be kept out of the time period, which implies a Pre-tribulational Rapture.

Response #3 – Revelation 3:10 would have used the Greek preposition ἀπο ("away from") instead of ἐκ if it referred to a Pre-tribulational Rapture.

HOWEVER:

In NT Greek, the meaning of the prepositions overlap to such an extent that the former is just as clear as the latter in expressing the idea of the church being kept "out of" or "away from" the hour testing. In addition, the apostle John uses "out of" four times as often as "away from", indicating a clear preference for the preposition "out of".

The post-trib view of the church being preserved in and through the hour of testing would be much more clearly expressed by the preposition ("in") or the preposition ("through") than by the preposition ("out of, away from").

Richard Mayhue: "It has been argued that if John had meant 'to keep from,' he would have used tereo apo.... But it is more than equally true that if John had meant 'protection within,' he would have used tereo with en, eis, or dia. The greater burden of proof lies with the midand post-tribulational positions since their solution of immunity within does not explain the use of ek." " The post-trib position has a much more difficult time in explaining why Revelation 3:10 uses ejk rather than ejn or diav than the pre-trib position does in explaining why it uses ejk rather than ajpov.

FURTHERMORE:

The fact that so many saints will die under the persecution of Antichrist during the Tribulation poses a difficult problem for the post-tribulational view that the church will be preserved in and through this period of time.

In what sense will the saints be preserved according to the post-tribulational view of Revelation 3:10? How would this promise of preservation have brought comfort and encouragement to the persecuted believers in Philadelphia?

Response #4 — If Revelation 3:10 taught a Pre-tribulational Rapture, one would expect Jesus to have used the words *ai[rw ejk* instead of *threvw ejk*. After all, Jesus' use *ai[rw ejk* in John 17:15a ("to take [*ai[rw*] them out of [*ejk*] the world") perfectly describes what the pre-tribulationist says Jesus will do with the church at the time of the Rapture.

HOWEVER:

This objection falls short, for the use of *ai[rw ejk* in Revelation 3:10 would not have communicated a Pretribulational Rapture:

If Jesus had used *ai[rw ejk* to promise that He would take the church out of the hour of testing, this would mean that the church had already entered this time period and was being removed from it (the mid-trib position).

In contrast, the Pre-tribulational Rapture view teaches that the church will be kept out of that hour of testing altogether — which is depicted very clearly with *threvw ejk* — not removed from it some time after it has begun.

➤ Additional Pre-Tribulational Arguments from Revelation 3:10

Revelation 3:10 indicates that the believers in the Philadelphian church had already passed their test ("Because you have kept the word of My perseverance...") and therefore would be kept from the future period of testing of the ungodly ("...I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth").

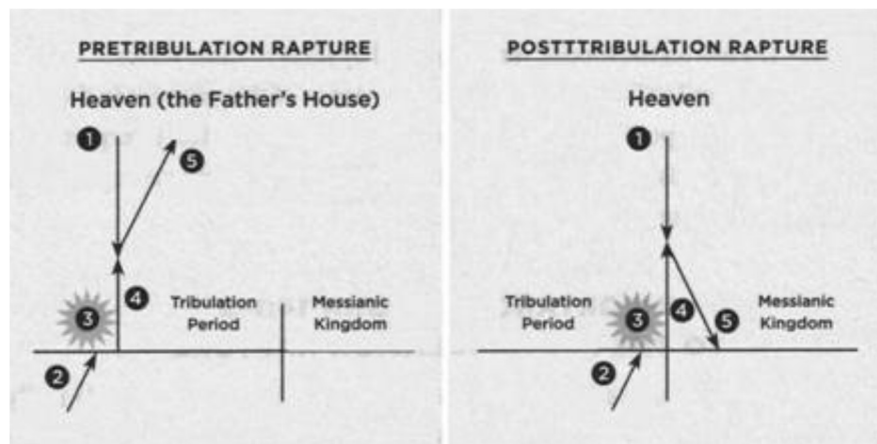
Revelation 3:10 specifically promises that the church will be kept out of the time period itself – “I will keep you from the hour of testing” – not merely from the events that occur during that time. This implies a removal prior to the time period itself rather than preservation through it.

