

Wenstrom Bible Ministries
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The Rapture of the Church: The Pre-Trib View of the Rapture

Lesson # 13

The Bible teaches that the rapture will take place prior to the Tribulation period since it teaches that the church is delivered from the wrath to come.

This teaching that the rapture will take place prior to the Great Tribulation period is called by theologians and students of prophecy, the “pre-tribulation” view.

However, not all Christians adhered to this view as a result there are five different views of the rapture, which we will note.

I will present the arguments for each view and then demonstrate through the Scriptures that these other views are incorrect and that the “pre-tribulation” rapture view is the correct biblical view.

The five views of the rapture: (1) “Pre-tribulation”: The rapture will take place “before” the Tribulation. (2) “Partial”: Only those believers who are worthy will be taken off the earth at the rapture. (3) “Mid-tribulation”: The rapture will take place during the “midway” point of the Tribulation. (4) “Post-tribulation: The rapture will take place “after” the Tribulation. (5) “Pre-Wrath”: The rapture of the church will take place prior to God exercising His wrath during the last year and half of the seventieth week of Daniel.

The “pre-tribulation” view contends that the rapture of the church will take place prior to the Tribulation period and will deliver every church age believer from this awful period.

The “pre-tribulation” view adheres to the literal method of interpreting the Bible unlike the “post-tribulation” view, which spiritualizes the literalness of the events in the Tribulation in an attempt to harmonize these events with other Scriptures in the light of this interpretation.

The “pre-tribulation” view makes a distinction between Israel and the church and sees them as two distinct entities in the plan of God.

Now, 1 Thessalonians 1:10 explicitly teaches that the church age believer is delivered from this wrath, thus it follows that the church will be raptured “before” the Tribulation.

The purposes of the Tribulation do not include the church, thus favoring a “pre-tribulation” rapture of the church.

The first great purpose of the tribulation is to prepare the nation Israel for her Messiah (Deut. 4:30; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9).

The book of Revelation teaches that the Tribulation period is a time when God deals with His covenant people Israel (Rev. 7:4-6; 12:1-2; 17).

God’s purpose for Israel in the Tribulation is “crisis evangelism” or in other words, to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

These Jews who turn to Jesus Christ as Savior will enter into the blessings of the Christ’s millennial kingdom and experience the fulfillment of all Israel’s covenants.

The second great purpose of the tribulation is to pour out judgment on unbelieving men and nations (Revelation 3:11; Joel 3:2).

Since the church is composed of individuals who have believed in Jesus Christ as Savior, it follows that the church will not go through the Tribulation and God’s wrath since Christ experienced God’s wrath for the church.

It is impossible for the church age believer to face God’s wrath during the Tribulation period since this would in effect cause Christ to have to face God’s wrath again since the church age believer is united to Christ as members of His body and His future bride.

The Bible teaches that the Tribulation portion of the day of the Lord is characterized by wrath, i.e. God’s righteous indignation or legitimate anger towards sin (Zeph. 1:15, 18; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19).

The tribulation period will witness the wrath of Satan in his animosity against Israel (Rev. 12:12-17) and of Satan's man, the Beast, also known as Antichrist, in his animosity against the saints (Rev. 13:7) but even Satan's wrath does "not" come close to the intensity of God's wrath.

The Scriptures plainly teach that the wrath poured out during the Great Tribulation period originates with God and is therefore a time of God's wrath upon a Christ rejecting a world that is deceived by the devil (See Isaiah 34:1-2; Joel 1:15; Obadiah 15; Revelation 15:1, 7; 16:1; Revelation 19:11-21).

The Scriptures plainly reveal that Daniel's Seventieth week, also known as the Great Tribulation period is distinctly the time when God's wrath and judgment fall upon the earth.

This is not wrath from men, nor from Satan, except as God may use these agencies as instruments for the execution of His will, thus the wrath during Daniel's Seventieth week is tribulation from God.

