

THE RAPTURE

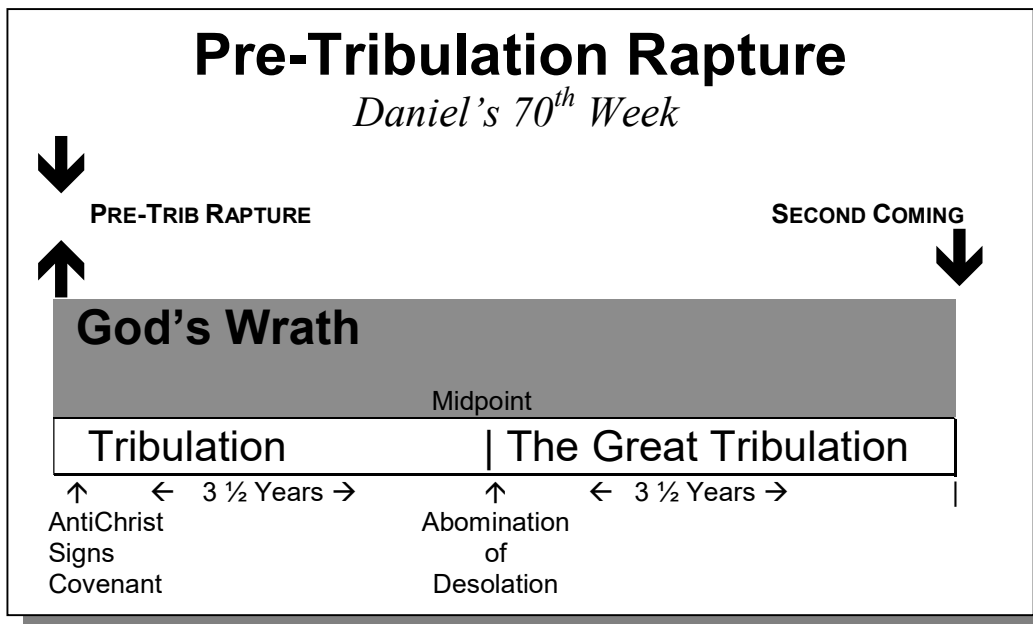
INTRODUCTION

- Definition: The supernatural removal of the church of Jesus Christ out of this world
- The word “rapture” is from the Latin word *rapturo*
 - Latin translation of the Greek word “caught up” in 1 Thess 4:17
 - ἄρπάζω (*harpazo*) = “to snatch or catch away, a sudden, irresistible act of carrying off by force”
 - This is a new idea in the NT; one not taught in OT
- Biblical evidence:
 1. *John 14:3 ~ And 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”*
 - This is the first mention of the rapture in Scripture...it does not refer to Christ coming *with* His saints (i.e. Rev 19:11-20:6), but rather *for* His saints...no judgment (2nd coming) mentioned here
 - Notice what this verse says:
 1. Jesus went to heaven bodily and will return bodily (vs. 3)
 2. His promise was to His followers and not mankind in general
 3. Jesus will take his followers with him to heaven (vs. 3)
 2. *Philippians 3:20-21 ~ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory”*
 - When Christ returns and takes believers with Him, he will change our body into a body like his
 3. *1 Cor. 15:51-52 ~ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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 shall be changed”*
 - Sleep = euphemism for death
 - The “mystery” is that some believers will not experience death
 - It is not a mystery that believers would be resurrected – the OT speaks of this
 - Some believers won’t die, but be caught up with Christ in transformed bodies
 - It will happen “in twinkling of an eye”
 4. *1 Thess 4:13-17 ~ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 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. 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. 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.*
 - The Thessalonians had come to believe in and hope for the reality of their Savior’s return
 - They were living in expectation of that coming, eagerly awaiting Christ
 - They knew Christ’s return was the climactic event in redemptive history and didn’t want to miss it
 - The major question they had was “What happens to the Christians who die before He comes? Do they miss His return?”

