



A Biblical View For A Pre-Tribulation Rapture

I'm frequently asked to explain, or even defend, the end-time view of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the church we hold to here at Calvary Community Church. This is a basic look at why we believe what we believe which I hope confirms or challenges some of your eschatological (end time) ideas.

Our belief that there will be a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church stands on the Biblical foundation of the following principles.

A) The Bible is the Word of God

The Bible (yes all 66 canonized books) is God's inerrant, infallible message to mankind, explaining His purposes and plans for the ages ([2 Tim. 3:16-17](#); [2 Peter 1:20-21](#)). No other book, letter, article or document can be reliably trusted, nor could any remotely reach the bar for the requirements of authentication that the Bible attains to.

B) The Bible is to be Interpreted Literally

We've all probably heard the saying "God means what He says and says what He means". God wants His creations to know His will plainly. While God does indulge in picturesque descriptions and parables, an explanation almost always follows or context is provided for explanation. Spiritualization of text, therefore, has no proper place in interpreting Scriptures. Any eschatological viewpoint must then be thrown out if it is based on the reader's desire to spiritualize the Bible into whatever meaning they desire. Take the Bible for its plain sense meaning.

C) The Church and Israel Are Separate Entities

Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel. A believer in Christ becomes a member of the Church, whether Jew or Gentile ([Rom. 1:16](#)), but a member of the Church does not become a form of spiritual Israel. God's promises to Israel as a people and nation are not the same as for the Bride of Christ, the Church.

D) A Literal 1000-Year Millennium

The Bible describes a future, literal 1000-year time period. The Greek word "chilias" for "one thousand" appears six times in Revelation 20, clearly marking the time period as having 1000 literal years. The purpose of this time period is for Jesus Christ to have an earthly kingdom from which to base His rule and to fulfill His promises ([Gen. 13:14-17; 15:5,18-21; 2 Sam. 7:16-19; Isa. 10:21-22; 11:1-2; Jer. 23:5-8; 30:22; 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:18-20; 34:24; 36:24-28; Mic. 7:19-20; Hos. 3:5; Rom. 11:26-29](#)).

E) A Literal 7-Year Tribulation

An upcoming time period has been set aside for God to pour out His wrath upon the evil of the world, to regather Israel back into its land, to force Israel to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, and for the Messiah to return and fight for His believing remnant ([Deut. 4:26-31; Isa. 13:6-13; 17:4-11; Jer. 30:4-11; Ezek. 20:33-38; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; Zech. 14:1-4; Matt. 24:9-31](#)). This time period begins with a covenant between Israel and the Antichrist ([Dan. 9:27](#)). The length of the Tribulation is seven years long, described in a variety of ways as "one seven" year block ([Dan. 9:27](#)), consisting of two "times, time and half a time" (two years + 1 year + half a year; [Rev. 12:14](#)), or two "1260 days" periods ([Rev. 11:3](#)), or two "42 month" periods ([Rev. 11:2; 13:5](#)).

F) Jesus Will Return Again to Earth

The Bible says Jesus will physically return again to earth ([Zech. 14:1-21; Matt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27; Lk. 21:25-27; Rev. 19](#)). Jesus returns is to defeat His enemies, set up His throne, restore Israel, rule with "a rod of iron" and share His authority with those who overcame in Him ([Mat. 19:28; 25:31; Acts 1:3-6; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21](#)).

G) The Bible Teaches About a Rapture

[1 Thessalonians 4:17](#) speaks of an event called "the Rapture", Latin "rapio," Greek "harpazo," which means "to catch up, to snatch away, or to take out." "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Paul states that the concept of the Rapture is meant to encourage believers during this Age ([1 Thes. 4:18](#)). Other New Testament references on the Rapture are [Jn. 14:1-4; I Cor. 15:51-58; and 1 Thes. 4:13-18](#).

The above statements about the Bible and its interpretation provide the foundation in which to analyze the following reasons for why I believe the Bible teaches a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

1) The Bible describes the Rapture and Second Coming as different events.

