



THE RAPTURE

Part 1

AIRED ON TheDOVE, JUNE 1, 2010

Perry Atkinson and John Mittendorf

INTRODUCTION

During the past several months, we have discussed the Gog and Magog war as delineated in Ezekiel 38 and 39 and the rebuilding of the Third Temple in Jerusalem. During those programs, TheDove received questions and comments regarding the Rapture and its timing with respect to the Tribulation and within world events. As a result, this series will look at the rapture from a simplistic perspective and focus on the primary viewpoints and scripture that support those viewpoints. Additionally, this series will be based on a foundation of seven basic presuppositions:

- All serious Christians agree the Lord will come to get them, the question is when (chronological relationship of final events)
- The time of the rapture with respect to the Tribulation is nowhere *plainly stated* in scripture. Two examples of this fact are (1) in Acts 1:7, Jesus tells his disciples that *"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority,"* and (2) in Matthew 24:36, Jesus again tells his disciples *"But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only"*
- There are good scholars on various sides of differing viewpoints (concerning the timing of the rapture). This is a primary reason why there are numerous perspectives such as pre-trib, post-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, and so on

- If you disagree with someone on the timing of the rapture, there is a good chance you have not read their position in full-strength
- The debate (or disagreement) on the timing of the rapture should serve as a greater desire for study and clarity on this subject, and *should not* present a barrier to healthy discussion and/or relationships. A specific viewpoint on the timing of the rapture will not determine a Christian's destiny. As an example, if you are a Christian and hold the Post-Tribulation viewpoint but Christ comes prior to the Tribulation, you will be raptured 7 years earlier than you previously thought
- Most people agree that when the Lord returns, He will set up an earthly kingdom for 1,000 years (Revelation 20)
- An illustration is not a proof (i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah)

DEFINITIONS

As an initial baseline for this series, let's consider the following definitions (which may vary slightly depending on the source that is used) in alphabetical order:

ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Refers to the violations of the ritual sacrifices of The Temple in Jerusalem. Applied to this series, can refer to the desecration and defilement of the Temple in both 70 A.D. (Romans) and, at the mid point of the Tribulation, the Antichrist walks into the Holies of Holies in the third Temple and declares himself God and puts a stop to worship and sacrifice (i.e., Daniel 9).

APOSTASY

The great falling away, Christianity without faith, religion without the gospel (i.e., Matthew 7, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Timothy 4:1, and James 2:14). Can also be defined as a "deliberate repudiation and abandonment of the faith one has possessed" (Whitlock).

DAY OF THE LORD

A period of time where God brings judgment. As an example, at the end of the Millennial kingdom, God will destroy all those who have rejected his offer of free salvation (i.e., 2 Peter 3:10, Acts 2:20, 1 Thessalonians 2:2, and 1 Thessalonians 5:2).

ESCHATOLOGY

The branch of theology that deals with future things.

IMMINENCE

As applied to the rapture of the church, it means that Christ can return at any time for His church, and no biblically predicted event must necessarily precede it.

LAWLESS ONE

Basically this phrase means to make up your own laws instead of Gods laws (self-sufficiency). Can also refer to the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3 and Daniel 7).

MID-TRIBULATION

Christ raptures His church in the middle of the Tribulation but prior to the wrath of God falling upon the earth during the last half of the Tribulation period. Proponents of this viewpoint believe support for this viewpoint is found in Revelation 11:11-15 and Revelation 14:1.

PARTIAL RAPTURE

Christ will only rapture those that look for him. This means that some of the Christians are not raptured (those who did not look for Christ's return) so this viewpoint is based on conditional conduct. Proponents believe support for this viewpoint is found in Matthew 25:1-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8, and Hebrews 9:28.

PRE-TRIBULATION

Christ will come prior to the beginning of the Tribulation to keep his church from the hour of temptation and thus enduring the 7 years of Tribulation. Proponents believe support for this viewpoint is found in numerous sources such as Revelation 3:10, Romans 5:9, John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4&5, and the list goes on. This viewpoint will be addressed in detail in the coming months.

