

## Reasons to Believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture

The following is culled from a message titled *I Will Keep You*, given a few years ago on Revelation 3:10-11. [The exposition of those verses is located at the end of this article]

### Thirteen Reasons

#### 1 – The Blessed Hope

The first reason we believe the Rapture takes place *before* the Tribulation is because it's called the *Blessed Hope* in Titus 2:13.

. . . looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

In 1 Thess. 4:18 the Apostle Paul writes this regarding the imminence of the Rapture . . .

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

If the Rapture doesn't occur until the middle or end of the Tribulation, where's the comfort in that?

Pretend you'd never heard of the Rapture and I was telling you all about the Last Days. I tell you about the horrors of the Tribulation, all the death and destruction that will take place as foretold in the Book of Revelation; the plagues, pestilence, famine, drought, economic and social upheaval on a scale never seen in history. A third of the earth's population will be wiped out, then later another fourth! I briefly chronicle the rise of the antichrist and false prophet and finally, the Battle of Armageddon, earth's worst and bloodiest war. Then I say, "But comfort one another, cause when it's all over, we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air."

You'd think I was nuts! There's no comfort in knowing you've got to pass through all of that to get to the Rapture. The *only* comfort you could gain was by hoping the Last Days were a long way off and that the return of Jesus was nowhere near.

But that isn't close to what Scripture tells us our attitude should be. We ought to hope and looking forward to the Rapture. The comfort of the Blessed Hope (Rapture) comes from knowing it comes *before* the hour of trial coming upon the *whole Earth*.

#### 2 – God's Wrath

In Revelation 6:15-17 we learn *the Tribulation is a time of God's wrath* being poured out on the "earth-dwellers."

<sup>15</sup>And the kings of the earth, the great men, <sup>16</sup>the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup>and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Yet 1 Thess. 5:9-11 we read,

<sup>9</sup>For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup>who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. <sup>11</sup>Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Those who've been born again are *not appointed to God's wrath* yet that is *precisely* what the Tribulation is – the *hour* [time-period] of God's wrath, testing the hearts of the earth-dwellers.

God's wrath against sin was fully satisfied in the Cross of Jesus Christ. When Jesus declared, "It is finished" He meant the holy demands of God's justice were completely satisfied. Jesus took our place on the Cross as the *object* of God's wrath. Therefore, it would be *unjust* for God to inflict His wrath on us. Christian won't be here for the Tribulation because it is the *hour of God's wrath* we've already been saved from.

#### 3 – Lot's Example

In Genesis 18, Lot and his family were delivered from the flaming judgment of God on wicked Sodom. God didn't protect them *in* the midst of judgment. He removed them *from the time and place* of the judgment and took them *up* into the hills.

In 2 Peter 2:9, Peter speaks of Lot as an example to us and says . . .

. . . the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

The word "*temptations*" is the same word for *tribulation*.

#### 4 – Enoch's Example

In Genesis 5 we read about Enoch. His story is interesting because he never died, God simply took him one day. This occurred *prior to the Flood*, which was God's judgment on a rebellious world.

Someone might counter by asking, "What about Noah? He too was righteous but he went *through* the Flood, being protected by God in the ark. Isn't that a *better* picture of God protecting the Church during and through the Tribulation?"

Noah *isn't* a picture of the Church. He's a picture of God's sovereign protection of *Israel* during the Tribulation, a subject that gets much coverage in the Book of Revelation. Noah pictures Israel, while Enoch represents the Church, which is raptured *prior* to judgment.

#### 5 – Daniel's Example

Have you ever wondered where *Daniel* was when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were in the fiery furnace in Daniel 3? They were there for refusing to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image. But where was Daniel? Certainly he didn't bow either; so where was he in the story? He's missing.

That's the point! That he's not even mentioned is a *mystery* – foreshadowing the mystery of the Rapture of the Church. Like Noah,

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego represent Israel and how God preserves them during the fiery trial of the Tribulation. But Daniel's absence pictures the Church's absence from the *very hour of the trial*.

[By the way, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar serves as a picture of the antichrist who makes an image and demands the world worship it.]

#### 6 – We Are To Pray For Escape!

I'm weary of those who mock the Pre-Tribulation position by saying it's *escapist*. They claim that since countless believers have faced tribulation, persecution and martyrdom, why should *we* hope to escape it?

The answer is simple: Up till the time of the Rapture, the trouble Christians have faced came from this corrupt and rebellious world system that hated them; it was *satan's* wrath they endured. Jesus told us to expect THAT kind of trouble. But the trouble of the Tribulation comes from *God's* hand – it's *His* wrath, and Jesus already paid for that for us.

In Luke 21:34-36 Jesus said –

<sup>34</sup>“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

The “Day” He refers to here is the *Day of the Lord*, a period of history that *begins* with the Rapture.

<sup>35</sup>For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

There's that phrase – “earth-dwellers” again.