The Bible must see the Rapture (Jn. 14:1-4; I Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thes. 4:13-18) and the Second Coming (Zech. 14:1-21; Matt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27; Lk. 21:25-27; Rev. 19) as separate events, because when the verses are compared they describe two very different scenarios:

1. Rapture — believers meet Christ in the air
Second Coming — Christ returns to the Mt of Olives to meet believers on earth
2. Rapture — Mount of Olives is unchanged
Second Coming — Mount of Olives is divided, forming a valley east of Jerusalem
3. Rapture — living believers obtain glorified bodies
Second Coming — living believers remain in same bodies
4. Rapture — believers go to heaven
Second Coming — glorified believers come from heaven, earthly believers stay on earth
5. Rapture — world left unjudged and living in sin
Second Coming — world is judged and righteousness is established
6. Rapture — depicts deliverance of the Church from wrath
Second Coming — depicts deliverance of believers who endured wrath
7. Rapture — no signs precede it
Second Coming — many signs precede it
8. Rapture — revealed only in New Testament
Second Coming — revealed in both Old and New Testaments
9. Rapture — deals with only the saved
Second Coming — deals with both the saved and unsaved
10. Rapture — Satan remains free
Second Coming — Satan is bound and thrown into the Abyss

Since the Rapture and Second Coming clearly are different events that do not occur at the same time, this would seem to rule out a Post-Tribulation Rapture scenario.

2) The Rapture is described as occurring at any time without warning.

Jesus stated in [Matthew 24:42,44](#) to "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Not only do believers in Christ not know when to expect Him, but the Father Himself seems to have left Jesus out on the exact time His Son is to return. As Jesus stated in [Matthew 24:36](#), "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." These and other verses ([Mat24:36,42,44,50; 25:13; 1 Thes. 4:18; Tit. 2:13; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2-3](#)) indicate that Jesus' arrival will come when nobody expects it.

The Second Coming, on the other hand, is preceded by many events, such as the rise of the Antichrist ([Rev. 12:13-17; Zech; 13:7-9](#)), a treaty with Israel ([Dan. 9:27](#)), the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple ([Mat. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 11:1-2](#)), as well as plagues and judgments and persecutions destroying most of the world's population ([Rev. 6-18](#)). The Book of Revelation reports these events as occurring during the 7-year Tribulation, which Revelation reveals precede the Second Coming.

Because the Rapture could happen at any moment and without warning and the Second Coming is preceded by so many signs, then the Rapture and Second Coming must be different events. The Rapture has to occur before the seven years' worth of signs, because Christians are called to look for the Lord's return rather than signs such as the Antichrist's arrival. Once the signs begin, then the seven year countdown begins towards its end with Christ's return at the Second Coming.

Jesus' imminent return dismisses any of the other viewpoints related to a rapture that occur within or at the end of the Tribulation.

3) The Rapture and the removal of the "Restrainer" occur at the same time.

In 2 Thessalonians, the church at Thessalonica was afraid due to a false report that they had entered the Day of the Lord (Tribulation) and had somehow missed the Rapture. The Apostle Paul assured them that the Antichrist would not be revealed until a restraining force would be taken away so that the Man of Lawlessness could be revealed.

Because the revealing of the Antichrist coincides with the beginning of the 7-year Tribulation starting with his peace treaty with Israel ([Dan. 9:27](#)), then the Restrainer has to be removed before the Tribulation. As the Holy Spirit also works in salvation ([Jn. 16:8-11; 1 Jn. 5:7](#)) during the Tribulation, then it is the Church that must be the Restrainer that is removed. Therefore, the Rapture and the removal of the Church must coincide, and at the beginning of the seven years.

4) The Tribulation is for Israel's redemption.

Jeremiah 30:7 describes the Tribulation as the "time of Jacob's trouble" — "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

In the Book of Matthew, whose primary audience is the Jews, Jesus explains to his Jewish followers what life will be like during the Tribulation. Also, Revelation 12 describes picturesquely a woman who gives birth and has to flee due to persecution during the Tribulation. The context shows the woman is Israel. And again, the Battle of Armageddon is the world against Israel. Two-thirds of the Jewish people will be killed from these battles. These texts and others show that the Tribulation is meant for the redemption of the Jewish people.