PRE-WRATH

The Day of the Lord, the time of divine wrath upon the earth, will begin sometime during the second half of the Tribulation and that the rapture of the church will immediately precede it. This viewpoint holds that the church will enter the Tribulation period (and encountering the problems of that period) but escape the last half (the worst part) of the Tribulation. This viewpoint is derived from a discussion in 1986 between Marvin Rosenthal and Robert Van Kampen and the books "The Pre Wrath Rapture Of The Church" and "The Sign."

POST-TRIBULATION

Christ will come at the end of the Tribulation which means that the church will go through the Tribulation and be raptured just before the appearance of Christ. This viewpoint holds that the rapture and the second coming of Christ are one and the same event. Proponents of this viewpoint believe support is found in verses such as John 16:1-1&33 and Romans 12:12. This viewpoint will also be addressed in detail in the coming months.

RAPTURE

Comes from the Greek word *Harpadzo* which means "to seize and take away quickly." The basic idea is "to suddenly remove or snatch away," or from the New Testament "to be caught up to heaven" (i.e., John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, etc). Another interesting rapture perspective is

the return of Christ will be to two-fold: (1) return for Christians and (2) judgment for non-Christians.

SON OF MAN

This was Christ's favorite phrase for himself (i.e., Daniel 7:13&14). Can also show that He is the Son who is related to mankind while the phrase *Son Of God* points to the deity of Christ.

SON OF DESTRUCTION

Antichrist displaying himself as God

THE BEAST

The Antichrist. Comes from the Greek word "Theerion" which means "wild animal." (Revelation 11:7, Revelation 19:19-2, etc).

THE ELECT

Christ's chosen people (also the chosen ones).

TRIBULATION

The Tribulation period will consist of 7 years and will begin with the Antichrist's signature of a covenant with Israel for 7 years (which he breaks at 3.5 years into the Tribulation). This 7 year period will be the greatest time of trial the world has ever experienced or will ever see (Matthew 24, Daniel 9:27, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, Romans 5:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, etc). The 7 year Tribulation period can also refer to the 70th week of Daniels prophecy (Daniel 9) which is the last 7 years of this age.

SUMMARY OF THREE COMMON "RAPTURE" PASSAGES

There are numerous biblical passages that talk about the rapture, but there is a commonality within each of these passages. As an example, 2 Thessalonians 2, Luke 17-18, Luke 21:25-28, Mark 13, and so on. However, we will briefly look at the following four rapture passages.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13 TO 5:11

- Can happen at any time
- Asleep means dead
- The lord will descend from heaven with a shout and trumpet and the dead will be raptured first
- Same voice that brought first life (Adam), now brings life to the dead
- In this text, the Lord does not come to the ground (see Zechariah where the Lord's feet split the ground). We will come back to this
- Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night
- Hope for the return of Christ is not **if**, its **when**
- If you are a Christian, it does not matter if you are alive or dead, you are always alive with Christ

- When you are raptured, you will be recognizable but different (likely what you would have been without sin)
- If you live for Christ, you will be happy to see him, but not surprised

1 CORINTHIANS 15:15-58

- You don't have time to prepare, so always be ready
- Raptured persons are changed at the rapture (receive new bodies - - Isaiah 25) which can also be referred to as a material transformation
- Death is killed by death itself. The price for sin is death (power of sin is the law). However, Christ used the cross to defeat sin and offer life. No other religion/message offers this
- Christ comes to get you, you are translated, and transformed (material transformation)

JOHN 14:1-6

- Night before Christ was crucified
- Jesus states "*He is the way*," there is no other way to heaven (it is not what you know, it is who you know). This is the foundation of the gospel. Remember that a Theist believes there is a God, but does not have a personal relationship with God. Therefore, the rapture is personal for Christians
- The disciples were troubled because of the impending death of Jesus and their failings (i.e., Peter)
- Jesus then comforts them with three realities (1) keep their eyes off themselves and on God - - trust me, (2) focus on the invisible (heaven), and (3) Jesus promises He would personally return to get them and take them to a real place (heaven)

MATTHEW 24-25 (Olivet Discourse)

