

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture One More Look

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture One more Look: Introduction

- *Eschatology*, the study of end times prophecy, is both natural and understandable for average people using a face-value approach to the Bible.
- The study of *eschatology* brings to life vast portions of the Bible – whole chapters and even books, both OT and NT – that otherwise will seem both obscure and irrelevant.
- The belief in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture means that we, like the earliest Christians, can constantly live life in the blessed hope and expectation of Christ’s return.
- As we approach the end of the Bible, *eschatology* or *the study of end-times events* will become more and more important.
- It will help us to begin getting a good grasp of the issues now, at this introductory stage.
- The material we cover today will be foundational to our understanding of all that the Bible says in this area.
- We will close out our study of 1 Thess 4:13-18 by looking at the following:
 - 1) What are the main events the Bible predicts in the area of end times prophecy?
 - 2) What are the main features of our approach to the interpretation of the relevant Scriptures?
 - 3) What are some reasonable objections to the pre-tribulation view of the Rapture and how can they be answered?
- The Main Events of End Times Prophecy
 - 1) The Rapture
 - 2) The Coming of the Man of Sin (the Beast or Antichrist)
 - 3) The Tribulation Period (The 70th Week of Daniel)
 - 4) The Second Coming of Christ
 - 5) The Millennium (1000-year Reign of Christ on Earth)
 - 6) The Final Judgment
 - 7) The New Heavens and the New Earth (Eternal State)

The Main Features of Our Interpretive Approach to Prophetic Passages

When we look at passages dealing with prophecy we will take an approach that is consistently:

- 1) **Face value** as to the meaning of the text.
- 2) **Futurist** pertaining to prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled in a face-value way.
- 3) **Premillennial** as to the Second Coming of Christ.
- 4) Making a distinction between **Israel** and **the Church**.

- Making a distinction between **Israel** and **the Church**.

Some views combine Israel and the Church throughout the Bible as if to say:

- Israel was **the Church of the Old Testament**.
- The Church is now **the New Testament Israel**.

The more we collapse the two into one, the more we will be forced to see unfulfilled prophecies regarding national Israel as being symbolically fulfilled in the Church. This goes against our first principle of a **face-value** approach.

This distinction need not be total or absolute, however:

- It must be noted that many who trusted in God in the OT were not part of national Israel. For example:
 - Isaac, Abraham, and all the patriarchs before them.
 - Job and other righteous people of ancient times.
 - Non-Jews like the Assyrian Ninevites who repented at the preaching of Jonah.
- It must also be noted that in the NT a distinction between Jews, Gentiles and the church remains.
 - See 1 Corinthians 10:32 for all three.
 - In Revelation 7, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles remains among believers.
- In the church such ethnic lines even now begin to blur.
 - See 1 Cor 12:13, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11

Keeping Israel and the Church distinct allows us to:

- See Israel as God’s primary instrument on earth during the OT, yet easily make room for other believers who were not a part of national Israel.
- Make sense of the vast amount of unfulfilled prophecy pertaining to national Israel without having to symbolically apply it to the church.
- Accept the fact that all who are saved are saved by faith and redeemed by the blood of Christ – though we the church understand that more clearly than people in pre-Christian times.
- More easily explain the differing ways the Holy Spirit has been working since Pentecost by indwelling all believers in Jesus. This is a strictly NT phenomenon.

We will define the Church as:

- A group of regenerated Jews and Gentiles who have been united by the indwelling Holy Spirit to form:
 - the Body of Christ
 - the Bride of Christ

God has been gathering this group since Pentecost and Christ will continue to “build His church” until the Rapture, after which time Israel will again take center stage.

Thus, keeping a distinction between Israel and the Church is both based on and contributes to our other interpretive features, namely:

- 1) **Face value** as to the meaning of the text.
- 2) **Futurist** pertaining to prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled in a face-value way.
- 3) **Premillennial** as to the Second Coming of Christ.

It also tends to point toward a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

- Some Reasonable Objections to a Pre-Tribulational View of the Rapture and some answers
- Reasonable Objections

Here are a few:

- 1) A Pre-Tribulation Rapture is unrealistic or escapist.

- 2) The Bible doesn't really present two future comings, but simply points to the Second Coming of Christ.
- 3) A Pre-Tribulation Rapture is a new view, first appearing in the 1800s and was completely unknown to the early church.
 - A Pre-Tribulation Rapture is unrealistic or escapist.

First of all, it should be pointed out that yes, it can be unrealistic or escapist in at least two ways:

- 1) Those who believe it may not be mentally or spiritually prepared to endure trials, troubles or persecution.
- 2) Those who believe it may not be diligent enough in doing good right now since they are waiting around for Jesus to come and end it all for them.