- Important to notice:
 1. 3 distinct sounds that signal the rapture
 - Shout
 - Voice of archangel – Michael (Jude 9)
 - Trumpet of God – same as trumpet in 1 Cor 15:52
 2. Dead believers raised first; then living believers
 3. The meeting occurs in the air
 4. Only those “in Christ” will be raptured: No unbelievers and no OT believers

RAPTURE VIEWS

Pre-Tribulational Rapture



- There are a number of supports for this view:
 1. **Christ's return to rapture believers is imminent. There are no prior events that must occur. It is the next thing on the eschatological horizon**
 - A pre-trib rapture preserves the imminency of Christ's return described in Bible
 - “imminency” is not a term found in Bible but it is used to describe the Bible's teaching that Christ can come at any time; the writers of the NT believed in imminency:

Philippians 3:20 ~ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 1:7 ~ so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ

Philippians 4:5 ~ The Lord is near

Titus 2:13 ~ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus
- “imminent” means that something is about to happen

- “Other things *may* happen before the imminent event, but nothing else *must* take place before it happens” – Renald Showers
- Christ’s imminent return to take believers to Himself is not same as a soon return; it may be imminent but not soon; 2000 years since 1st century
- No signs or events must take place prior to His return
- This is important because the 2nd coming is not imminent; certain events must occur:
 - Appearance of Antichrist – 2 Thess 2:3-4
 - Abomination of Desolation – Matt 24:15

2. God has promised that believers will not experience the wrath of God. Since the Tribulation is the wrath of God, believers will be exempted from this.

- The wrath of God is a unique time of worldwide destruction and supernatural power

Daniel 12:1 ~ Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.”

Joel 2:2 ~ A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, *So* there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations

Matthew 24:21 ~ for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.

Revelation 6-18 describes this wrath: seals, trumpets, bowls; during the 7 year Tribulation

- But church saints are said to be exempt from God’s wrath (although not from troubles in this life):

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. (this is not referring to hell because the context is 2nd coming)

1 Thessalonians 5:9 ~ For God has not destined us for wrath...

3. God promised to keep believers from a *worldwide testing*. There is no known such worldwide testing other than the Tribulation.

Revelation 3:10 ~ 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 on the earth.

- “keep from” = *tereo ek*
- Those who hold to post-tribulationism say this means that believers will be preserved in the midst of the Tribulation – i.e. that the church will go through the tribulation and that God will preserve it during the tribulation so that the church will emerge successfully at the end of the hour of testing
- But if that’s what John meant, he would not have used “keep from” (*tereo ek*)
- He would have used “keep in, through” (*tereo en, tereo dia, or tereo eis*) – occurs this way in Acts 12:5; 25:4; 1 Peter 1:4; Jude 21 (*tereo en* means “previous and continued existence within”)
- It seems better to understand *tereo ek* as “continued existence outside” – i.e. to be kept completely from
- It has this meaning in John 17:15 where same construction (*tereo ek*) occurs

John 17:15 ~ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one

- Jesus did not pray that believers would be preserved within Satan’s power, but kept from it entirely (which is what 1 John 5:19 indicates)

- If *tereo ek* did mean “preservation within,” it contradicts the fact that some Tribulation believers will be martyred, i.e. not preserved – Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-14

4. The Scriptures are silent about the church in the Tribulation

- No epistles mention the Great Tribulation...it is hard to believe that there is no instruction to the church in the Epistles on such a traumatic event if church really goes through it
- Daniel 9:24-27 says that those years pertain to Israel...the church is not seen anywhere in that passage
- Also, there is no mention of the church after Revelation 3, suggesting that the church has been removed prior to the beginning of the Tribulation.
 - Revelation 1-3 mentions church 20 times and once in 22:16
 - The church is never mentioned in Revelation 6-19; If the church were to endure the Tribulation, Revelation 6-19 would surely mention it