The connection between “that hour which is about to come upon the whole world” in verse 10 and the promise that Jesus is “coming quickly” in verse 11 implies that the period of testing is near because Jesus could come at any moment. Because Scripture indicates that the imminent coming of Christ will involve the removal of the church via the Rapture (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:13- 18), this implies that the Rapture will be the means that God uses to keep the church out of the Tribulation period.

5. The Destination of Raptured Believers (John 14:1-3)

“Though we often think of the difference between the pretribulational position and the posttribulational position as being one of timing, it might also be conceived of as a difference in venue, i.e., where do the believer and Jesus go after being caught up into the clouds in the air? Do they go back to heaven or do they go down to earth?” (George A. Gunn)

Gunn illustrates the two different views like this:



- 1) The Lord descends from heaven.
- 2) The dead in Christ are resurrected.
- 3) The alive in Christ are glorified.
- 4) All in Christ are caught up to the Lord.
- 5) All accompany the Lord to His next venue.

a. The Key Questions:

What is that venue?

Where does Jesus take believers who are raptured?

Post-Trib View: Back down to _____

Pre-Trib View: Up into _____ (the "Father's house")

b. The Answer of Jesus in John 14:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Richard Mayhue: "A posttribulational rapture demands that the saints meet Christ in the air and immediately descend to earth without experiencing what the Lord promised in John 14. Since John 14 refers to the rapture, only a pretribulational rapture satisfies the language of John 14:1-3 and allows raptured saints to dwell for a meaningful time with Christ in His Father's House."

Paul Feinberg: "In the posttribulation understanding...the church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and will immediately accompany Him on His continued descent to the earth. Compare that with John 14:3. In the Rapture the Lord is going to come and take those raptured to be with Him. The clear implication is that the raptured saints will be taken to heaven, not earth."

Various Post-Tribulational Responses

Post-tribulationists have responded to this argument from John 14:1-3 in a variety of ways, the following seven being the most common: a.

Response #1 — John 14:3 refers to the death of an individual believer (not to the Rapture). "

Henry Cowles: "This must refer to Christ's coming in the death of his saints. At and in their death he comes to receive their souls to himself,

to bear them up to his Father's mansions where he has prepared a place for them."

HOWEVER:

This view involves many comings of Christ that are repeated over and over every time a believer dies, but the adverb "again" in John 14:3 indicates a one-time event like the first coming was (Renald Showers).

"The Bible never speaks of death as an event in which the Lord comes for a believer" (Thomas Ice).

Response #2—John 14:3 refers to Christ returning to His disciples after His resurrection and yet prior to His ascension (not to the Rapture).

HOWEVER:

The departure of Christ in John 14:2-3 clearly refers to His ascension into heaven (see John 13:33, 36; 14:12, 18, 28; 16:5), which precludes the possibility that His return in verse 3 takes place prior to His ascension.

Response #3—John 14:3 refers to the spiritual coming of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (not to the Rapture).

HOWEVER:

The coming of Christ in John 14:3 involves Christ receiving believers unto Himself, whereas the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost involves believers receiving the Holy Spirit.

Response #4—The dwelling places of John 14:3 refer not to heaven, but to "spiritual abodes within the person of Jesus Christ."

Robert Gundry: "To console the disciples concerning His going away, Jesus tells them that His leaving will work to their advantage. He is going to prepare for them spiritual abodes within His own person. Dwelling in these abiding places they will belong to God's household. This He will accomplish by going to the cross and then ascending to the Father. But He will return to receive the disciples into His immediate presence forever. Thus, the rapture will not have the purpose of taking them to heaven."

HOWEVER:

The metaphorical expression “My Father’s house” clearly refers to the dwelling place of God the Father.