- This passage contains numerous facets of the rapture such as the disciples two questions (when will these things be and what is the sign of your coming), the Tribulation, the second coming, parable of the fig tree (the fig tree is not a code word for Israel - - more appropriately, summer follows spring), illustration of the days of Noah, illustration of the two servants, parable of the ten virgins, parable of the talents, and the judgment of the Gentiles. This portion of scripture is a "*must study*" when dealing with the rapture
- Two kinds of people in the parables, (1) those who take God seriously and (2) those who do not although they know God is there
- Life is also eternal in Hell
- Nominal Christian is in name only. Real Christians live under the Lordship of Christ

SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES DEALING WITH THE RAPTURE

- Jesus has promised to come and get you
- You will be translated (taken from this age/earth)
- You will be transformed (receive a different body)

Next month we will specifically look at Post-Tribulation.

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THE RAPTURE

Part 2

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- Most people agree that when the Lord returns, He will set up an earthly kingdom for 1,000 years (Revelation 20)
- An illustration is not a proof (i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah, Noah, etc). As an example, the fact that Lot and Noah were saved from God's wrath does not necessarily mean the church will be saved from God's wrath during the Tribulation
- This series will not attempt to either prove or disprove various Rapture viewpoints but will focus on scripture that is used to substantiate a specific viewpoint. The important point is two-fold; (1) know the reasons that support what you believe, and (2) be familiar with the reasons that support the other viewpoints

BACKGROUND

Before we look at the predominant Rapture viewpoints, and in the interest of clarity, let's review four events that are often associated with Rapture theology, keeping in mind that debate among scholars also extends to these scriptural events which are; (1) The Millennium, (2) The word Tribulation, (3) The Day of the Lord, and (4) The 70 Weeks of Daniel.

THE MILLENNIUM

A description of The Millennium is found in Revelation 20:1-7 and is mentioned six times. There are three views as follows:

Premillennialism

This viewpoint teaches that the millennium is a literal 1,000 year period during which, Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of numerous prophecies reigns on the earth

Amillennialism

This viewpoint teaches that there will be no literal, future 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth, but a spiritual form of the kingdom is now present. This viewpoint also understands the 1,000 years to be merely symbolic of long periods of time.

Postmillennium

This viewpoint teaches that Christ's kingdom is now being extended throughout the world through the preaching of the gospel and that the current age is the Millennium which is not necessarily a literal 1,000 years in length.

TRIBULATION

The word Tribulation means to *"press together, to press hard upon,"* and refers to times of oppression, affliction, and distress. The Tribulation period is allocated more space in scripture than numerous noteworthy subjects (i.e., Hell, Millennium, etc) except the promise of the second coming of Christ and salvation. It is also mentioned 49 times in the Old Testament and 15 times in the New Testament (as an example, see Matthew 24:9 and Revelation 4-19). For this discussion, there are three basic definitions of the Tribulation that will be used; (1) a time of trial and testing, (2) a period of seven years which will be comprised of two 3.5 year periods, and (3) the "Great Tribulation" which will be the worst time in world history and will occur the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:21, etc). The Tribulation will be used to; (1) conclude the times of the Gentiles, (2) bring judgment against the Christ rejecting nations, and (3) prepare for the restoration and gathering of Israel in the millennial reign of Christ following His second coming. The Tribulation will be initiated by the Antichrist signing a peace treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27). During the first 3.5 years, God will begin to impose judgments that will escalate in severity. The seven seal judgments will be first, followed by the seven trumpet judgments. At this point, the Antichrist will desecrate the Temple and declare himself God. This will begin the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation which will see the seven bowl judgments.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The term "The Day Of The Lord" is used in scripture in various ways. As an example, Old Testament prophets often used the phrase to signify an event to be fulfilled in the near future and was also used for an event in the distant eschatological future such as the Tribulation period. New Testament writers generally used the phrase for the judgment that will climax in the seven year Tribulation period. The Day Of The Lord is characterized by God dynamically intervening supernaturally in order to bring judgment against sin in the world which results in God actively controlling and dominating history in a direct manner. Two periods of The Day Of The Lord have not been fulfilled on earth; (1) the judgment that climaxes the Tribulation period, and (2) the consummating judgment at the end of the millennial period that ushers in a new earth.

THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL

This amazing prophecy can be found in Daniel 9:24-27, and is a prophetic timetable for the nation of Israel. The prophetic clock began ticking when the

command was given to restore and rebuild Jerusalem following its destruction by Babylon. In Daniel 9:25, the timetable for Israel is divided into 70 groups (weeks) of seven years for a total of 490 years. The first 69 groups (or 483 years) was the time from the order to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah, the Prince (Jesus Christ) rode into Jerusalem to proclaim Himself the Messiah. At that point, the prophetic clock stopped. A gap between the 483 years and the coming final 7 years of Tribulation is often referred to as the church age and is delineated in Daniel 9:26. Then the last seven years (final week) will begin when the Antichrist signs a peace treaty with Israel.

END TIME OVERVIEW

Before we look at the various Rapture viewpoints, let's take a moment and quickly overview the end time events in chronological order so we can keep the Rapture in proper perspective:

- The Antichrist signs a peace treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27). This event begins the 7-year Tribulation period
- The Tribulation period will last seven years and is divided into two 3.5 year periods (Daniel 9:27)
- Although the first 3.5 year period will be disastrous and will experience the 7 seal judgments (Revelation 6:1-8:5) and the 7 trumpet judgments (Revelation 8:7-11:19), it will not be as disastrous as the final 3.5 year period
- At the end of the first 3.5 year period, the Antichrist will break the peace treaty with Israel and walk into the Temple Holy of Holies and call himself God and worthy of worship (Revelation 13:16-17)
- During the last 3.5 years, God will pour out his wrath known as the bowl judgments (Revelation 15:1-16:21) and is referred to as the "*Great Tribulation*." The Bible also says that if this period was not cut short, all life would perish (Matthew 24:22)
- At the end of the Tribulation (end of seven years), Christ will return on a white horse and defeat the nations and Satan which is known as the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16, and 19:11-21)
- Satan and the Antichrist will then be bound and thrown into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3)
- The 1,000 year Millennium will begin with Christ ruling on the Davidic Throne from the Millennial Temple on earth (Jeremiah 3:17, Revelation 20:4, etc)
- At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be set free, he will gather the nations together for one last final battle, and they will be defeated by Christ. Satan

will be thrown into the Lake of Fire to be tormented forever and ever (Revelation 20:7-10)

- The Great White Throne Judgment will take place with the Book of Life being opened. People not found in the Book of Life will go into the Lake of Fire, and people in The Book of Life will go to Heaven (Revelation 20:11-15)
- The beginning of a new heaven and earth will commence (Revelation 21)

RAPTURE VIEWPOINTS

Prior to looking at the various Rapture viewpoints, it is important to consider that all of these viewpoints can be placed into two categories. They will either **not** take you through the Tribulation of varying degrees (Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Pre-Wrath, etc), or you **will** go through the Tribulation (Post-Tribulation). Now, using Part 1 (which included common eschatology definitions) as a starting point, let's begin by briefly looking at the Post-Tribulation viewpoint and then ten explanations *that are used to support* the Post-Tribulation viewpoint.

POST-TRIBULATION

Believers will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation (when the Lord returns) and just before He puts his feet on the Mount of Olives. This period of time is when the Lord rescues his believers and also judges the earth. There is **no** significant time lapse between the Lord's return and coming with his believers (or coming *for* his people and coming *with* his people, as in John 14:1-6, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and Revelation 19:14). They are the same event. Remember, when reading the following explanations, it is helpful to not assume a particular viewpoint and read something into a verse and/or viewpoint that is not there.

