

WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

This event of being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air is what many Christians refer to as the “rapture.”

Due to the diverse opinions among Christians, I consider a person can still be an orthodox Christian no matter when they believe the rapture will take place. Repentance from sin and faith in Jesus is what grants us salvation. If Jesus is the Lord of your life you are saved.

While the rapture debate is of secondary importance, it is going to become of greater significance because we are living in the last days. There are three main views in regard to the timing of the rapture of the church and they are referred to as being pre, mid, or post tribulation. The great tribulation is the name given to the final stage of catastrophic events when the beast, or antichrist, will be revealed, and the judgments of God will be greatly intensified (Matthew 24:21; Daniel 12:1).

Many Christians believe in the pre-tribulation view, that the rapture takes place before the great tribulation. Some believe in mid-tribulation, that the rapture takes place in the middle of the seven years. The post-tribulation view is that the rapture takes place in conjunction with the actual Second Coming of Christ and not before.

We should note that pre, mid, and post-tribulation opinions all have very similar central views: the resurrection of the dead, the catching up or rapture of those who belong to the Lord, and the literal, physical, visible, and glorious return of Christ to rule and reign upon the earth. All three of these views acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Saviour whom we must obey. The differences lie in only the timing of some of the key end-times events.

WHAT I BELIEVE?

My personal opinion is that the true followers of Christ are caught up to meet the Lord in the air during the final stages of the battle of Armageddon (post-tribulation), and then they are with the Lord as He victoriously conquers the antichrist and the false prophet, as we enter the millennial reign of Christ.

The post-tribulation view is that the Church will go through the entire tribulation period, which means that many of God’s people will be persecuted by the antichrist and even martyred. When the Lord returns, He will resurrect the believers of past generations and rapture those who are alive at that time by catching them up to meet Him as He descends. Jesus will then complete His coming to earth in power by overthrowing the antichrist and his armies at the battle of Armageddon. Those who are raptured will be a part of the final overthrow of the Antichrist.

I’m concerned that even many “Christians” will be deceived in the last days because they have been taught that they don’t have to go through the tribulation. They think that they will be safely raptured to Heaven before the antichrist does his works and before the judgments of God strike the earth. Scripture clearly indicates, however, that God’s people, the elect, will need to remain faithful to Jesus during the time known as the great tribulation. The apostle Paul didn’t want the believers to be ignorant of these things, so every Christian does need to look into it.

No matter if you agree with me or not on the exact timing of the rapture, we must be united in the fact that we have to lead people to salvation through Jesus Christ. Yet I will now give the reasons why a pre or mid-trib rapture cannot be possible.

CHALLENGING THE PRE AND MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE THEORIES

The following points show why the rapture has to be post-tribulation.

1) The apostle Paul taught that the rapture cannot take place before the resurrection of the righteous dead (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53). There has to be a resurrection and then the rapture of all the saints, and this cannot happen before the coming of the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The fact that the rapture cannot take place before the first resurrection makes the pre-tribulation rapture theory an impossibility.

From the post-tribulation point of view there are two main resurrections, which are clearly seen in Scripture: 1) At the beginning of the thousand years (Revelation 20:4-5), and; 2) At the end of the thousand years for the final Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). These two resurrections are clearly post-trib. In order to support pre-tribulation, they have to say that there are three large-scale resurrections due to the fact that they are claiming that the resurrection/rapture of believers takes place seven years before the two main resurrections. There is no Biblical evidence for this claim of an extra pretribulation mass resurrection of believers.

2) The martyrs who refuse to take the mark of the beast or worship his image are given prominence in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). This proves that the resurrection of the righteous comes after the great tribulation. Therefore the pre-tribulation and mid-tribulation theories are incorrect. The rapture comes after the great tribulation, and the post-tribulation rapture belief is the most in line with Scripture.

3) Paul clearly states that the resurrection/rapture is at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52). In Matthew 24, we have a clear timetable of end-time events—wars, famines, false prophets, abomination of desolation, false Christs, signs in the heavens. Jesus returns in His glory; then there is a loud trumpet call and the gathering of the elect. The rapture takes place at the last trumpet, and the last trumpet is sounded when Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation period.

When Jesus returns there is a trumpet call. The rapture takes place at the last trumpet. Therefore, the rapture cannot take place before the return of Christ. The return of Christ is at the end of the tribulation period. Therefore, the rapture has to be post-trib and cannot be pre or mid trib.

**FAITHFULNESS TO JESUS UNTIL
THE END**

As I have studied end-time events I have become more convinced that the Book of Revelation is not about being raptured before the wrath of God comes; rather, it is about faithfulness to Christ during this difficult time, perseverance on the part of the believers, victory over Satan's attacks against the Church, and boldness in evangelism. The Church is not raptured so that God's wrath can be revealed. This wrath was revealed throughout the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 9:8), during the time of the early church, and has been throughout the Church Age (Romans 1:18). The Book of Revelation was sent to the churches so that believers are prepared to remain faithful to Christ until the very end.

The Bible says that we are called to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the day of God and speed its coming (2 Peter 3:10-12). But

how can the Church bring the return of Christ if we have already been raptured years before the Second Coming? The work of the Church includes preaching the gospel throughout the time of tribulation right until the very end of the age, at the return of Christ. There is no seven-year gap where the Church can't be found on the earth preaching the gospel. The Church will be alive and well upon the earth during the great tribulation.

Jesus has commanded us to go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (Mark 16:15). We are to make disciples of all nations, knowing that Jesus is with us until the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20). We must go forth, boldly proclaiming the gospel to all nations. You cannot say you are ready for the return of Christ if you are not in some way witnessing for Him and doing something for the propagation of the gospel.

In my evangelistic preaching, I have an urgency to lead people to Christ and to make sure they are saved. Life is short, and none of us know how long we have to live. Death may overtake us at any time, yet that is not the main reason we should live a holy life. It is the return of Christ, not the coming of death, that Jesus has given to us as the incentive to walk in righteousness (Matthew 24:45-46). The return of Christ is an awesome, awesome event; so make sure you are ready for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE TAKE PLACE?

'For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words' (1 Thess. 4:16-18).