

Future Tense: A Study of the End Times and 1-2 Thessalonians

The Rapture

I. The Doctrine of the Rapture

A. Definition

The rapture refers to the “catching away of the church” (both resurrected dead and transformed living believers) to meet the Lord in the air.

B. Major Passages

1. John 14:1-3 –
2. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 –
3. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 –

C. Major Agreements (general)

1. The rapture is future –
2. The rapture will occur in a moment –
3. The rapture will involve the resurrection of the dead saints –
4. The rapture will involve the transformation of living saints –
5. The rapture will involve meeting the Lord in the air –

D. Major Differences (specifics)

1. Pre-tribulational View –
2. Mid-tribulational View –
3. Post-tribulational View –

E. Some Reasons for Holding a Pre-Tribulational Position

1. Textual differences

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING TEXTS	
<i>The Rapture Texts</i>	<i>The Second Coming Texts</i>
The Lord comes in the air	The Lord comes to the earth
Comes for the church	Comes with the church
Blessed Hope	Time of God's wrath
Resurrection of the church	Resurrection of the Old Testament saints

2. The purposes of the Tribulation

- a. The tribulation is for the salvation of Israel not the Church
- b. The tribulation is for the judgment of the world not the Church

F. Major Events Following the Rapture according to the Pre-Tribulational Position

1. Judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:10–15) –
2. The beginning of Daniel's 70th week/Tribulation (Dan 9:24–27; Rev 6–18) –
3. The marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7–10) –
4. The Second Coming (Rev 19:11–21) –
5. The binding of Satan (Rev 20:1–3) –
6. The Millennium (Rev 20) –
7. The final judgment of Satan and the lost (Rev 20:7–15) –
8. The new heavens, earth, and Jerusalem (Rev 21–22)

G. The Rapture and the Book of Revelation

1. Introductory comments
 - a. The rapture is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation –
 - b. The lack of an explicit mention of the rapture is a problem for all three major views –

- c. Most Pre-tribulationists place the rapture between Revelation 3 and 4 –

2. Evidence for placing the rapture between Revelation 3 and 4

- a. The phrase “After these things” (μετὰ ταῦτα) in Revelation 4:1 seems to signal a change in emphasis. Pre-tribulationists often believe that the emphasis is changed from the church (which has been raptured) to the earth which now goes through the Tribulation. –
- b. A few commentators see the command in 4:1 for John to “come up here” as a picture of the rapture. –
- c. The word “church” (ἐκκλησία) is used twenty times in Revelation 1–3 but not at all in chapters 6–18. This omission is understandable if the church has been raptured. –
- d. Revelation 6–18 covers the Tribulation, a period of God’s wrath. However, several passages suggest that the church is not the object of God’s wrath (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9) or will be delivered out of God’s wrath (Rev 3:10), that is, raptured out. –
- e. Revelation 6–18 centers on the nation Israel and not on the church (cf. Rev 7:4–11; 11:1–2; 12:1–17). –
- f. The seven lampstands representing the churches are missing from the description of the throne room in Revelation 4–5. Some suggest that this is due to the church’s rapture. Furthermore, some believe that the twenty-four elders in these chapters represent the churches in whole or in part. –