5. God has distinct programs for national Israel and the Church

- The church is not identical with Israel...it has not replaced Israel or assumed the promises to Israel
- God has two distinct programs for two distinct groups (Israel and the church)
- The covenants are made with Israel, therefore must be fulfilled with Israel
- It seems logical that God would conclude His program with church before resuming His plan with Israel
- Romans 11:25 says church age goes until fullness of Gentiles is completed

Romans 11:25 ~ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- A pre-trib rapture best preserves the distinction between Israel and the church
- Nowhere in Scripture is it taught that the church and Israel would co-exist and yet remain mutually exclusive

6. The purposes of the Tribulation do not include the church

- Primary purpose of the Tribulation: to prepare national Israel for its Messiah and the mediatorial, millennial kingdom...Israel is the focus of the Tribulation not the church

Jeremiah 30:7 ~ Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s distress, But he will be saved from it.

Zechariah 12:10; 13:8-9 ~ I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn....“It will come about in all the land,” Declares the Lord, “That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. “And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ And they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’ ”

Matthew 24:15-20 ~ Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains; Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

- Secondary purpose: to execute judgment on the wicked Gentiles and take back the earth from Satan and his followers

Isaiah 13:6-13 ~ Wail, for the day of the Lord is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

Zephaniah 3:8-13 ~ "Therefore wait for Me," declares the Lord, "For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal. "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the Lord, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder. "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, Will bring My offerings. "In that day you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds By which you have rebelled against Me; For then I will remove from your midst Your proud, exulting ones, And you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain. "But I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, And they will take refuge in the name of the Lord. "The remnant of Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies, Nor will a deceitful tongue Be found in their mouths; For they will feed and lie down With no one to make them tremble."

7. There are several differences between passages dealing with rapture (1 Thess 4; 1 Cor 15; John 14) and those dealing with the 2nd Coming (Joel 3:12-16; Rev 19:11-21; Zech 14:1-5; Matt 24:29-31)

RAPTURE	2ND COMING
No judgment mentioned	Comes in judgment – 2 Thess 1:8
Comes for saints – John 14:1-3	Comes with saints – Jude 14
Stops in the air – 1 Thess 4:17	Descends to Mt. of Olives – Zech 14:4
Dead and living given new bodies – 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16-17	Only dead OT saints get new bodies – Dan 12:1-2
Occurs before wrath of God is poured out	Occurs after wrath of Day of the Lord
Imminent	Preceded by signs
Believers removed, only unbelievers remain	Unbelievers removed, only believers remain

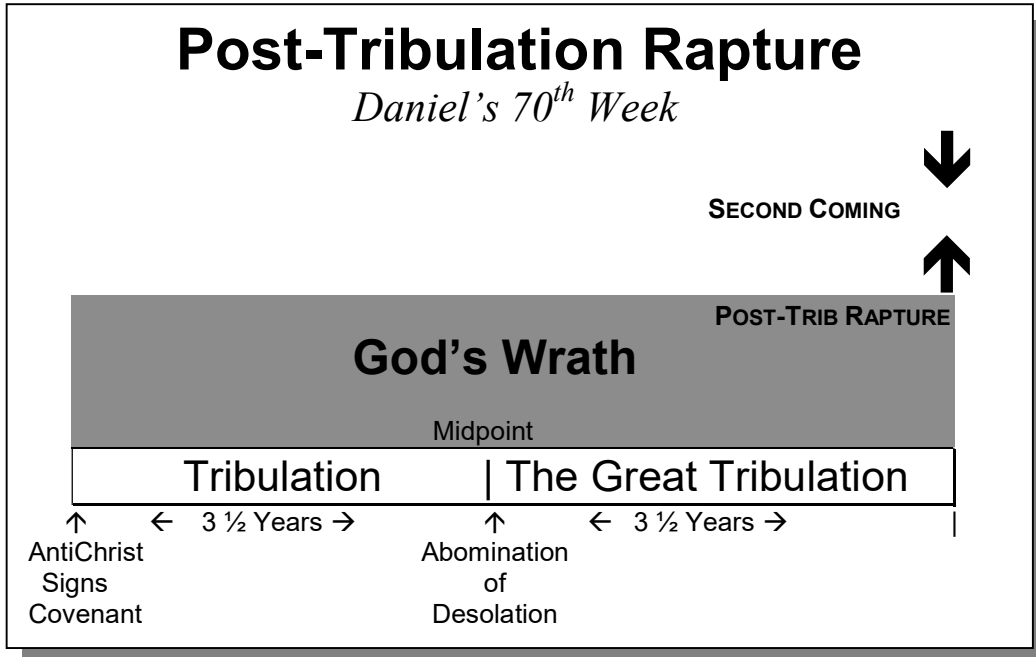
8. John 14:1-3 demands a pretrib rapture

