

## Theories Relative to the Tribulation

Foundational Scripture: And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh. Luke 21:28

### A. Definition of "Rapture" from Webster and online dictionaries/websites.

1. A feeling of intense pleasure or joy; being carried away by intense emotions.
2. A mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things; .synonym for a mystical union with God, or our final sharing in God's heavenly life, generally, without a belief that a group of people is left behind on earth for an extended tribulation period.
3. In Christian eschatology the rapture refers to the belief that, either before or simultaneously with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Earth, believers who have died will be raised and believers who are still alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (the resurrected dead believers) in the clouds to meet the Lord.
4. Connotative Meanings.  
The raptured church will be taken directly up to Heaven.  
The Rapture is preceded and/or followed by God's wrath being poured out on the Earth.  
The Rapture is accompanied with or followed by the cleansing of the Earth with fire.

### B. Theories when the Rapture will occur (Adapted and modified from posttribpeople.com).

There are four common beliefs (or theories) concerning the Rapture relative to the Tribulation:

1. The Pre-Tribulation belief which holds that the Rapture will take place **before** the tribulation, the Church will be with the Lord for seven years, & will return with him when the tribulation is over.
2. The Mid-Tribulation belief which holds that the Rapture will take place in the **middle** of the seven years of tribulation, that the Church will be with the Lord for 3 1/2 years, and will return with him.
3. The Pre-Wrath belief which sees the Rapture and the return of the Lord as **one event** sometime in the second half of the tribulation immediately followed by a "shortened" time of Great Tribulation. Some refer to this as the ¾ Tribulation.
4. The Post-Tribulation belief which is that the Rapture will take place at the **end** of the tribulation, that the Church will be lifted up to the Lord and return with him for the beginning of the Millennial reign. Most believe the Rapture and the Return of the Lord are **one event**: that the Church will be caught up to meet the Lord as he descends from heaven; and so, they believe in only one coming of the Lord at the end of the tribulation.

### C. The Four Theories with more detail.

#### 1. Pre-Tribulation.

##### a) Major beliefs.

Because of God's grace, all believers have a right to be raptured and do not have to prepare for the ending days.

The Elect in Matt 24:22 refers to Israel, not the church, so the believers will **not** have to go through the tribulation days when all flesh would be lost if the days were not shortened.

God will not pour His wrath out upon the church (believer).

The Holy Spirit must be removed before the antichrist comes into power.

Therefore, the Rapture must occur before the Great Tribulation.

##### b) Specific supporting Scriptures.

Rev 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.

1Th 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.

1Th 5:9 God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Rom 5:9 ... being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.  
1 Cor 15 the last trumpet is blown for believers but the 7 trumpets of Rev 8-11 are sounded for unbelievers. The Revelation trumpets therefore can have no relevance for the Church.

c) Major contradictory or unaddressed issues.

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

2Pe 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1Jn 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.

2. Mid-Tribulation.

a) Major beliefs.

Mid-Tribulationists' beliefs are similar to those of Pre-Tribs except on 2 major points.

- Matt 24:22 Mid-Tribs believe that the term "elect" refers to both the church and Israel.
- The church will experience a Post-Trib but Pre-Great-Tribulation Rapture.

There are two major beliefs concerning the timing of the Rapture. One is during the time of Rev 14 (God reaps the harvest) and the other is at Rev 11:15 (Kingdoms become Our Lord's). The **signs** of the end will precede the **events** of the end, as indicated in Matt. 24:1-31; Mark 13:1-27; Luke 21:5-28.

This twofold division is also seen in Dan 7:25, 9:24-27, 12:7-12); and in Revelation. 11:2-3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5.

The signs of the end will inaugurate the tribulation, described in Revelation as the seven seals and the seven trumpets (Rev 5-9). The tribulation will involve suffering and difficulty for believers and unbelievers alike, although Christians will be spared the wrath of God, which are the Bowl judgments (Rom 5:9).

b) Specific supporting Scriptures.

Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Rev 14:14-16 Upon the cloud sat one like the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle ... and he trust in his sickle & reaped the Earth.

c) Major contradictory or unaddressed issues.

Rev 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. This clearly contradicts a rapture in Rev 11:15.

Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. These saints are going to die, not be raptured in Rev 14:14-16.

3. Pre-Wrath rapture or  $\frac{3}{4}$  Trib Rapture.

a) Major beliefs.

The six seals are the wrath of man and satan; and the church will experience these.

The rapture occurs approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  way through the tribulation, after the sixth seal perhaps

Rev 7 with/after the sealing of the 144,000; or, since the seventh seal ushers in the

Trumpets, perhaps sometime **early** during the Trumpet judgments.

The trumpets and bowls/vials (plagues) are God's wrath and the church is exempted.

b) Specific supporting Scriptures.

Rev 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **Comment:** Raptured or martyred?

Rev 16:2 And the first went, and poured out his vial (bowl) upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

c) Major contradictory or unaddressed issues.

Rev 5:5 And one of the elders says unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Rev 8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

The Pre-Trib's position is that because the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls judgments are all from God, then the entire tribulation period must be from God and the church is exempted from the wrath of God; and so must be raptured before the wrath/tribulation.

Ex 9-11 The children of Israel, including Moses, lived through the wrath of God upon Egypt.

The Seventh Trumpet sounded in Rev 11:15 but study the 2 verses below:

Rev 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

4. Post-Tribulation.

a) Major beliefs.

Mt 24:29-31 The Rapture will occur after the Great Tribulation.

The church will be raptured after the Tribulation, just before the Battle of Armageddon.

1 Thes 4:15-17 The Rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus will be one event.

The church will return after satan is bound, to start the millennium kingdom.

Luke 21:36 The believers must watch, pray and be prepared for this event.

b) Specific supporting Scriptures.

Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1Th 4:17 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.

Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

c) Major contradictory or unaddressed issues.

Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. What is the purpose and role of the church in this process; in other words, when do we start acting as kings and priests?

Rev 20:4-6 There is no mention of the church nor the resurrected believer in the reference to those who had been dead.

1Co 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Who does that?

Luke 20:42 And David himself says in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Luke 20:43 Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. Who does that?

D. General Problems with all Theories.

1. Sovereignty of God.

Heb 6:18 By His oath and His promise, God cannot break His Word because he cannot lie.

Acts 10:24 God does not have favorites; He is no respecter of persons.

Gen 1:28 Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. This is God's first and only commission given to and for mankind. The others are to the individual or to the church or to Israel.

Gen 1:26 He has given man authority over the earth and all upon it.

2. Inconsistencies with the O.T. Examples.

Heb 11:7 Noah condemned the world by his actions and God cleansed it.

Josh 1:3 Joshua and the Israelites with God's help cleansed the Land in 7 years.

Ex 14:16 God's obedient people never run away and never lose. Moses parted the Red Sea.

3. Inconsistencies with the N.T. Covenants.

Phil 2:1 We have authority in three worlds through the Name of Jesus.

Rom 8:19 We are to become manifested sons of God, super-conquerors (Rom 8:37).

Eph 5:26 We are to become the Glorious Church without spot or wrinkle.

1 Cor 15:26 We are to overcome the last enemy, death, not run from it.

4. Partnership with God.

Eph 1:3 The church is blessed with every spiritual blessing but we call them into being. Rom 4:17

2 Pet 1:3 Everything we need for life and godliness has already been purchased for us by Jesus.

Mk 11:23-24 We receive everything by having faith in God's word.

Ps 91:7, 10, 11 10,000 shall fall at your side but no evil shall befall you because angels guard you.

Eph 1:21, 2:6 Satan is under your feet.

## References

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- 4) The Pre-Wrath Rapture: Is there any validity to this concept?  
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- 5) Posttribpeople.com