Why are the Jews the object of persecution during the Tribulation? It's possible Satan hates the Jewish people for giving the world the Scriptures and the Messiah, as well as he wishes to thwart God's promises to the Jews. Secondly, the Jews have to be so desperately brought low that they finally call out to their Messiah "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord" (**Mat. 23:39; Lk. 13:35**). The Tribulation, then, is used for Israel's redemption which also results in the punishment of the wicked. The Church does not fit into this scenario, and are left out of the purposes of the Tribulation. They would need to be removed — caught up — before the Tribulation begins.

5) The Tribulation is not for the Church.

The Tribulation is God's wrath upon the unbelieving world, and not for those who are saved from Christ's resurrection to the Rapture — called the Church. Yes believers have suffered all throughout human history, but there is a special time (just like the Flood) set apart called the Day of the Lord for God's wrath. Christians suffering and the Tribulation/Day of the Lord are different.

True believers in Christ during the Church Age, represented by the Church of Philadelphia, are promised in **Revelation 3:10**, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Paul states in **1 Thessalonians 1:10**, "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." He also states in **1 Thessalonians 5:9**, "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." **Romans 5:9** states, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ!" **Ephesians 5:6** states, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." **Colossians 3:4** states, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Again and again, Scripture states the Church is not meant to endure God's wrath.

6) God's wrath involves the whole 7-Year Tribulation.

The view that the Rapture will occur at the mid-point of the Tribulation is based upon [1 Corinthians 15:52](#) which states that the Rapture will occur at the blowing of "the last trumpet." This Mid- Tribulation Rapture view then declares this trumpet to be the last of the seven trumpets in Revelation 11 that is blown at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Why of the 114 references to trumpets in the Bible these two are identified as one and the same only defies sound Bible study. The context clearly shows the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15 is blown for believers whereas the seven trumpets of Revelation 8, 9 and 11 are sounded for unbelievers. The Revelation trumpets therefore can have no relevance for the Church.

The Pre-Wrath Rapture view has the Church raptured just before the bowl judgments (Revelation 16) that occur during the last quarter of the Tribulation. The bowl judgments are the only judgments this view considers to be the wrath of God, leaving the Seal and Trumpet judgments as wrath from man and Satan. But, isn't it Jesus Himself who breaks the seals that launch each of the Revelation 6 seal judgments which occur at the beginning of the Tribulation? Also, the seven angels who blow the trumpets that initiate each of the trumpet judgments are given their trumpets at the throne of God ([Revelation 8:2](#)). And, [Revelation 15:1](#) states that the bowl judgments at the end of the Tribulation finish the wrath of God, not begin His wrath.

Because these judgments are initiated by Jesus Himself at the beginning of the Tribulation, the whole Tribulation must be God's wrath, which the Church is exempt from.

7) The Old Testament and Revelation leave the Church out of the Tribulation.

The focus of the Tribulation — to pour out God's wrath on the earth just like the Flood ([Isa. 24:22](#); [Zeph. 3:8](#); [1 Thes. 5:3](#); [2 Thes. 2:12](#)) and to bring the Jewish people to accept Jesus as Messiah ([Mat. 23:39](#); [Lk. 13:35](#)) — is addressed by the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation to the unbelievers and the Jewish people. In any biblical content concerning the Tribulation/Day of the Lord, the Church cannot be found.

The whole concept of the Church was a mystery to the Old Testament prophets. They focused on the nation of Israel. The Book of Matthew is written to the Jewish people, whom Jesus is addressing in Matthew 24. In the Book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 cover the Church Age, but then there is no mention of the Church until after the Tribulation/Day of the Lord chapters 6-18. In Chapter 19, the Church returns to the texts and can be found, not suffering, but celebrating with Christ at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and preparing to return with Jesus to earth.

8) The Church is busy elsewhere during the Tribulation.

While the 7-year Tribulation is occurring, the Bible records the Church will be busy with three events. None of the three have to do with suffering on a world being destroyed.

The first event the raptured Church will participate in is a judgment by God — the Judgment of the Just. This judgment on works is not to determine eternal destiny, but to determine degrees of reward (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 19:6-9).