Answer to those not prepared to endure trials, troubles or persecution :

- Be prepared. We believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture because it makes sense scripturally, not because it makes life easy for us. What's more, Scripture nowhere guarantees Christians an easy life.
- **See John 16:33**

Answer to any who might be waiting around for Jesus and lacking in diligence to do good right now:

- This very problem evidently existed in Thessalonica.
- The fact that Paul had to deal with this problem is consistent with their believing that Christ could come for them at any moment (a Pre-Tribulation Rapture).
- **See 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.**

- The Bible presents not two, but one future coming of Christ.

Answer:

- This could also be said of the OT. For example, see Isaiah 61:1-2 and compare it with Jesus' reading of this passage in the synagogue of Nazareth. He actually stops in the middle of v.2. See Luke 4:18-19

- In our previous study we showed how it is easier to make sense of all the Scriptural data pertaining to Christ's return if we separate it into two events.
- The rapture is a New idea not seen before the 1800s.

There is a good reason people believe this:

- The Pre-Tribulational view was greatly popularized by the Englishman John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren. It has increased in both scholarly support and popularity since Darby's time.
- But the allegation that Darby invented the view is not exactly true. It has appeared in various forms since ancient times.
 - From *The Pastor of Hermas* in about 160 A.D.:
 - "You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it ..."
 - From *Sermon on The Last Times, The Antichrist, and The End of the World* (4th to 6th Centuries):
 - "Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? . . . For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."
- Frank Marotta, a brethren researcher, believes that Thomas Collier in 1674 makes reference to a Pre-Tribulational rapture, but rejects the view, thus showing his awareness that such a view was being taught in the late seventeenth century.
- There is the interesting case of John Asgill, who wrote a book in 1700 about the possibility of translation (i.e. Rapture) without seeing death.
- Morgan Edwards (founder of Brown University in Rhode Island) saw a distinct rapture three and a half years before the start of the millennium.
- He wrote about his Pre-Tribulational beliefs in 1744 and later published them in 1788.

- He taught the following:

*The distance between the first and second resurrection will be somewhat more than a thousand years. I say, somewhat more –because the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ's "appearing in the air" (I Thes. iv. 17); and **this will be about three years and a half before the millennium**, as we shall see hereafter:*

... but will he and they abide in the air all that time?

No: they will ascend to paradise, or to some one of those many "mansions in the father's house" (John xiv. 2), and **disappear during the foresaid period of time**. The design of this retreat and disappearing will be to judge the risen and changed saints; for "now the time is come that judgment must begin," and that will be "at the house of God" (I Pet. iv. 17) . . .

- The Pre-Tribulation Rapture researcher Thomas Ice has recently written:
- "I have heard from another scholar who is reading through many Latin manuscripts of previously unpublished documents that he has found a number of previously unknown pre-trib rapture statements from pre-nineteenth century Christendom. He is planning on publishing his material in a few years. ...
- ... What these pre-Darby rapture statements prove, if nothing else, is that indeed others did see the rapture taught in Scripture similar to the way that pretribulationists in our own day teach. Thus, the argument that no one ever taught pretribulationism until J. N. Darby in 1830 is just not historically true and it is becoming increasingly clear with each passing year. Maranatha!"
- In conclusion:
- *Eschatology*, the study of end times prophecy, is both natural and understandable for average people using a face-value approach to the Bible.
- The study of *eschatology* brings to life vast portions of the Bible – whole chapters and even books, both OT and NT – that otherwise will seem both obscure and irrelevant.
- The belief in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture means that we, like the earliest Christians, can constantly live life in the blessed hope and expectation of Christ's return.

Maranatha!

Or "O Lord, Come!" (1 Cor 16:22)

*He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!***

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. (Revelation 22:20-21 ESV)

- Resources:
- *The ESV Study Bible*
- Thomas Ice, *A Brief History of the Rapture*.
- Paul D. Feinberg in *Three Views on the Rapture*, Gleason Archer, ed. (on Google Books)
- Paul D. Feinberg, *Dispensationalism and the Rapture*
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*
- Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*

1 Cor 10:32 NKJV ³²Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,

1 Corinthians 12:13 NKJV ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink [£]into one Spirit.

Galatians 3:28 NKJV ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:11 NKJV ¹¹where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

John 16:33 NKJV ³³*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

Second Thessalonians 3:6-13 NKJV ⁶But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; ⁸nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, ⁹not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

¹⁰For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. ¹¹For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. ¹²Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

¹³But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good.

Isaiah 61:1-2 NKJV ¹ "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me,
Because the LORD has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;
² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,

Luke 4:18-19 NKJV ¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*