

The Rapture is in the Air

If you've ever been on an airplane departing from a busy terminal, maybe you've wondered how your 747 is able to punch into the clouds upon departure and seemingly make the necessary turns and adjustments in the clouds to get you from point A to point B. Commercial flights almost always operate under what is known as Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). When flying IFR, the pilots don't look outside except for takeoffs and landings, but in flight, they are solely reliant on the navigation instruments to determine everything from airspeed, altimeter, navigation, and rate of climbs and descents. Likewise, they would also be receiving instructions from an Air Traffic Controlling (ATC) agency who is giving them commands on where and when to turn, when to climb or descend, or to maintain current headings and altitudes.

In IFR, there are different kinds of instrument approaches you can use, depending upon what kind of instruments your aircraft has available to it. One of the most common ones amongst aircraft is the VHF Omnidirectional Range or VOR. Without getting too technical, a VOR offers you direction but doesn't give you distance unless it intersects with another VOR airway. The VOR itself sits on the ground usually near an airfield, and serves as a marker for your approach, should you need it in case of bad weather. Unique to a VOR, is the 'cone of confusion' you enter, as you pass overhead of the VOR. In other words, the closer you are to the actual navigation aid the more sensitive your instruments become to it, causing rapid oscillations and false readings.

As both an aviator and a student of prophecy, I can't help but draw the parallels between the increasingly vitriolic attacks on the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine, and this 'cone of confusion'. I am of the firm conviction that the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the only biblical eschatological position regarding the timing of the Rapture, and as evidence to its validity, the increasing hostility towards it, and the confusion on the subject means we must be very close indeed.

The truth is, the Rapture of the Church is going to happen whether we like it or not. The Rapture of the Church is in effect, the victory 'ticker tape' parade through Satan's domain where Christ our Redeemer escorts us to our new heavenly abode. Yet, before He does this the dead are resurrected and the living are instantaneously

translated into immortal bodies. It will also happen in accordance to the way Scripture says it will, which is before the seven year Tribulation begins. So think about it this way...Jesus is returning and He is giving us 'superman' type bodies, and we get to leave this crummy, sin-ridden world...and "Christians" are angry about this? That dog don't hunt.

It strikes me as odd that the level of anger and vitriol which is leveled against those of us who hold the Pre-Trib view, especially coming from other "Christians". It seems that a lot of folk are apprehensive and irritated that Christ would have the audacity to return without their say-so. Again, with all the savagery directed at us "Pre-Tribber's", you'd think we were attempting to add a fourth deity to the Trinity or something. When you boil it down, the encapsulated inside the Pre-Trib view is the following:

- That Christ ushers in His Kingdom, not men
- The Church is NOT Israel, nor is the Tribulation for the Church
- That God delivers His Bride (the Church) before He pours out His wrath on the earth
- That God's wrath begins with the first Seal Judgment

What has become fashionable as of late, primarily amongst critics of the Pre-Trib view, is to issue financial taunts in the form of the "\$10,000-You Can't Find One Pre-Trib Verse" challenge. While even though we do offer verses which are Pre Trib in nature the fact remains that their challenge is disingenuous at best and outright blasphemous at worst. Either way, they won't pay or can't pay, and offer only interpretational excuses so as to discredit any verse we do offer as evidence. But, we have something greater than a single verse, we have the entire canon of Scripture, both Old and New, which verifies and testifies to God's faithfulness in regards to His judgments. Besides, we already know the answer to the pivotal question Abraham presented on the plains of Mamre when he asked the Lord, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? (Gen. 18:23)

We can rest assured that our view, still and always will be, the only biblical version of the "Blessed Hope". Although I will not be able to address all four of these in a single sitting, they will be addressed, and hopefully in a manner that piques your interest to search these things out for yourself. The following represent popular areas of contention:

Part 1

1. The definition of wrath
2. Who's who in the Tribulation

Part 2

1. The identity of the Restrainer
2. Imminence

Wrath v. Deliverance

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. *Luke 17:26-30*

First and foremost, a believer's supernatural deliverance in Scripture is in direct relationship to the size and scope of God's judgment. In describing the time just before His return, Jesus uses both Noah's and Lot's day as examples for what it would look like in the Day prior to His return. In Noah's time, the common argument **against** the Pre-Trib view is that Noah had to endure the Flood via the Ark...thus, the Rapture must be Post-Tribulational.