Scripture teaches that the unique dwelling place of God the Father is heaven (Deut 26:15; Ps 33:13-14; Isa 63:15; Matt 5:16, 45; 6:1, 9), and the fact that the dwelling places of believers are in “the Father’s House” indicates that the destination of raptured saints is heaven.

George Gunn: “Note the terms ‘Father’s house,’ ‘dwelling places,’ ‘a place,’ ‘where I am,’ and ‘where I am going.’ Jesus could scarcely have used more specifically localized language. Surely He was referring not to the sphere of individualized salvation but to a location in heaven where He intended to take His disciples in the great eschatological event we refer to as the rapture.”

Response #5 – The emphasis of John 14 is not the destination of raptured believers, but rather the believers’ union with Christ.

Douglas Moo: “According to the posttribulational interpretation, raptured saints descend with Christ to earth, but John 14:3 implies that saints are raptured to heaven. But, in fact, the word heaven is not used in John 14:1-3 and, although John’s language may imply it, the stress of the text is on the promise that ‘Where I am, you may be also’ (v. 3b).”

HOWEVER:

Identifying the emphasis of a given passage does not mean that its other details are either insignificant or inaccurate.

Regardless of the specific point of emphasis, the words of Jesus do indeed indicate that heaven is the destination of raptured believers (i.e., this is where they will be united with Christ).

The conditional structure of verse 3 (“if...then”) indicates that Jesus receiving the saints unto Himself is in some way dependent on His prior act of having prepared a place for them in heaven. Therefore, if Jesus is to some day return and take His people to be with Him, it is imperative that He first go and prepare a place for them in the Father’s House. This preparation is not necessary according to the post-tribulational view, but it fits perfectly with the pre-tribulational view.

Response #6 – According to the pre-tribulational view, believers only occupy heaven for seven years before returning to earth, at which time they will then be away from these dwelling places for 1,000 years. Therefore, John 14:1-3 presents just as much problem for a Pre-tribulational Rapture as for a Post-tribulational Rapture.

Douglas Moo: “The pretribulational scheme demands that raptured believers spend only seven years in heaven before descending with Christ to earth – this is not much of an improvement on the posttribulational conception!”

Robert Gundry: “The pretribulational interpretation would require us to believe that the Church will occupy heavenly mansions for a short period of seven years, only to vacate them for a thousand years.... A thousand years’ delay before habitation of the mansions poses no greater problem for posttribulationists than a thousand years’ vacating them does for pretribulationists.”

HOWEVER:

John 14:1-3 does not indicate how long Jesus and the raptured saints will be in heaven before returning to earth.

The pre-tribulational view is perfectly compatible with the language of John 14:1-3:

Jesus will go to heaven and prepare a place there.

Jesus will come again to take His people to that place.

This is precisely what pre-tribulationalism teaches.

In contrast, the post-tribulational view is incompatible with the language of John 14:1-3, because posttribulationism denies that Jesus will take His people to heaven when He returns.

Response #7 – “The fact that believers at a posttribulational rapture would rise to meet the Lord in the air only to return immediately to earth with him creates no difficulty, for the text does not state that believers will go directly to heaven, but only that they will always be with the Lord” (Douglas Moo).

QUESTION: Is this true?

Conclusion on John 14:1-3

“From the earliest period in the history of interpretation, Christians have looked at Jesus’ promise in John 14:1-3 as an eschatological promise of Christ’s return to take His children to a heavenly home where they would be rewarded. Since the destination points to a venue in heaven, not earth, the promise cannot point to a posttribulation rapture and is most consistent with a pretribulation rapture” (George Gunn).