The second event is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This feast celebrates the spiritual marriage of Christ's Bride — the Church — to her Savior. Revelation 19:7-9 shares this wonderful celebration, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

The third event follows the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and is the Church's preparation to follow the King of Kings into the Battle of Armageddon at the conclusion of the Tribulation. This event is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Zech. 14:1-21; Matt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27; Lk. 21:25-27; Rev. 19:11-21). Revelation 19:14 identifies the Church in their "fine linen, white and clean," which was given to them during the first event — the Judgment of the Just. The Church and angelic forces follow the King of Kings into His Second Coming to the earth, but only Jesus Himself will engage in battle and with mere words defeats the nations in siege against Jerusalem.

9) There needs to be sheep to separate from the goats.

If the Church is raptured at the end of the Tribulation, receives their glorified bodies, and then immediately u-turns back with Christ for the Second Coming as the Post-Tribulation Rapture view holds, then what believer in Christ will be available for the Sheep and Goats Judgment of Matthew 25? The only people left on earth would be unbelievers, called goats. No believer — sheep — would be available for God to put into the sheep category.

Since those who are in glorified bodies will be like the angels in that they aren't given in marriage or reproduce (Matt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25), then a believing, unglorified, human remnant must make it into the sheep category and go on to produce the nations during the Millennial reign of Christ (Ezek. 43:13-27; Isa. 19:21; Isa. 65:20-22; Rev. 20:7-10). This would mean that people would need to come to Christ during the Tribulation yet after the Rapture to produce this Millennial population.

10) The Bible shows God rescues the righteous from His wrath.

Being a Christian means having to endure suffering and trials at the hand of man (Jn. 16:33; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thes. 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:12-13). But, the Bible has many examples of those who put their faith in God are exempt from God's wrath. Noah and his family were removed from the Flood waters that in God's wrath were used to judge and cleanse the earth. Lot and his wife and two daughters were made to leave Sodom and Gomorrah before God burned the towns up with fire and sulfur. Rahab's family was set apart when Joshua's army invaded Jericho.

Could believers be miraculously protected during the Tribulation, like the Israelites were during the plagues on Egypt? Yes, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists from Revelation 7 and 14, for instance, will be divinely protected. But, the slaughter of believers during the Tribulation will be so massive that they are certainly not under any special protection (Rev. 7:9-17; 20:4).

11) The Pre-Tribulation Rapture view is not too new to discount.

Some argue that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view is just "too new" to be considered viable. Critics will point to the origin of the modern Pre-Tribulation view and credit John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) with its founding. But, is that assessment historically accurate? No...

In the early church writings (the Gospels and Epistles) there are numerous references to the imminent return of Jesus Christ, a central argument for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view.

Biblical truth is determined by Scripture, and not how that teaching has been perceived at different times during history. When Augustine falsely began spiritualizing the Bible, his view of a non-literal interpretation took hold of the church until the Renaissance, obliterating the Premillennial and Pre - Tribulation Rapture views in favor of Amillennialism. But, there are many others that distinguish the Rapture from the Second Coming.

When the chains of allegorical interpretation began to fall off beginning with the Reformation in the 1400 and 1500s, writers such as Joseph Mede (1586-1638), Increase Mather (1639-1723), Peter Jurieu (1687), Philip Doddridge (1738), John Gill (1748), James Macknight (1763), Thomas Scott (1792) and Morgan Edwards (1722-1795) all wrote concerning the Rapture occurring separate from the Second Coming. Even in the more modern church, those like William Witherby (1818) were precursors to John Darby in support of the view. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture view is indeed then not only biblical, but supported throughout Church history.

Closing Thoughts

After reading this please take time to go before God in prayer, asking Him to reveal to you the truth surrounding the imminent return of Jesus Christ! You have to weigh out the Word of God and decide for yourself (on God's leading) what you believe God's Word is saying. Please remember, your end times views have no bearing on the basic doctrines of Salvation. Prayerfully we can all agree that through the gift of salvation we will one day be caught up to be with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all of eternity.