While it is true that Noah and family endured the wrath whilst floating safely on the Ark, maybe we should take a moment to consider that Noah and family's removal

from the earth wasn't necessary. After all, God's plan wasn't to destroy the world itself, or why would He have Noah save the animals? Since their permanent removal wasn't a part of God's program, He preserved them through the flood, so they could repopulate the earth after the flood waters receded. (Gen 9) The Ark then was simply the mechanism of deliverance, which allowed for Noah's escape through and above the flood waters. A true picture of the Pre-Trib Rapture, would be Enoch's mysterious rapture prior to Noah's day. (Gen. 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5-6)

Subsequently in Lot's day, deliverance this time was not through the judgment, but away from it. Since the judgment was limited to just the two wicked cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, His warning came before the judgment, and judgment was withheld until he left with his family. In this instance, Lot and his family's deliverance was in their departure from the cities before fire rained down. (Gen. 19)

But in either example Christ used, deliverance was before the judgment that fell, not during or afterwards. So a consistent understanding of deliverance, reads prior-to the divine judgment being issued out. Again, when God pours out His wrath, He faithfully removes the righteous first.

So what then defines *wrath*? Merriam-Webster defines it this way:

1: strong vengeful anger or indignation

2: retributory punishment for an offense or a crime: divine chastisement

Jesus, in the Upper Room Discourse, was pretty pointed in stating that in this life, we would have trials, tribulation, and be hated by all nations for His name's sake. (John 14-16) Christ then prays for Himself, His disciples, and then all of us in the following chapter (17) for strength and deliverance in the form of perseverance to become overcomer's. This is in keeping with the biblical construct that, the world is currently under Satan's temporary management, and he's got the whole system rigged against us. (Luke 4:4-6, John 14:30, Eph. 2:2, 1 John 5:19)

Likewise, nowhere in the New Testament are believers promised respite in this life, because we (the servants) are not greater than the Master (Jesus Christ). If they

hated and killed Him, we will not be immune from it. The fact that the western world has embraced Christianity to one degree or another, isn't necessarily a good thing. On the one hand, it has reduced physical persecution here in the west for a brief period of time, but only because Satan is working something far more nefarious in the forms of division and corruption.

Frankly, we should be more frightened if the world comes to love us, because that means our doctrine has really strayed from the course. (2 Timothy 3, 2 Peter 2-3, Jude, Rev. 2-3) In regards to Eschatological views, simply look at which views the world will tolerate, and which they won't for another indicator of Biblical validity. To date, I believe that the Pre-Tribulation view is the most hated. So if Satan runs this world, and He hates the things that God loves, well, you get the point.

However, these trials and tribulations we undergo in this age, does not presuppose that God's judgments are equal and/or on the same level as satanically inspired persecution. God allows it, but only to a certain degree, and only to further accomplish His plan. But these are not divine wrath. In other words, as long as there are Christians and Jews on this earth, and as long as Satan is allowed to run loose, there will be persecution against God's people so long as He allows it. Christians have faced persecution in every generation, and on almost every corner of this planet for the past 2,000 years. IF Christian persecution were the only barometer for deliverance, Christ would have returned millennia ago.

But it is not. Persecution, corruption, suppression, and censorship are simply a part of everyday life here on planet earth...just as Jesus said it would be. The aforementioned are NOT what THE Tribulation is about. In fact, *The Tribulation* isn't even really the name of the time period we are dealing with, but is referred to it as such in common vernacular. We are in fact dealing with *the time of Jacob's Trouble* (Jeremiah 30:7-11), which is also known as the 70th Week of Daniel. (Daniel 9:24-27)

Who's who in the Tribulation?

The problem with trying to fit the Church into the seven year *Tribulation*, is that the Church has no role to play in it. It would be like trying to fit the cast and plot of

Benny and the Jets, into *The Sound of Music*...it just don't fit. If we are to understand first, who and what the 70th Week is for, then that point would become very evident that it has nothing to do with the Church. So let's see what the Tribulation is for, and then who is who inside the confines of it. From Jeremiah 30:7,11:

⁷ Alas! For that day is great,
So that none is like it;
And it is the time of Jacob's trouble,
But he shall be saved out of it...

