

Three Views of the Rapture of the Church

Post-Tribulation View

This view sees the Rapture of the Church happening at the end of the Tribulation just before or during the 2nd Coming of Christ in Revelation 19:11. They believe that OT passages of scripture that speak of the Day of the Lord are too nebulous to speak specifically about the End Times Tribulation. They do not see the events of the tribulation as being such that would warrant the removal of the church. Many also do not see all the judgments depicted in Revelation as being “God’s wrath”. They believe the judgments which are the wrath of God will only affect the rebellious nations and not the Church. The Church will not be harmed by any judgments befalling the world during the Tribulation.

Mid-Tribulation View

This view sees the Rapture of the Church happening after the first three and a half years of the Tribulation. This view is based on the Olivet Discourse of Jesus in Matthew 24. Here Jesus describes the Great Tribulation (v21) including the Abomination the brings Desolation (v15). They see Revelation 12 and 13 as describes events that take place in the middle of the Tribulation as well as the Anti-Christ breaking his covenant with Israel at the mid-point. Jesus describes his appearing as happening immediately after these things. Therefore, they see the rapture as taking place following the these events.

Pre-Tribulation View

This view sees the Rapture of the church happening before the Tribulation. Proponents of this view find its strength based in 3 main areas. 1. The tribulation is for the wrath of God to be poured out on the nations of the earth, and for Israel to be brought to faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah. 2. They view the entire tribulation period as wrath of God. And since 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; Rev 3:10 teach that the church will not suffer under God’s wrath that is to come, they view God as removing the church from the wrath. 3. They see the bible as describing two separate and unique events with regards to the return of the Lord.

Why I Believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church

1 Thess 4:13-18; John 14:1-3; 1 Cor 15:51-57

1. The differences in biblical descriptions of the Rapture and the 2nd Coming of Christ:

Rapture:	2nd Coming of Christ
1. Believers are caught up to meet Christ in the Sky (1 Thess 4:13-18)	1. Christ Descends to the earth (Zech 14:1-8)
2. The Dead are raised prior to Christ setting foot on the earth, in fact, he does not actually set foot on the earth at the rapture – he only comes to the sky (1 Thess 4:17)	2. The dead are not raised until after Christ returns to earth (Rev 20:4)
3. Christ takes believers to Heaven (Jn 14:1-4)	3. Christ ushers believers into the earthly millennium (Rev 20:1-10)
4. The Rapture is virtually instantaneous (1 Cor 15:52)	4. The second coming occurs over a period of time (Matt 24:30, Rev 19:11-21)
5. The bodies of living saints are “changed” into glorified bodies (1 Cor 15:51-57)	5. Living saints go into the millennium unchanged – as evidenced by the fact that they bear descendants (Is 65:17-25)
6. The rapture was a mystery not revealed in past ages (1 Cor 15:51)	6. The 2 nd coming was clearly revealed in the OT (Zech 14:1-8)

2. The Bible promises that the church will be kept from the Tribulation, ie. the Wrath of God.
1 Thess 1:10 ; 4:13-18; 5:9; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; Rev. 3:10
3. Since the Rapture is presented in the NT as imminent (1 Thess 5:1-3), it must happen before the Tribulation Judgments that seemingly happen in precise sequence.
4. The absence of references to the church in Rev 4-18 and the Olivet Discourse of Matt 24.
5. The Tribulation seen in the OT (Jer 30:7; Dan 7:15-28) is a distinctly Jewish time period.
6. The bible gives us many types or examples of what might happen at the rapture. And with many of them God seemed to preserve and protect His chosen people from death or wrath/judgment.
 - Enoch is taken up– Heb 11:5
 - Noah is taken above the flood– Heb 11:7
 - Lot is taken out of Sodom– Luke 17:28-29
 - The Passover: Jews are kept/protected from death – Ex 12
 - Israelites escape the Egyptians through the Red Sea – Ex 14:22
 - Rahab saved from the destruction of Jericho – Josh 2:21
 - Elijah raptured in a chariot of fire – 2 Kings 2:11
 - The Ascension of Jesus – Acts 1:9-11
 - Paul raptured to the 3rd Heaven – 2 Cor 12:2-4

Questions:

1. If the church is raptured during or after the tribulation, or must go through the tribulation, how is the church in Thessalonica to feel comforted and encouraged by the message about the rapture in 1 Thess 4:18 and 1 Thess 5:11?
2. The Bible says that the tribulation and the 2nd coming of Christ will have signs preceding it and an order of things that must take place. If there is no rapture, or the church is raptured during or after the tribulation, or must go through the tribulation, how can the Bible teach that the return of Christ is Imminent (could come at any time) (1 Thess 1:10; Titus 2:13; Luke 12:40)?
3. Matt 24:22 describe the judgement of the Tribulation as being so destructive, that “If the Lord, had not cut short these days, no one would have survived.” If the church is to be exempt from the wrath of God that is to come during the Tribulation (1 Thess 1:10; 1 Thess 5:9; Rev 3:10), why would God allow the church to experience and witness for 7 years the death, carnage, and supernatural destruction that is described in the book of Revelation?