This period differs from all preceding tribulation, not only in intensity but also in the kind of tribulation, since it comes from God Himself.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 explicitly teaches that the church age believer is delivered from this wrath.

Revelation 3:10 explicitly teaches that the church will not go through the Tribulation.

Revelation 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 on the earth." (NASB95)

"Because you have kept the word of my perseverance" refers to the believer in Jesus Christ in the sense that he or she has trusted in His person and work on the cross and who now sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for the believer.

"The word of My perseverance" refers to the testimony of Scripture regarding the truth of Christ as the suffering, resurrected, and so also, the victorious Savior who endured the shame of rejection and the cross and who endures today as the resurrected and ascended Lord now sitting at God's right hand (Heb. 1:3 with 12:1-3).

The statement **“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”** is a promise from the Lord Jesus Christ to all church age believers that because they have trusted in Him as Savior, He will deliver them from the Tribulation period.

In support of the “pre-tribulation” view is Revelation 6-18.

These chapters describe the events that will take place during Daniel’s Seventieth Week and the church is conspicuously not mentioned once in these chapters, thus implying that the church will not go through this period because it has already been removed from the earth at the rapture.

The fact that the church is never mentioned in Revelation 6-18, which deals exclusively with events of the Tribulation period is an indication that the church will not go through the Tribulation.

Also, in support of the “pre-tribulation” view of the rapture is that the New Testament epistles are silent on the church going through the Tribulation, which would leave the church unprepared if they were to go through the Tribulation.

Revelation 12 teaches that the object of Satan’s attack during the Tribulation period is Israel, which is significant since the church is the body of Christ and why not attack the church!

Also supporting the “pre-tribulation” view is the fact that the Holy Spirit permanently indwells each and every church age believer and 2 Thessalonians 2:7 teaches that the Antichrist cannot appear until the Spirit who indwells the church is taken away from the earth.

“He who now restrains” refers to the Holy Spirit since He is the only one who has the power to restrain evil.

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit permanently indwells the church age believer’s body (John 14:16-17; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:18-20).

A comparison of these passages with 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 teaches that Antichrist cannot be revealed until the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way and for the Holy Spirit to be taken out of the way, every church age believer would have to be removed as well since the Spirit permanently indwells every church age believer.

The “immanency” of the rapture further supports the “pre-tribulation” view since 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 teaches that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night meaning that it will take place unexpectedly.

The only way the day of the Lord could break unexpectedly upon the world is to have it begin immediately after the rapture of the church, which is imminent.

The thief comes at night when you least expect them and so it is with the return of Jesus Christ at the rapture of the church.

Those who don’t believe in a “pre-tribulation” rapture of the church also fail to see the distinctions between the Second Advent of Christ and the rapture and thus attribute passages dealing with the latter to the former.

There will be three major events following the Rapture for the church in heaven: (1) Bema Seat Evaluation: Involving all believers (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). (2) Overcomer believers are presented to the Father by the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 3:5). (3) Marriage of the Lamb: Involving all believers (Rev. 19:7).

Also, the events of Daniel’s Seventieth Week have to take place between the rapture and the Second Advent of Christ.

The “pre-tribulation” view unlike the “mid-tribulation” and “post-tribulation” views does not take this into consideration.

If all believers are raptured at the Second Advent of Christ, then there are no believers with non-glorified bodies to enter the millennial kingdom, which causes a major problem for the “post-tribulation” view, which contends that the rapture will take place at the end of the Tribulation period.

Therefore, the “pre-tribulation” view is the correct biblical view because it interprets the bible literally and does not allegorize or spiritualize Scripture and thus respects the authority of Scripture.

Secondly, this view is the biblical view because it recognizes the distinctions between Israel and the church and the rapture and the Second Advent and it also is correct since it supports the immanency of the rapture, which is designed to motivate the Christian to grow to spiritual maturity.

Finally, it magnifies the faithfulness of the Lord to the church in that it corresponds with the Lord’s explicit promise to deliver His bride from the Tribulation.