¹¹ For I am with you,' says the Lord, 'to save you;
Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you,
Yet I will not make a complete end of you.
But I will correct you in justice,
And will not let you go altogether unpunished.'

As any student of the Bible should know, Jacob was given the new name **Israel** by the Lord in Genesis 32:28. In fact, it is the first time the word 'Israel' is used in the entire bible. In Jeremiah's passage, God makes three unassailable points:

1. This is the time of Israel's trouble
2. God will make a 'full end' of the nations, in which national Israel has been scattered too
3. God will punish (discipline), but not destroy Israel

Given the entire context of these verses, the time of Tribulation is what is in context here and is still yet future (since nations still exist). Ask yourself then, in light of the entire chapter,

- Where does the Church in which Christ built, fit in?
- Does the Church (the *Bride of Christ*) still need to be corrected in justice?
- Does the *Bride of Christ* still need punishment?
- Where is the Church mentioned in these passages

It is only natural for those who are watching the deteriorating conditions in the world today, too want to abandon the idea of the "blessed hope" in favor of 'prepping' for The Tribulation. History has, after all, shown us that fortune favors the prepared. But just as it is with our eternal salvation, our deliverance from this coming time isn't dependent upon our efforts but on what Christ has already done. After all, isn't that what distinguishes Christianity from every other faith-system? In other words, the 'blessed hope' goes against man-centered logic and puts the onus of salvation completely in God's hands.

Consider the two examples Christ gave us with Noah and Lot. What manner of prepping (aside from what God told them to do specifically) could Noah and Lot have done to 'weather the storm'? What bunker or high place could have saved Noah from the flood waters which covered the earth? What fortifications could Lot have done to make his house 'judgment-proof'? In either case, their deliverance wasn't dependent upon themselves to find a way through it, but as they were instructed by God.

NOWHERE in the NT epistles does the Church find instruction to prepare for the 70th Week of Daniel. The only way people can come to that conclusion is if they take information intended for another audience, and then misapply it to themselves. Such is the case with the confusion over the Olivet Discourse and Revelation 4-19.

Who's who in the Tribulation?

We now turn to Daniel's 70 Weeks Prophecy for further clarification of who this particular time is for. The future 70th week of Daniel then is a seven year, "week of years" and is the summation of the entire 70 Weeks (490 years) prophecy as was given to the Prophet Daniel by the angel Gabriel. Daniel 9:24 states:

“Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,

To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.”

If you were to take the whole passage of Daniel 9 in context, it becomes abundantly clear who Daniel was asking forgiveness for and on behalf of...that being national Israel. Here, we see the angel Gabriel comes to assure Daniel that God has a plan for the Jew's (your people) and for Jerusalem (your holy city). Again, the Church is nowhere to be seen in this, as Daniel (along with all the other OT prophets) had no concept of who or what the mystery of the Church was then, because it had not yet been revealed, and wouldn't be, until Christ first does in Matthew 16:17-20. Even then, Christ doesn't go into the details about the specifics of the Church, He will save that task for the Apostle Paul, many years later. And just as we don't see the Church in the first 69 weeks, neither will we in the 70th week.

As another point of confirmation, we see in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Jesus addressing the Church (ecclesia) 19 times in chapters 1-3...yet doesn't mention the ecclesia anymore from chapters 4-19 while describing the 21 divine Judgments that are poured out upon the earth. Critics will argue that this is an argument from silence, but the silence is deafening. Note this as well, the phrase He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches accompanies each of the seven letters to the seven churches. Yet, inside the seven year Tribulation, we see this warning given in Revelation 13:9, which states if anyone has an ear, let him hear. If the Church were still in the Tribulation, this would have been the perfect opportunity to mention it.