- John 14 refers to the rapture not an individual's homecoming
- Because a post-trib rapture demands that saints meet Christ in the air and immediately descend to the earth without experiencing what is promised in John 14, only a pre trib rapture satisfies the language of John 14

9. There is a need for an Interval of Time between the Rapture and 2nd Coming

- 3 future events seem to take place after the rapture but before 2nd coming:
 1. Judgment seat of Christ – 1 Cor 3:11ff; 2 Cor 5:10; bride has already received her rewards in Rev 19:8
 2. Marriage of the Lamb – Rev 19:7-9; believers are permanently united with Christ
 3. Salvation of people after rapture who will then populate earth during millenium
 - At rapture, all believers removed, leaving no believers
 - When Christ comes back, however, there are believers present
 - These do not receive glorified bodies but do repopulate the earth during the Millennium
- A pre-trib rapture provides time for these events to occur

Post-Tribulation Rapture



This view says that:

1. **This is the historic position of the church (i.e. pre-trib not invented until 1830)**
2. **Since believers are seen in the Tribulation, church must be there also**

Response:

- This confuses distinction between Israel and the Church
- The stated purposes of the Tribulation have to do with Israel not the church

3. **Matthew 24:31 is a conclusive statement that the Rapture occurs at the end of Tribulation in conjunction with 2nd Coming**

Matthew 24:30-31 ~ and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

- In Christ's Olivet discourse about Future events there is no mention of any gathering of the elect until just prior to the Second coming.

Response:

- These verses contain no reference to the resurrection or glorifying of any saints, which is a critical part of the Rapture
- The Olivet Discourse is in answer to the questions about the future of Israel and the millennial kingdom, not the church
- Any attempt to relate the 2nd coming in the Olivet Discourse with the rapture in 1 Thess 4 is not convincing. Simply because trumpets and clouds are found in both does not equate them.

4. **The doctrine of imminency is incorrect**

- A Pre-Trib Rapture would seem to have been an obvious “sign” of Christ’s coming if it were true.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 ~ Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may 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. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

- Paul indicates that there are specific events that must occur prior to “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him” - the apostasy, the man of lawlessness etc.

5. The church is promised persecution and tribulation

- Most of the Tribulation period is the wrath of man and Satan being poured out; God’s wrath only occurs at the end on unbelievers
- Therefore, there is no reason to assume that the church is removed from the Tribulation
- The church will be protected during the Tribulation, but not removed

6. Problem with the interpretation of Rev 3:10

Revelation 3:10 ~ 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 on the earth.

- The audience was the 1st century Philadelphian church. To extrapolate down through thousands of years seems tenuous at best.
- The use of the term “testing” seems to not justify a technical reference to the 70th week of Daniel.
- Within the book (Rev. 2:10) there was a definite time of “testing” that was first century in time frame.