Explanations for supporting the Post-Tribulation viewpoint

- The second coming in the New Testament is *not* portrayed as a 2-stage event but as a unified event. The words used to describe the Second Coming of Christ clearly put His appearance at the end of the tribulation (all sides agree Christ will come at the end of the Tribulation). In this scenario, Christ will rescue His believers right before his feet touch the Mount of Olives. The question is, will He *also* come at the beginning of the Tribulation (the Pre-Tribulation perspective)
- None of the rapture passages clearly indicate its sequential relationship to the Second Coming. However, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 does seem to associate the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation (one event)
- The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:22, 24:24, and 24:31) places the "*elect*" people in the Tribulation period. The word *elect* is used 3 times in Matthew

24. Elect can mean all Christians (Jews and Gentiles), saints, members of the church, or chosen ones. As a result, the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 seems to refer most naturally to the Rapture. Remember, everywhere the term elect is used it refers to members of the church (Gentile and Jew). Do not restrict the elect to ethnic Jews only. Therefore, the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 seems to refer most naturally to the Rapture

- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is viewed from a Post-Tribulation viewpoint as identifying the Rapture, the Second Coming of the Lord, and The Day Of the Lord as a unified event
- In Revelation 6-19, *saved* people (called saints and my people) are mentioned on earth during the Tribulation. The term saints in the New Testament always refers to members of the church. Therefore, it might be assumed that the church is present during the Tribulation
- Revelation 3:10 does not prove anything about the Rapture. The Greek term "*ek*" (out of) can also mean protected within. This can mean the church will be removed **or** he will keep the church in his care *while He pours out His wrath on the rest of the world*. Ek is also used in John 15:17 (to keep them from the evil one). Both Post and Pre-Tribulationists believe that neither position will endure the wrath of God. Remember that an illustration is not a proof
"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."
Revelation 3:10
- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 is viewed as supporting the Lord will protect his people from his wrath
"And to wait for His son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."
1 Thessalonians 1:10
"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Thessalonians 5:9
- 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is viewed as supporting the resurrection will happen at the end of the tribulation
"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord."
1Thessalonians 4:17
- Imminence does not require you to believe instantaneous at any moment. A process that can start at any time
- The early church held a Post-Tribulation viewpoint. The Pre-Tribulation viewpoint did not appear until about the mid 1800's

PRE-TRIBULATION

The Pre-Tribulation viewpoint supports the premise that the Lord will appear to rescue His church just before the Tribulation period (which is a seven-year period between the Rapture and the Second Coming). As opposed to the Post-Tribulation viewpoint, there are two distinct appearances (or comings of the Lord) and are separated by the Tribulation period.

Next month we will look at the explanations for supporting the Pre-Tribulation viewpoint.

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- The time of the Rapture with respect to the Tribulation is nowhere *plainly stated* in scripture. Additionally, it is apparent that the timing of the Rapture is not for us to know. Three examples of this fact are; (1) in Acts 1:7, Jesus tells his disciples that *"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority,"* (2) in Matthew 24:36, Jesus tells his disciples *"But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only,"* and (3) in Mark 13:32, Jesus again tells his disciples *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is."*
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Prior to looking at the various Rapture viewpoints, it is important to consider that all of these viewpoints can be placed into two categories. They will (1) either **not** take you through the Tribulation of varying degrees (Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Pre-Wrath, etc), or (2) you **will** go through the Tribulation (Post-Tribulation). Now, using Part 1&2 (which included common eschatology definitions) as a starting point, let's begin by briefly looking at the Post-Tribulation viewpoint and then some explanations *that are used to support* the Post-Tribulation viewpoint.

POST-TRIBULATION

This viewpoint holds that believers will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation (when the Lord returns) and just before He puts his feet on the Mount of Olives. This period of time is when the Lord rescues his believers and also judges the earth. There is **no** significant time lapse between the Lord's return and coming with his believers (or coming *for* his people and coming *with* his people, as in John 14:1-6, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and Revelation 19:14). They are the same event. Remember, when reading the following explanations, it is helpful to not assume a particular viewpoint and read something into a verse and/or viewpoint that is not there.

Explanations for supporting the Post-Tribulation viewpoint

- The second coming in the New Testament is *not* portrayed as a 2-stage event but as a unified event. The words used to describe the Second Coming of

Christ clearly put His appearance at the end of the tribulation (all sides agree Christ will come at the end of the Tribulation). In this scenario, Christ will rescue His believers right before his feet touch the Mount of Olives (the question is, will He **also** come at the beginning of the Tribulation - the Pre-Tribulation perspective?).