At best, critics of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture liken the term 'saints' as the Church on the earth during the Tribulation. I'd like to point out, that 'saints' is a fairly generic term, which is used before, during, and after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. So the usage of 'saints' as an indicator of who one is, must be understood in light of the context in which it is given. Jesus specifically addresses the Church as ecclesia, and is liberal in the usage of it in the first three chapters of Revelation. If the ecclesia is in the Tribulation, why neglect it for the next 17 chapters? If you were reading a story in a book and a character was regularly mentioned for the first three chapters,

and then not mentioned again...wouldn't that strike you as odd? The burning question it should leave you unsettled with is...what happened to them?

The Restrainer

One of the most significant points in understanding why the Church is not inside the confines of the seven year Tribulation, is that Paul exhorts and corrects the Thessalonians in his second epistle that they can't already be inside that specific time period (as someone had erroneously taught them), because the man of lawlessness had not yet been revealed. The man of lawlessness can't be revealed, until the Restrainer is removed. The Restrainer can't be removed, until the apostasia has arrived. See the sequential process in 2 Thess. 2:3-8;

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

- 1."Falling away"; apostasia occurs first
- 2.This occurs in conjunction with the removal of the Restrainer
- 3.And then the lawless one will be revealed

The apostasia, must be a singular event. Why is that you ask? Well, apostasy has been present in this world since the 1st century as Paul, Peter, Jude, John, early church fathers, etc. all have had to contend with it in their respective days, even until

today. If apostasia simply means the KJV rendering of "falling away"....which "falling away" is it then? Paul dealt with Judaizers. John and Peter dealt with Gnostics. The ECF's dealt with heresies of all kinds. We have Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, Roman Catholicism, and cults of every flavor to contend with these days. The current theory is the 'general falling away' across greater Christendom through ecumenism with heretical and non-Christian faiths. So which is it then and why would God give us such an unspecific sign that could be used in every single generation? And why do those who argue against imminence, then use apostasia as a type of imminence in their argumentation?

This author (along with others), believes that the apostasia is the actual departure at the Rapture. This concept of apostasia is tied to the removal of the Restrainer. Consider the identifying characteristics of the Restrainer who is first identified in a gender neutral identity (what is--vs. 6), then in the masculine form (He--vs. 7).

Were this speaking of Michael the Archangel, or the Antichrist himself, or Satan, they could only be referred to as a 'he' or 'him', since they are masculine in embodiment. Were the restrainer human government or religion, or some other type of institution, the restrainer would be a thing, and not referred to with a personal pronoun. The only One who this could be referring to is neither male, female, or human in any type of bodily form...yet, is also a living Being, so as to distinguish Him from simply being a 'thing'...which is God the Holy Spirit. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as a 'He' numerous times in John 14-16, and thus we should conclude, that the clues Paul leaves here can only reference God the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, this Restrainer, must be God the Holy Spirit, since evil is present simultaneously all over the created order, and the Restrainer must be powerful enough to curtail it. We see in verse 9; The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. It first removes the Satan as a candidate, since Satan wouldn't hinder himself. Secondly, it removes Michael the Archangel since Michael doesn't (or doesn't presently) confront Satan with anything more than a rebuke. (Jude 1:9)

It would seem that just as it was in Creation (Gen. 1:2), in Noah's day (Gen. 6:3), and again before and after Pentecost, (Acts 2), there is coming a time when the Holy

Spirit's active role here on the earth will be changed. To clarify something that often gets misconstrued, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, and so it's not that He disappears from the earth altogether, but His role changes, just as it had in the past with Creation, during the OT period, at Pentecost, and now during the Church Age. He will be removing (the apostasia) the Body of Christ via the harpazo (catching up) of those He permanently seals and indwells (John 14:16, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 4:30) in order for the man of lawlessness (the Antichrist) to be revealed.