6. The Presence of Non-Glorified Saints in the Kingdom (Rev 19-20)

- The rebellion of Revelation 20:7-10 requires that at least some nonglorified saints enter the Millennial Kingdom; otherwise, where will these unbelievers come from?
- According to the post-tribulational view, all the saints will be glorified when they are raptured at the Second Coming of Christ, which leaves no believers to enter the Millennial Kingdom in non-glorified bodies.
 - **John Feinberg:** “If everyone who goes at the rapture is glorified, and if the rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, who is left to enter the kingdom in a natural body? All believers will have been raptured and glorified by that time. Most posttribs don’t seem to recognize the problem.”
 - **John Feinberg:** “Scripture shows that some people will enter the millennial kingdom in natural bodies and then give birth to children (Isa. 65:20). Some of those children will rebel against the Lord (Rev. 165 20:7-10). But people in glorified bodies cannot give birth, nor do they sin. Thus, there must be some people who enter the kingdom in nonglorified bodies. But everyone who is raptured is glorified. So, if the rapture occurs posttribulationally, it seems that no one is left to enter the millennial kingdom in a non-glorified body.”
- Therefore, the post-tribulational view is incompatible with the presence of non-glorified saints in the Millennial Kingdom

- In contrast, the pre-tribulational view fits perfectly with the presence of non-glorified saints in the Millennial Kingdom:
 - The saints will be raptured and glorified prior to the Tribulation period.
 - Those who are saved (but not martyred) during the Tribulation will enter the Millennial Kingdom in non-glorified bodies.
 - These believers will procreate normally during the Millennial Kingdom, and the unbelieving rebellion of Revelation 20:7-10 will arise from that part of their offspring that does not believe in Christ.

POST-TRIB RESPONSES:

Response #1 – The 144,000 who are protected throughout the Tribulation are those who enter the Millennial Kingdom in natural bodies.

HOWEVER: Scripture indicates that the 144,000 are all male and that they are all celibate (Rev 14:4).

Response #2 – Numerous Jews will believe in Christ as He returns to earth after the Rapture, and they will be saved and enter the kingdom in nonglorified physical bodies (Zech 12:10-13:1; Rom 11:26).

HOWEVER: Some would argue that the repentance of Israel will precede the return of Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Hos 5:15-6:3; Zech 13:1 seems to occur before Zech 14:3-4; Matt 23:29), in which case this post-tribulational objection is simply not valid:

In the Tribulation period, Israel will find herself under the chastening hand of God, being the special object of satanic persecution (Rev 12:13-17).

Two-thirds of the nation will be annihilated by the Gentiles (Zech 13:8-9), and all the nations will lay siege to the city of Jerusalem (Zech 12:1-5; 14:1-3).

At this point, the end appears near, and the nation will turn to God in repentance just before the return of their Messiah.

If this is indeed the case, according to the post-tribulational view these believing Jews will be glorified at the return of Christ with all other believers and will therefore enter the Millennial Kingdom in glorified bodies.

But even if the repentance of Israel takes place at the return of Christ (Zech 12:10-14) – rather than prior to it – this does not solve the dilemma for the Post-tribulational Rapture view because:

It raises the question of why these Jews would not be raptured immediately to receive their glorified bodies. After all, since post-tribulationists believe that Matthew 24:30 alludes to Zechariah 12:10 and that the Rapture occurs at Matthew 24:31, this implies that those who are saved in Zechariah 12:10 and Matthew 24:30 will be raptured and glorified in Matthew 24:31.

Because this view consists of Jewish believers entering the millennium in natural bodies, it cannot account for the Gentiles who will populate the Millennial Kingdom in non-glorified bodies (Rev 20:7-10; Isa. 19:18-25; Zech 14:16-21; Isa 60:1-3).

Response #3 – Although most unbelievers will be destroyed when Christ returns to earth, not all of them will be, and those unbelievers who survive will enter the Millennial Kingdom in non-glorified bodies and populate the earth during that time.

HOWEVER: Scripture indicates that the wicked will not escape the judgment of the Day of the Lord at Christ's coming (1 Thess 5:3). The complete elimination of the wicked will be ensured not only by their destruction at the descent of Christ (Rev 19:17-21), but also by the separation of the sheep from the goats in the judgment that follows (Matt 25:31-46).