<sup>36</sup>Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

A Pre-Trib Rapture isn't *escapist*. It's the thing Jesus told us to look and pray we'd be ready for.

#### 7 – The Jewish Wedding Ceremony

In John 14 Jesus spoke some incredibly comforting words -

<sup>1</sup>“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Being 21<sup>st</sup> Century Gentiles, we miss out on how the *original disciples* would hear and understand this. Jesus used the terminology of the *Jewish wedding ceremony*.

Once a man and woman were betrothed, he would return to his father's house and add on a new room. When the room was nearing completion, he'd send a friend to tell the bride the time for the wedding was approaching. She'd get ready, but rarely knew the precise moment of his arrival. It was part of the suspense and romance of the event that she'd wait without knowing the precise hour of his arrival. But finally the day would come and the groom would go forth to claim his bride.

His friends went with him and made much noise, blowing trumpets and shouting to let everyone know the time for the wedding had finally come. When he arrived, there was a huge feast – the wedding supper, after which the man would take his wife into the new room he'd made, and they would stay sequestered there for, note this, 7 days! After which they emerged and he'd present her to the community as his beloved.

This is how the Rapture will occur. We are now betrothed to Christ and He has gone to prepare our chamber. We do not know the day or our hour of His return, but we do know the times and seasons because He's sent His friends, the prophets to describe them. When the time is ripe, He will come, accompanied by much noise, then He will take us to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and we'll be sequestered with Him in heaven for the 7 years of the Tribulation. When He comes again, emerging from Heaven in glory, we come with Him to rule and reign for a 1000 years.

#### 8 – The Outline of Revelation

A Pre-Tribulation Rapture follows the outline for the Book of Revelation given to us in 1:19.

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

A 3-fold division of Revelation is given here:

- **The things John had seen** – The vision of Jesus in ch. 1
- **The things which are** – chs. 2 & 3 = Messages to the 7 churches
- **The things which will take place after this** – chs. 4-22

The exact words “after this” open chapter 4.

After these things [the events of chs. 2 & 3] I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

After speaking to the churches, John was taken *up* to heaven. It's from that vantage point that he saw a description of the terrors of the Tribulation.

The word "church," used 18 times in chs. 1-3, isn't used *even once* after that until the very end of Revelation. Chapters 6-19 describe the Tribulation but don't once mention the "church." Because the church isn't on earth; it's in heaven. Chapters 4-5 describe the church in heaven, worshipping God

If the *mid*-Tribulation Rapture position is correct, then chapters 4-5 would have to be placed *after* chapter 11, and if the *post*-Tribulation view is right, chapters 4-5 would have to come *after* chapter 19. Only the Pre-Tribulation Rapture makes sense of the flow of the Book of Revelation and follows the outline Jesus gave John in 1:19.

#### 9 – A Conditional Tribulation

In the Letter to the Church at Thyatira in Revelation 2, Jesus rebuked the church for allowing a gross moral and spiritual polluter to remain among them. In v. 22 Jesus says -

<sup>22</sup>Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

If the Rapture occurred *after* the Tribulation, this wouldn't make any sense. This is one more proof that the Rapture occurs *before* the Tribulation and will sort out the *genuine believers* from those who are *mere professors*. Genuine believers *will* repent, and so be delivered from Great Tribulation.

#### 10 – Unknown Time Of Christ's Return

One of the most powerful proofs for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is that it's the only one that can account for the *repeated reference* to the coming of the Lord being *at a time not expected*.

Daniel 9 spells out clearly that there will be 1260 days from the time the Antichrist enters the temple in Jerusalem and declares himself god, *till the Return of Jesus Christ*. Yet Matthew 24:36 makes it clear that *no one knows the day of Jesus's Return*. The only way to reconcile this is to see the Rapture and the Second Coming *as two different events*, separated by 7 years.

The Jews of Jesus's day missed His first coming because they had misinterpreted the prophecies of His coming. They did so because one set of prophecies foretold a *suffering servant* while the other set foretold a *conquering King*. They'd come to see the suffering servant prophecies as *symbolic* but interpreted the conquering king ones as *literal*. So they looked for the Messiah to come in *majesty* and missed His coming in *humility*.

We need to learn this lesson, for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ also has *two phases*, just like the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah's coming. Before Jesus comes to Earth in glory as the Conquering King, He will come *secretly* in the clouds to receive His bride. This coming, as Paul says in 1 Thess. 5, is like a thief in the night, not a King in the mid-day sun.

No one knows when Jesus comes in the Rapture, which is very different from His Second Coming, which will be 1260 days after the Antichrist enters the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem & declares himself god, demanding worship.