- None of the rapture passages clearly indicate its sequential (multiple event) relationship to the Second Coming. However, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 does seem to associate the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation (one event).
- The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:22, 24:24, and 24:31) places the “*elect*” people in the Tribulation period. The word elect is used 3 times in Matthew 24. Elect can mean all Christians (Jews and Gentiles), saints, members of the church, or chosen ones. As a result, the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 seems to refer most naturally to the Rapture. Remember, everywhere the term elect is used it refers to members of the church (Gentile and Jew). Do not restrict the elect to ethnic Jews only. Therefore, the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 seems to refer most naturally to the Rapture.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is viewed from a Post-Tribulation viewpoint as identifying the Rapture, the Second Coming of the Lord, and The Day Of the Lord as a unified (single) event.
- In Revelation 6-19, *saved* people (called saints and my people) are mentioned on earth during the Tribulation. The term saints in the New Testament always refers to members of the church. Therefore, it might be assumed that the church is present during the Tribulation.
- Revelation 3:10 does not prove anything about the Rapture. The Greek term “*ek*” (out of) can also mean protected within. This can mean the church will be removed **or** He will keep the church in his care *while He pours out His wrath on the rest of the world*. Ek is also used in John 15:17 (to keep them from the evil one). Both Post-Tribulationists and Pre-Tribulationists believe that neither position will endure the wrath of God:

“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

Revelation 3:10

- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 is viewed as supporting the Lord will protect his people from his wrath:

“And to wait for His son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

1 Thessalonians 1:10

"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 5:9

- 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is viewed as supporting the resurrection will happen at the end of the tribulation:

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 4:17

- Imminence does not require you to believe instantaneous at any moment. A process that can start at any time.
- The early church held a Post-Tribulation viewpoint. The Pre-Tribulation viewpoint did not appear until about the mid 1800's.

PRE-TRIBULATION

The Pre-Tribulation viewpoint supports the premise that the Lord will appear to rescue His church *just* before the Tribulation period, and therefore, the church will come back with Christ at the end of the Tribulation period (Revelation 19). As opposed to the Post-Tribulation viewpoint, there are two distinct appearances (or comings of the Lord) which would happen prior to and at the end of the Tribulation (or are separated by the Tribulation period). *Note: This viewpoint was never to be understood as protection from tribulation (small "t"), but protection from the wrath of God. To label this position as "escapist" is not appropriate.*

Explanations for supporting the Pre-Tribulation viewpoint

- This viewpoint makes the best sense of God's promise to be protected from his wrath. This can be found in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, and 5:9 (see above for these verses). As there is good reason to see the entire Tribulation period as the pouring out of God's wrath on the world, the best way for that protection to happen is for the Lord to take His church off the earth before His wrath is poured out on the earth.
- This viewpoint makes the best sense of Revelation 3:10 which is as follows:
"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."

Revelation 3:10

The Greek word "*ek*" in this verse is viewed as meaning "out from within" and is applied to the entire hour of testing that is coming on the whole earth (Tribulation). See the 6th bullet point on page 4 for an expanded viewpoint on this verse.

- Allows for believers in "*old model*" bodies to inhabit and populate the 1,000 year Millennium period. Remember that when believers are raptured, they will be changed to new bodies (1 Corinthians 15:35-53 and Philippians 3:20-21). Both Post-Tribulationists and Pre-Tribulationists agree that there must be

un-resurrected people entering the Millennium. These people will likely have been saved during the Tribulation, will not have been raptured, and therefore, will go into the Millennium. Revelation seems to say that people born during the millennial kingdom will have the desire to rebel against God, which means this is unregenerate life. Remember that Christ does not allow unbelieving people to enter the kingdom when He returns (Matthew 25:31-46 - - sheep and goats judgment). If Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation to rapture his believers (who are changed – “*new model*” bodies), there would be no believers to go into the millennial kingdom.

