



The Rapture

Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, or Premillennialism?

The rapture is one of those often talked about and often misunderstood points of theology within Christian circles. This is written to shine a little bit of light on some of the common beliefs regarding the End Times. This is clearly not an exhaustive work on the subject, nor is it meant to be. Please take time on your own to study Scripture and determine for yourself what you believe.

To kick us off, there are some who are known as Amillennialists who do not believe in a Christ who will set up rule on this earth. For them, Christ simply comes, judges, and establishes the new heaven and earth. For them there is no rapture. Catholics and some Protestants are Amillennialists.

Then there are the Postmillennialists who believe that the world, through the preaching and teaching of the church, will become more godly, peaceful, and prosperous and that the new age will be essentially like the present with the church ruling for a period of time. At the end Christ returns and judges the world. The post-millennialists also have no place for a rapture. Presbyterians and some Baptists are traditionally post-millennialists.

Finally, there are Premillennialists. This was the view of the earliest church, as we know from Justin Martyr and Papias, and other early writers. It is also the view of many evangelicals, including many Baptists and most people in the Evangelical church today.

Among the pre-millennialists, there are four basic views of the rapture. There are the Pre-Tribulation rapture proponents. There are Mid-Tribulation

rapture proponents. There are Post-Tribulation rapture proponents. And there are some who call themselves Pre-Wrath rapture proponents.

In sorting through these various possible positions using Scripture, I reject Amillennialists because they do not have a place for God to honor His promises to Israel in their eschatology. Passages such as Ezekiel 40-48, Isaiah's many passages on a future blissful time on this earth, and the book of Revelation are treated allegorically and not literally. The problem with treating them allegorically is two-fold:

- 1) Their interpretation is not available to common people, but must be taught by the church (a real problem to me since I believe Scripture was written for the common person), and
- 2) God has a consistent history of fulfilling His prophecy literally, and so I would not want to bet against this history with the prophecy yet to be fulfilled.

I reject post-millennialism for the same reasons and for an additional reason. Scripture seems fairly clear that the church is not going to usher in a blissful age. Things are not going to get better and better. Paul tells Timothy that in the last days perilous times will come. Jesus asks the question in Luke 18 whether there will even be faith on the earth when He returns. I think post-millennialism is very weak from a Scriptural support position.

I accept pre-millennialism, not only because it is what the early church held, including those who knew the the apostles personally, but also it seems to be the best fit with Scripture, providing a place for the promises of God to be fulfilled and allowing a more straightforward reading of Scripture, including Revelation 19-20.

Among the Premillennialists, I find the Post-Tribulation rapture to be the weakest. First, the yo-yo theory (as I call it) makes no sense. For Christ to promise to take us to be with Him forever (which is what John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and following state), when He is actually coming to be on earth for 1,000 years seems illogical. Why would we be caught up to heaven when Jesus is coming to earth?

The Mid-Tribulationists have very little support in Scripture. The way they pick and choose passages and read into them the rapture is without a sound hermeneutic. I have never found their arguments even mildly convincing.

The Pre-Wrath proponents, in my mind, are simply Mid-Tribulationists who want a different name. They argue that the rapture will take place before God pours out His wrath, but they see this point as coming significantly after the beginning of the tribulation. They accept the teaching of Scripture that we are not appointed to wrath. They simply fail to see that the entire tribulation is a time of God's wrath. If they could just read Revelation 6 as the opening of the tribulation they might see that the wrath of God begins with the first seal.

I think the Pre-Tribulation rapture position is both most consistent with the character of God and most true to all of the texts of Scripture addressing the issue. It provides the best explanation for all of the texts.

The more I have studied the matter, the stronger I have become in my view that the Pre-Tribulation view is the view of the biblical writers. There are repeated promises that we will be saved from the hour of trial, from the period of wrath, from all the things that are going to try the earth, from the tribulation, etc. What do these promises mean? And how can the return of Christ be our "blessed hope" if we were destined to go through the tribulation? Frankly, I would rather die before His return, if that were the situation. At least then, I could avoid the suffering and I would be with Christ. But because I believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, I am much looking forward to the return of Christ.

For more on the subject of a Pre-Tribulation rapture of the church please read "[A Biblical View Of A Pre-Tribulation Rapture](#)" on the Calvary Community Church website media download page.