

# The Pre-Tribulation Rapture

By Jesse Larsen

One argument against the Rapture is that it is a myth, simply because the word “Rapture” is not found in the Bible. But if you really think carefully about what I am going to say next, then you should see that is one of the silliest arguments against the Rapture that someone could possibly use. The word “Rapture” is simply a word that many Christians use to describe the event in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 when the saints will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air.

The word “Trinity” is also not found in the Bible, but that does not do away with the words of 1 John 5:7. In the same way, the word “Rapture” is not found in the Bible, but that does not do away with the words of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. We can call it the “Rapture,” we can call it being “caught up,” or we can call it “the Resurrection,” but it makes no difference because the Scriptures are still saying the same thing whether we use the word Rapture or not, and that is what is important.

## Two Distinct Events?

Now let us examine the Bible to find out whether or not the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ are two distinct events. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 explains that the saints will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. So the Lord does not return to earth during that event, but instead we meet Him “in the air.” According to Zechariah 14:1-5, there is also a time when He does return to earth, because verse 4 says, “*in that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives.*” Furthermore, verse 5 mentions that He will come with “all the saints.” So during the Rapture the saints will meet the Lord “in the air,” but during the Second Coming He will return to earth with “all the saints.”

To further clarify these two distinct events, Matthew 24:37-42 clearly indicates that people will be going about business as usual while some are taken and others are left, not like the coming in Zechariah 14:1-2 in which all the nations will be gathered together to battle against Jerusalem.

If you have read through Revelation then you may already know that there will be many plagues on the earth during the Tribulation period, and things will get worse as time goes by. At one point these plagues will become so great that man will blaspheme God who has power over these plagues (See Revelation 16:8-9). But the Rapture obviously comes at a time when the world is not expecting God’s judgment since they will be going about business as usual.

According to Matthew 24:29-30, the Second Coming happens immediately after this Tribulation period. I highly doubt that people will be “*marrying and giving in marriage*” (Matthew 24:37-39) during the time of such great tribulation, just before Christ returns to earth for the battle at Armageddon. This is revealed very clearly through Revelation 16:3-21. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus referred to this period as a time of “*great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world ...nor ever shall be.*” So people definitely won’t be going about business as usual during this time, as they will be before the Rapture, and as they were in the days of Noah, just before the flood. With all due respect to those who hold to the post-Tribulation Rapture view, many of them don’t seem to grasp just how bad things will get during the Tribulation period.

## “A Thief in the Night”

Jesus warned us to be ready for a very important reason: He is coming at an hour we do not expect as He mentioned in Matthew 24:44. The Believers would definitely be expecting the Second Coming after seeing the events of the Tribulation period take place, so the only time period when we would not be expecting Jesus to come would have to be before the Tribulation period.

In Jesus' letter to the church in Sardis, He said, *"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"* (Revelation 3:1). Then when He was speaking to the same church He said, *"If you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you"* (Revelation 3:3). So those who are "dead" (spiritually) as Jesus referred to that Church will be the ones to whom He will come as a thief.

Now put this together with Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4. Through these Scriptures it also becomes clear that Jesus will come as a thief upon those who have not been watchful. On the other hand, when Jesus was speaking to the church in Philadelphia He said, *"Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth"* (Revelation 3:10 KJV).

### **"God Did Not Appoint Us to Wrath"**

Through that verse it becomes clear that this *"hour of temptation"* was meant to *"try them that dwell on the earth,"* and that those who have kept the word of the Lord's patience will be kept from this hour, because *"God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* as it is said in 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Those who have not obtained this salvation can only be the ones who will face the wrath that is to come in the Tribulation period. It is a much-needed process, and God's final attempt to get the lost to respond.

### **No Time to Waste**

In Matthew 24:48-51, Jesus told about the portion of the servant who has a "my master is delaying his coming" attitude. Those who are not watching, and those who are too wrapped up in the cares and the pleasures of this life (who are not born-again), will most likely be left in the Tribulation period. Not that we have to merit our salvation (See Ephesians 2:8-9), but it is likely that they have not obtained salvation in the first place if the things of this world are more important to them than the Lord – Romans 8:5-9: *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."*

If *"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works"* (Ephesians 2:10), then we do not obey Him to merit His favor, but we obey Him because we love Him, and because we are grateful for the salvation which He has already given us.

Once again, it is clear that the Believers would obviously be expecting the Second Coming after they have witnessed the events of the Tribulation period, but if one was to believe that Jesus could return at any moment, then there would be no time to indulge in sin, and no time to waste in witnessing to the lost. There is **absolutely no time to waste whatsoever for those who**

**believe that our Lord could return at any moment.** So, contrary to what you may have heard from those opposed to the pre-Trib Rapture view, this is a doctrine that has a purifying and motivating effect, which is why 1 John 3:2-3 says, *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

### **“Blessed Hope”**

The Rapture is the *“blessed hope”* which Paul mentioned in Titus 2:13. The reason I find it important to defend the pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine is because of the fact that it has a purifying and motivating effect on our lives. Revelation makes it very clear that many of the Christians will be killed during the Tribulation period (See Revelation 20:4), and that no one may buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast (See Revelation 13:16-17). Obviously, there will be very few Christians left on the earth when Christ returns for the battle of Armageddon. During this time Christians will obviously have a small chance of surviving until the Second Coming. So this interpretation does not go together very well with the *“blessed hope”* which Paul was speaking of in Titus 2:13.

In Dave Hunt's newsletter titled *Pre or Post-Trib Rapture?*, he made the same point concerning that verse when he wrote, “It makes no sense to suggest that if you can secretly eat out of enough garbage pails to avoid starvation and still keep one step ahead of the Antichrist's world police death squads, ‘Blessed hope! You'll be raptured at Armageddon!’” So this *“blessed hope”* which Paul referred to must be the Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation period, although there will indeed be Tribulation saints after the Rapture.

### **Conclusion**

God does not demand that we must be Bible scholars in order to obtain salvation, but I still feel that the pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine is a very important topic which needs to be discussed, because we have other doctrines concerning Christ's return which have been causing confusion in the church.