- Allows for an imminent return while still leaving room for the many indicators that lead up to the Second coming. The viewpoint is, if the Rapture happens prior to the Tribulation, then there is still time for prophesized events to happen before the Second Coming (anti-Christ, etc).
- Allows Israel to take center-stage as the venue of gospel work after centuries of hardness and rebellion. This seems to be the point of Daniel 9:27. Remember that the last seven years (Tribulation) has a Jewish flavor.
- This viewpoint explains why the Rapture passages are different from the Second coming passages. The Rapture passages have no “warning signs” that lead up to them, but the Second coming passages do (ie., the siege of Jerusalem in Zechariah 14:1-2).
- There is no reason that a prophetic event might not be divided into two or more phases. As an example, the first and second comings of Christ appeared to be one event to the Old Testament believers, but are actually separated by thousands of years. Additionally, the prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 is only half-fulfilled in Acts 2:17-21. The rest will happen at the Second Coming.

MID-TRIBULATION

The Mid-tribulation perspective is derived from the viewpoint that Christ will rapture the church in the middle of the Tribulation period (3.5 years) and has been taught by scholars Gleason Archer, J. Oliver Buswell, and Merrill Tenney. Specifically, the first 3.5 years under the anti-Christ will be under a peace treaty that has been signed with Israel. However, at the end of the first 3.5 year time frame, the anti-Christ will desecrate the Temple which will begin the final 3.5 year period of the “Great Tribulation.”

Explanations for supporting the Mid-Tribulation viewpoint

This viewpoint believes that the church will enter the Tribulation period but will be delivered from wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9, see page 5), which is believed is in the second half of the Tribulation and not in the first half of the Tribulation. Additionally, proponents also believe that the Rapture occurs at the last trumpet judgment (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and because the last trumpet sounds in the

middle of the Tribulation (Revelation 11:15-19), then the Rapture must occur during the middle of the Tribulation.

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

PRE-WRATH

This viewpoint was represented by Robert Van Kampen and Marvin Rosenthal, and believes that the Rapture will happen towards the end of the tribulation before the *great wrath* of God begins.

Explanations for supporting the Pre-Wrath viewpoint

It is believed that the church will enter the Tribulation but will not experience the *great wrath* of God as outlined in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. However, since the wrath of God does not appear in Revelation until after the sixth seal, this is viewed as meaning the wrath of God will not be poured out until the seventh seal (Revelation 6:12-8:1). Therefore, the Rapture must happen between the sixth and seventh seals.

“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sack cloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.”

Revelation 6:12

“When He opened the seventh seal, there was a silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

Revelation 8:1

Note: Pre-Wrath supporters also find the Rapture in Matthew 24:40-41, and Luke 17:20-37.

PARTIAL RAPTURE

This viewpoint is not one of the more popular perspectives, but nevertheless it does have a following.

Explanations for supporting the Partial Rapture viewpoint

The partial rapture viewpoint holds that the rapture is not based on the salvation of a person, but is rather based on a conditional or deserving conduct of a person (Hebrews 9:28). It is believed by some that disobedience or sin will make a Christian unfit to be raptured with Christ, so these persons must be punished during the Tribulation. Some of the verses used to substantiate this viewpoint are Matthew 25:1-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8, and Hebrews 9:28. Additionally, it is believed that persons who do not “*watch*” will not “*escape all of these things that shall come to pass.*” Passages used to support this viewpoint are Titus 2:12-13, 2 Timothy 4:8, and Phil 3:20.

*"So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him
He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."*

Hebrews 9:28

*"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the
Lord Jesus Christ."*

Philippians 3:20

RECOMMENDATION

Although this has been a brief overview of the Rapture, there are numerous sources that expand on this discussion that are listed in the following Bibliography. Several sources that are highly recommended in the following section are **THE RAPTURE**, Pastor Rick Booye, **WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?** Pastor Rick Booye, **THE POPULAR ENCYCLOPEDIA of BIBLE PROPHECY**, Tim LaHaye and Ed Hinson, and **THE POPULAR DICTIONARY OF BIBLE PROPHECY**, Ron Rhodes.

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