Problems with Post trib:

1. If believers are raptured and glorified just prior to the Millennium there will be no one to populate and propagate the Kingdom (no sheep present at sheep/goat judgment)
2. It does not maintain the distinction between Israel and the church
3. It fails to recognize the differences between the events and terminology of the Rapture and 2nd coming
4. It does not allow time for 3 events to occur:
 - a. Bema Seat
 - b. Marriage supper of the Lamb
 - c. Salvation of people who will enter millennium

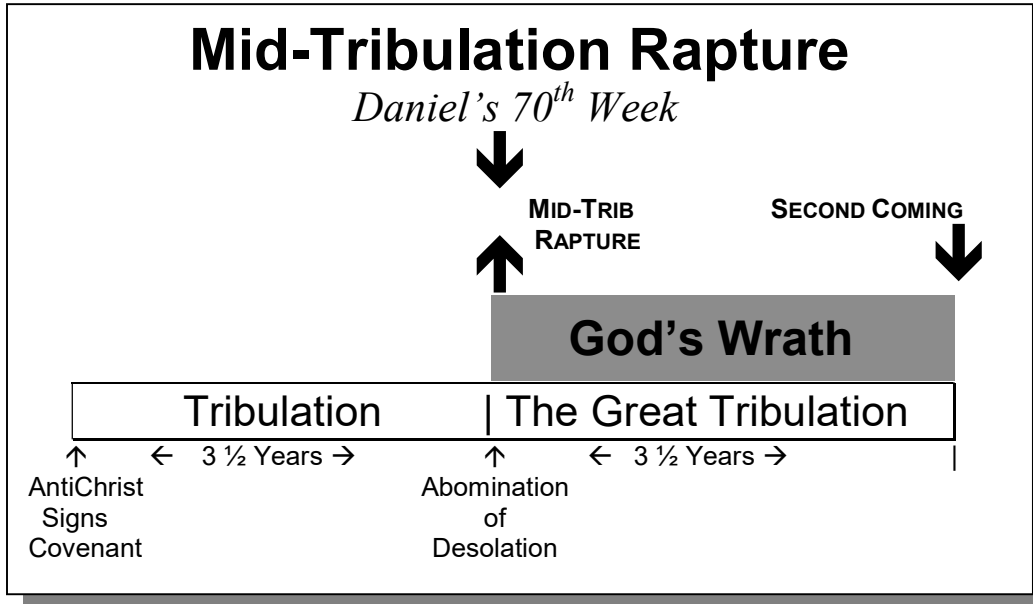
Mid-Tributional Rapture

- This view represents a hybrid between pre- and post-trib...it says that:
 1. **Persecution and tribulation can be expected by believers, therefore, the church will experience the troubles of the first half of the Tribulation**
 2. **Real wrath occurs in last half of the Tribulation**
 - During this time, the Antichrist becomes world dictator...the abomination of desolation is set up in Jerusalem temple, and the greatest judgments are poured out on earth during this time

- The seal and trumpet judgments of Rev 6-9 are the wrath of man and the wrath of Satan; i.e. the wrath of God has not yet begun
- Only the last half of the 7 years is the Tribulation which begins with the opening of seventh trumpet

3. The Rapture occurs at the mid-point of the Tribulation so that the church will be exempt from the “Wrath of God” (2nd half of the Tribulation)

- The rapture of the two witnesses in Rev 11:12 is symbolic for the entire church (i.e. occurs halfway through the Trib at the conclusion of the sixth trumpet)
- It says that the “last trump” of 1 Cor 15:52 is same trumpet as the 7th trumpet in Rev 11:15



- Evaluation of the Mid-Tribulation position:
 1. It denies imminency
 2. It denies the distinction between Israel and the Church
 3. It is inappropriate to make the trumpet of 1 Cor 15 equal to 7th trumpet in Rev 11
 - Many trumpets in Scripture with different purposes
 - Trumpet in 1 Cor 15 announces resurrection and deliverance
 - 7th Trumpet in Rev 11 announces judgment
 4. The chronology of the rapture events and Rev 11 are different
 - In 1 Thess 4, trumpet sounds first, then the rapture events occur
 - In Rev 11, the resurrection and rapture of two witnesses takes place first, then the 7th trumpet follows
 - The events of Rev 11:11-14 go with the sixth trumpet, not the seventh
 5. It underestimates the judgments of the first half of the Tribulation
 - The wrath of God begins at the beginning of the Tribulation, not with 7th trumpet
 - It begins with the seal judgments (Rev 6ff) and encompasses the whole Tribulation