Imminence

I've recently had someone argue against the doctrine of imminence by stating that since Peter was foretold that he was going to have to die in a certain manner that this rules out imminence since Peter would not expect to be taken up in the Rapture prior to that. (John 21:18-19)

For me, that argument carries very little weight and seems to ignore the general expectation that Paul, John, James, and the others had in regards to keeping that 'blessed hope' alive, even in their generation. Marshall Hawkins writes concerning this "seeming" dilemma;

Time for this gap between Peter's middle age and his old age is allowed for by the progress of revelation. It was not until the book of James (written just about A.D. 50), and then later in Paul's writings that the imminence of the rapture is revealed. Twenty years would have elapsed between the prophecy and the writing of James—enough time for Peter to have aged sufficiently. . . . By this time imminence was a viable doctrine for most of the church since they would have no idea whether Peter was alive at any one moment or not. . . . For those accompanying Peter at this time, the rapture was also imminent because Peter may have been seized and martyred at any time, making the rapture possible immediately afterward. Marshall Hawkins, "Rebuttal of the Posttribulational Denial of Imminence" (Unpublished ThM thesis, Capital Bible Seminary, 1979), p. 45. Cited in McAvoy, "Critique," p. 83

Let me conclude this discussion on imminence with a sampling of passages linking our faith, with the biblical significance of imminence; 1 Corinthians 1:7, 1 Corinthians

16:22, Philippians 3:20, Philippians 4:5, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Timothy 6:14, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 9:28, James 5:7-9, 1 Peter 1:13, Jude 21, Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20, Revelation 22:17, 20

[Excerpts from Dr. Tommy Ice's [Imminence and the Rapture](#)]

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, a believer's supernatural deliverance in Scripture, is in direct relationship to the size and scope of God's judgment. When the 70th Week comes, it will encompass the entire world and there will be no place for man to escape to on the earth, thus explaining the reason why the removal of the Church (those born-again believers), has to be off-planet. This reasoning fits exactly with what Jesus states in Revelation 3:10...

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.

The Mid-Trib, Pre-Wrath, and Post-Tribulation views try to promote the notion that 'prepared' believers are somehow exempted from the judgments and persecution that will come upon believers during the Tribulation. Yet, we see in Rev. 6:9-11 and 13:7 martyrdom has become global, and that the Antichrist is given permission to overcome the 'saints' completely. In fact, the ONLY ones' who are sealed supernaturally, are those 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel, who are listed out by their respective tribes. (Rev. 7:1-8) So the question then becomes....what exactly is the believer 'kept from' during the Tribulation? It would seem martyrdom is the only sure guarantee...which negates the idea of being 'kept from'.

The only view, which ensures and supports the biblical view of imminence is the Pre-Tribulation view. The Tribulation is a highly chronicled time, broken down by days (2,520), months (42 x 2), and years (3 ½ x 2) and marked by 21 divine judgments, with a clear halfway-point (Matt. 24:15) that separates the first half of the 70th week, from the last half. The question then is, how can any view outside the Pre-Trib view be

considered imminent, (no man knows the day or hour) when there are so many clear signs and markers inside the confines of the 70th Week, which count down to the day the Lord will return at His Second Coming?

The only view which correctly defines the apostasia, the Restrainer, and the role each play in accordance to the revelation of the man of lawlessness, AND also fits perfectly with chronological nature of Revelation 1-6 beginning with the Churches, the Rapture of John, the Throne Room scene, and Christ opening of the Seal Judgments, is the Pre-Tribulation view.

The only view which is in keeping with the biblical purpose of "the why" of the Tribulation, is the Pre-Tribulation view. Jeremiah 30:7-11 and Daniel 9:24-27, very specifically teach that this time is for the Christ rejecting world, and for the nation of Israel. This then correlates perfectly to the obvious absence of the "ecclesia" from Revelation 4 onwards.

The only view which properly defines divine wrath consistently, and in keeping with the principles laid out throughout the Bible, is the Pre-Tribulation view. Again, trials and persecutions in this life are to be expected. That is NOT the same thing as the wrath that God pours out in His indignation.

The only view, which takes the biblical understanding of salvation, both eternal and physical, and puts it solely in God's hands, is that of the Pre-Tribulation view. Our 'blessed hope' isn't dependent upon our own ability to preserve ourselves, but in placing our faith in a God who is faithful to His word, and that He will not destroy the righteous with the wicked.

Lastly, if the Rapture were in conjunction with the Second Coming, the passage below would make no sense. If the Rapture were at some point inside the Tribulation (which Christ said would be the most horrific time in human history), would make no sense. The only way this passage makes sense, is if the Rapture happens before the Tribulation begins. Therefore...

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a

place for you. 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. John 14:1-3

By Pete Garcia