Response #4 – Zechariah 14:16 refers to a remnant from among the nations that went up against Jerusalem in the Battle of Armageddon who will presumably be converted as Jesus comes down to earth after the rapture/resurrection and therefore enter the kingdom in nonglorified physical bodies.

Response #5 – Perhaps unbelieving babies and infants will be neither destroyed in the judgment of the Second Coming (Rev 19) nor judged in

the separation of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25), but rather will enter the millennial kingdom in non-glorified physical bodies.

7. Additional Arguments for a Pre-tribulational Rapture

The following arguments also support the Pre-tribulational view:

1) The Doctrine of Imminence

2) The Seeming Superfluous Nature of a Post-Trib Rapture

3) The Need for a Time Interval for Certain Events

- For the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:10-4:5; 2 Cor 5:9-10)
- For the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-9)

4) The Two Groups in Revelation 20:4

20:4 Then I saw thrones, and **they** sat on them, and judgment was given to **them**. And I *saw* **the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand;** and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

▪ **they / them**

the glorified saints returning w/Christ after being raptured prior to the Tribulation

▪ **the souls of....**

the tribulation martyrs resurrected after the Tribulation at the Second Coming

5) The Jewish Nature and Purpose of the Tribulation

6) The Differences between Rapture and Second Coming Passages

III. Common Objections to a Pre-Tribulational Rapture

1) A Lack of Clarity

“The New Testament nowhere clearly says that the church will be taken out of the world before the tribulation.... The doctrine of a pretribulation rapture is an inference from several passages, all of which are disputed” (Grudem).

RESPONSE:

2) Two “Last” Trumpets?

If the “last trumpet” is blown at the time of the Pre-tribulational Rapture (1 Cor 15:52; cf. 1 Thess 4:16), “then it is hard to see how another loud trumpet call (Matt. 24:31) could follow it seven years later” (Grudem).

RESPONSE:

3) Two Separate Returns?

“The New Testament does not seem to justify the idea of two separate returns of Christ (once for his church before the tribulation and then seven years later with his church to bring judgment on unbelievers)” (Wayne Grudem).

RESPONSE:

4) A “Secret” Rapture?

Since the Rapture will take place “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God” (1 Thess 4:16), it is difficult to view this event as being “secret” and visible only to the church.

RESPONSE:

5) The Church in Matthew 24

In Matthew 24 Jesus warns His disciples of the persecution and suffering that will take place during the Tribulation leading up to the Second Coming, which implies that the church will be present in the Tribulation.

RESPONSE:

6) The “First” Resurrection in Revelation 20

If the church will be raptured and resurrected prior to the Tribulation, how can Revelation 20 refer to the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs as “the *first* resurrection” (vv. 4-5)? Wouldn’t that be the *second* resurrection?

RESPONSE:

7) The Nature of the Meeting in 1 Thessalonians 4:17

The Greek word “to meet” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is a technical term which referred to citizens going out of a city to meet an arriving magistrate and then returning to the city with him (cf. Matt 25:1, 6; Acts 28:15). The meeting of Christ in the air in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, then, most likely refers to the saints meeting Christ and then immediately returning with Him back down to earth.

RESPONSE:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Paul D. Feinberg, Douglas J. Moo, and Richard R. Reiter, *Three Views on the Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Alan Hultberg, ed, *Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- John S. Feinberg, "Arguing About the Rapture: Who Must Prove What and How," in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, eds. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, pp. 187-210. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995.
- John F. Hart, *Evidence for the Rapture: A Biblical Case for Pretribulationism.* Chicago: Moody Press, 2015.

CONCLUSION

When Jesus returns for His Church, He will:

- 1) snatch believers up to meet Him in the air (1 Thess 4:17)
- 2) return with them to heaven (John 14:1-3)
- 3) keep them out of the Tribulation period (Rev 3:10)
- 4) come again to earth with His saints (Rev 19:14)
- 5) reign with them on earth for a thousand years (Rev 20:4)