#### 11 – Tribulation Is Unnecessary for the Church

In Jeremiah 30:7, the Tribulation is called *Jacob's trouble*. It's called this because it's a unique time in which God awakens *the Jews* to embrace Jesus as their Messiah. In Deuteronomy 4, Moses made this remarkable statement –

<sup>29</sup>From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

<sup>30</sup>When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice <sup>31</sup>(for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

All God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled and it's during the Tribulation that He will move *decisively* to make Himself known to her. But in order for God to make Israel the *focus* of His redemptive attention, He will need to switch that focus *off* the Church. The only way to do that, and not violate His promise to never leave nor forsake us is to take the church *out of the earth* and transport her to heaven.

#### 12 – It Squares with the "70 Weeks of Daniel 9"

This is a rather complex and involved proof, but one of the most powerful.

In Daniel 9, God told the prophet 490 years had been set aside for God to deal with the Jews and Jerusalem in a special and focused way. The first 483 of those years were fulfilled right down to the very day. That leaves one last period of seven years.

If the first 483 years were literally & perfectly fulfilled, we must see the last seven in the same manner.

God said these 490 years were *all* set aside for His unique focus on Israel. As with the previous Reason (#11), in order for God to turn his attention to the nation of Israel, He must turn His focus away from the Church, and the only way He can do that is if the Church has been Raptured and is with Him in heaven. The church wasn't here for the first 483 years of Daniel's prophecy; it's not going to be here for the last seven either.

As Daniel foretells, that last seven years begin when the Antichrist forges an agreement with many nations that appears to have something to do with the City of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. In light of all that's taking place in the Middle East today, and how the nations of the world are lining up trying to figure out what to do to bring peace, this all becomes interesting to students of the Bible.

### 13 – The Rapture Is Imminent!

The apostles and the early Church all believed in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. We know that because they believed Jesus could come *at any moment*, yet they knew they *weren't* in the Tribulation.

We find the expectation of Jesus' coming all over the letters of Peter, Paul, and John. The writings of the earliest of the church fathers carry a strong expectation of the Lord's coming for the Church. This simply isn't what we would find if they believed in a mid- or post-tribulation rapture.

They took Jesus' words *literally and seriously* when He said, "Watch and be ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes."

Finally, Revelation 3:10

In Revelation 3:10-11, Jesus promised the Church at Philadelphia -

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Because believers at this persecuted and struggling church kept His command to remain faithful, Jesus promised to keep them from the hour of trial that's coming upon the whole world.

Many Bible scholars and students have noticed an eerie parallel between the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 and Church History. Knowing that the number 7 represents completeness, the thought is, "Do these seven churches, in the order in which they are given, represent the entire church age, represented by seven eras or ages?" It's difficult *not* seeing at least a shadowy similarity between the sequence and church history.

The Letter to the church at the Greek city of Philadelphia is the sixth and next to last letter. And the last letter, written to the church at Laodicea suggests while they call themselves a church, Jesus doesn't. He's not among them; He's outside, knocking on the door by way of letting those inside know He's left.

So *Philadelphia is the last real church*; the faithful church that sees the departure from the true faith by the affluent mainline denominations. It's to the faithful of the last real church that Jesus says, "I will keep you **from the hour of trial.**"

"**From**" is the Greek word "ek/ex" and means "out of." We get the word "exit" from it. Jesus is not saying He will keep them *through* the hour of trial, but that He will take them *out of* it.

Then notice Jesus doesn't promise to keep them out of *the trial*. It's out of the **hour** or **time period of the trial**. They won't even be around.

Consider the **scope** of this coming trial: **It comes upon the whole world**. There isn't a corner of Earth that won't be affected by this trial; it's global in scope.

Consider its **purpose**: It comes to **test those who dwell on the earth**. That phrase, "those who dwell on the earth" is used 9 times in 7 verses in Revelation. It refers to *unbelievers* who live on Earth during the horrific events of chs. 6-19, a period of time called *the Tribulation*. The word "test" means to prove something by subjecting it to stresses *that'll reveal its true nature*.

That's what the *Underwriter's Laboratories* do to products they test. They subject them to all kinds of challenging stresses to see what becomes of them. They drop, sink, burn, electrocute, freeze and boil them. They subject every product to whatever kind of trauma they may encounter in the real world. If it still works after all the tests, the product gets the coveted *UL* stamp of approval. The point of every test is to reveal the true nature of what's being tested. The purpose of the Tribulation is to prove what's *really* in the heart of sinful man. God pours out His wrath on Earth and the result is that the earth dwellers, instead of *repenting*, become even more bold and brazen in their rebellion. The Tribulation *proves* that what keeps people from coming to faith in God is not a lack of evidence but a willful heart of unbelief.

Jesus spoke this word to the Church at Philadelphia in ancient Asia Minor. What He says here at special application to them in that day. But it also carries significance to us today. Each of the seven letters of chs. 2 & 3 end with the exhortation –

Let Him who has an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The promise Jesus made to the historic church of Philadelphia *continues on* and finds an even more significant fulfillment for the church in the last days.

This promise is for the faithful followers of Jesus today. God will take us out of the Earth before He pours out His wrath in the Tribulation.