

The Rapture Dilemma B

Eschatology: Study of God
Developing People in His Image

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Inexorably Linked Together

Rapture



Great Tribulation



The Rapture

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Th 4: 13-18 ESV)

The Rapture

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
(1 Co. 15:50-58 ESV)

Rapture is not the Dispute

- Everyone who agrees with the Rapture of the Church have no argument about what will occur at the Rapture
 - Dead saints in Christ will arise
 - Living saints will arise
 - All will receive flesh and bone bodies

Timing of the Rapture is the Dispute

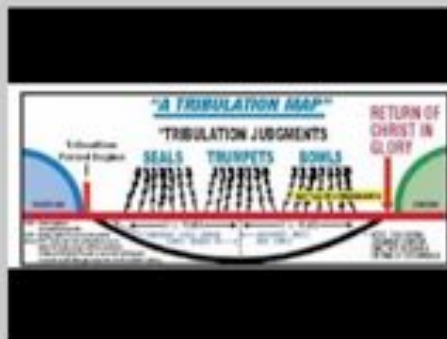
- There are three major views concerning the *timing* of the Rapture (and one minority view)
 - Post Tribulation
 - Mid Tribulation
 - Pre Tribulation

Timing is NOT the Issue

- Though the timing is usually the point of disagreement, this is NOT the true dispute
- We will discuss each major view from the perspective of its required worldview (hopefully without creating a “straw man” fallacy)

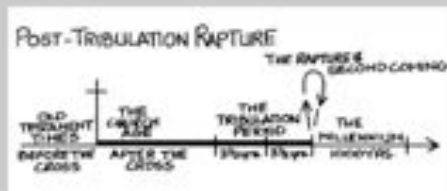
Great Tribulation Map

- Review of Tribulation events
- Helps to understand how each rapture view fits into these events



Post Tribulation Rapture

- Occurs at end of Tribulation
- Those raptured meet Christ in the air as He returns to set up His Kingdom
- Literal interpretation



Post Tribulation Contradiction

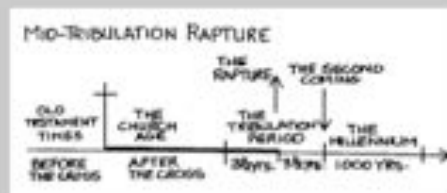
- Violates the Law of Non-Contradiction and thus is untenable with a Millennial Kingdom
- If all the saints are raptured to return to earth with Christ, *who* enters the Kingdom?
- No one! Only ones left on earth are lost who are cast into Hell

Post Tribulation is Gnostic at Heart

- The Post Tribulation rapture is tenable only *if* there is *no* Millennial Kingdom
- The Post Tribulation must actually be linked with Amillennialism to have any credibility
- Amillennialists usually do not hold to a rapture

Mid Tribulation Rapture

- This position believes the Church is taken out with the coming of the Antichrist declaring himself to be god in the Temple



Mid Tribulation Rapture Rationale

- For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. 1 Th 5:9-10 (NASB)
- This eisegetical interpretation is applied to the Church and the Great Tribulation due to *proximity*

Church Escapes Wrath

- The rationale is:
 - Church is the Bride of Christ
 - Christ will not pour His wrath on His Church
 - Church must be *purified* with some tribulation
 - *Great Tribulation* does not begin until the halfway point, or thereabouts

Purified Church Ready for Christ

- There is *no* consistent hermeneutical interpretation that places the Rapture at the mid point or designates one part as tribulation and the latter part as the Great Tribulation
- This view demands that Christians must face the tribulation to maintain *fairness* and offset the *erroneous* Pre Trib Rapture

Ad Hominem Attack

- This fallacious argument does not legitimize the Mid Trib or illegitimize the Pre Trib rapture view
- It does prevent serious discussion



Mid Tribulation Add-Ons

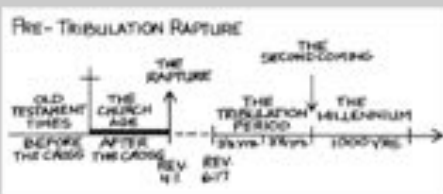
- This Rapture position has spawned another Rapture viewpoint
 - Pre Wrath View – Similar to the Mid Trib but disagrees on what constitutes the start of the Wrath of God period
 - Predicated on misunderstanding Mt 24-25

Post & Mid Trib Rapture Flaws

- Both of these positions
 - See only the “church” benefiting
 - Incorrect view of the “Bride of Christ”
 - See only God “punishing” people for sin
 - Beating people harder does not lead to repentance
 - Miss the reason for the Tribulation (Discussed in our previous lesson)

Pre Tribulation Rapture

- The Rapture occurs at the beginning of the transition into the Tribulation Period
- The Church is not in view at all during this period



Pre Tribulation Rapture Views

- This view
 - Uses the normative hermeneutical interpretation methodology the same as the Premillennial view
 - Sees God fulfilling His promises to Israel consistent with OT and NT scripture

Pre Tribulation Rapture Views

- God's "*wrath*" is allowing man enjoy the fruits of his own rule (I can do better than God) (Ps. 138:3)
- God limits this to prevent the complete destruction of all mankind (Tower of Babel)
- God emphasizes the total depravity of man who rejects God's mercy and longsuffering

Pre Tribulation Rapture Views

- God is remolding the earth as He did in the Cataclysm (*Evolution* in reverse)
 - This time for all to see, rejection of evolution
 - All mountains and islands disappear, except Zion
- God is preparing for the Millennial Kingdom and a return to “pre-flood” conditions

Pre Tribulation Rapture Views

- Church comes back with Christ during His parousia at the end of the Great Tribulation
- Those who accepted Jesus and His people enter the Millennial Kingdom
- Those who rejected Jesus and His people are “*raptured*” into Hell, missing the Kingdom

Objection: Two Returns of Christ

- This is a common objection to the Pre Trib Rapture view: Bible talks about only “one” return and this view requires “two” returns
- In Luke Jesus reads from Isaiah about *His first advent, though the second is in view*, in this one sentence (Prophetic language) (Lk 21:27-32)

Objection: Two Returns of Christ

- Christ told them His first advent was fulfilled in their time and sat down
 - He did not address His second advent with them
 - His second advent was addressed in the NT
- This lays a pattern for the Pre Trib Rapture

Unified: Two Returns of Christ

- 1 Thessalonians talks of Jesus meeting His saints in the air but does not link this with His second advent (1Th 4:13-18)
- When He returns at His second advent, with His Church, this does not negate His coming for His Church earlier to judge them at the Bema Seat (2Co 5:8-10, Mt 25:11-12)

My Conclusion

- This is why I believe that the Pre Tribulation Rapture of the Church is consistent with the Dispensational Premillennialism requiring the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-6)
 - Rewards those who are spiritual: Jews, Gentiles
 - Condemns those who reject Christ, while Satan is and is not "chained," seeking to destroy Jerusalem