

THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

This is one of the most debated subjects within the Church but I believe it is a subject that one must broach critically using the Word of God as the basis. The timing of the rapture should not divide the body of Christ for we know as children of God that the Christ will come back, the Great Tribulation will take place and that the rapture or “the seize or carry away” of the Church will happen.

The following Index of Terms will help us understand the various viewpoints of this most important subject:

1. **Rapture** – this the term which is applied to the scriptural event characterizing the translation of the living saints and resurrection of the dead saints to meet Christ in the air when He returns.
2. **Premillennialist** – A person who believes that Christ will return for the Church before He establishes His millennial reign of one thousand years upon the earth.
3. **Amillennialist** – Generally speaking, a person who does not believe in a literal millennial reign of Christ upon the earth after His second coming, or a one thousand year period of worldwide peace and righteousness before the end of this present world order.
4. **Postmillennialist** – A person who does not believe in a literal millennial reign of Christ upon the earth after His second coming, instead, they see the kingdom of God being victoriously extended in the present world through the preaching of the gospel. They believe that the world will be eventually Christianized prior to Christ’s return. They generally spiritualize the millennium and apply it to the Church age.
5. **Pretribulationism** - A belief which teaches that Christ will come to remove the church from the earth prior to a final period of great tribulation.
6. **Postribulationism** – A belief which teaches that Christ will come for the church at the conclusion of a final period of tribulation, and that the rapture and the second coming are synonymous events.
7. **Dispensationalism** – A belief which maintains that God has divided time into seven distinct periods in which He deals with humanity according to the unique character and qualifications of a particular period.
8. **Futurism** – A belief that maintains that the major prophetic portions of Scripture are yet to be fulfilled in a futuristic setting. This can include such distinctive events as the appearance of the Anti-Christ, the Great Tribulation and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.
9. **Historist** – A person who views major prophetic portions of Scripture such as Revelation against the backdrop of the unfolding drama of the church age rather than isolating them to a strict, futuristic setting.
10. **Eschatology** – The study of final things. Eschatology is the a study of prophetic events associated with the end times.

WHAT IS THE TRIBULATION?

The Bible gives us many periods and times of tribulations, presently the Christian Church is going through a period of tribulation and many are being killed, and we the saints will suffer much and be persecuted but the question is, will those in Christ be rapture before the “Great Tribulation” takes place?

Following are some Old Testament Scriptures dealing with tribulation:

1. Deuteronomy 4:27-31 – And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples...
2. Deuteronomy 30:7 - And the Lord your God will inflict these curses ..
3. Isaiah 34:2,3,8 – For the Lord’s indignation is against all nations
4. Jeremiah 30:5-9 – For thus says the Lord, “I have heard a sound of terror and there is no peace.
5. Daniel 9:24-27 Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people..

There is a lot more. Reference in the New Testament:

1. Matthew 24⁴ 4-28 – Jesus describes the tribulation period
2. Luke 17:22-37 – The day will come when you long to see one of the days of The Son of Man, and will not see it
3. 1Thesalonians 1:10
4. 1Thesalonians 5:9

Is the Great Tribulation the same as the Tribulation?

As I read the Word of God I believe The Bible distinguishes between the tribulation period, 7 years, and the Great Tribulation 3 ½ years.

⁸ "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs. (Mat 24:8 NAS), this I believe speaks of the 7 year period of the tribulation.

²¹ for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. (Mat 24:21 NAS), I believe this speaks of the Great Tribulation. The Bible clearly teaches two segments, but does it label them differently? There is no doctrinal orthodoxy at stake whichever view is taken, 3 ½ + 3 ½ = 7 Great Tribulation, others believe 3 ½ Tribulation + 3 ½ Great Tribulation.

Regardless we have 7 years of tribulation. How does “the Time of God’s Wrath” relate to the tribulation?

I gleaned from the Bible that God’s Wrath and the Tribulation are the same 7 year period, Scripture supports this, we read ³⁰ "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' (Dan 4:30 NAS)

⁵ A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, (Zep 1:15 NAS)

The New Testament picks up on this, ⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (Rom 2:5 NAS)

⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Rom 5:9 NAS)

⁶ For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, (Col 3:6 NAS)

¹⁰ he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. (Rev 14:10 NAS)

¹⁹ And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered *the clusters* from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. (Rev 14:19 NAS)

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, *which are* the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. (Rev 15:1 NAS)

⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. (Rev 15:7 NAS)

Events of the First Half of the Tribulation

1. The Seal of Judgment Rev. 6
2. The rise of the Antichrist and the ten-nation confederacy Dan. 9:26,27, Dan 2:43,44, Rev. 12:3, 13:1,; 17:12, 16.
3. The Ministry of Elijah – Malachi 4:5,6
4. The revival through the 144,000 Jewish evangelist Rev. 7
5. The Trumpet judgments – Rev. 8 and 9
6. The ministry of the two witnesses – Rev. 11:3-6
7. The False church Rev. 17:1-6

Events of the Middle of the Tribulation

1. The Little Scroll – Rev. 10:9-11
2. The antichrist killed Rev. 13:3, notes that the seventh head, the antichrist, is killed., he is not yet finished
3. Satan cast down to the earth from heaven Rev. 12:7-9
4. The resurrection of the antichrist Rev. 13:3,4
5. Three kings killed and seven submit Dan. 7:24, Rev. 17:12, 13
6. Destruction of the false church 17:16
7. The death and resurrection of the two witnesses, during the first half of the tribulation, the two witnesses were protected God. God now allows the deception to deepen when antichrist murders the two witnesses but then, 3 ½ days later they rise up again, Rev. 11: 7-13
8. The Worship of the Antichrist Rev. 13:3-4, Rev. 13:8
9. The false prophet , Rev. 13:11-15 and I saw another beast...
10. 666 the mark of the beast – Another ministry of the false prophet will be to administer the false seal of the Holy Spirit. Rev. 13:16-18
11. The seven year covenant broken, Daniel 11:41, Isaiah 28:18
12. The abomination of desolation Daniel 9:27, Mat. 24:15-16, 2Thes. 2:4
13. The persecution of the Jews – The second half of the tribulation will be characterized by an extreme attempt to wipe out the Jews off face of the earth. Rev. 12:1-6

Events of the second half of the tribulation.

1. The bowl judgments – They occur in the second half of the tribulation, devastate antichrist's kingdom and prepare the way for the second coming of Christ.
2. The protection of the Jewish remnant, Micah 2:12, Rev. 12:6, 12:14
3. The conversion of Israel – Before the second coming Israel will be converted to the Messiahship of Jesus and saved from their sins. This will prepare them for their role in the millennial kingdom. Zech. 12:10, Rom. 11:23-27

When will the tribulation occur?

Some say that the tribulation has occurred and cite John 16:33 - ³³ "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (Joh 16:33 NAS). This is true and has proven to be so to this date, however the tribulation of Daniel's 70th week is a completely different era. The tribulation of the future is not the same as the daily trials, struggles and persecution of Christians. The Tribulation of end times is God's wrath which will come upon the people of the earth to test them. Rev. 3:10. 6:15-17

What is the Pre-tribulation Rapture?

The pre-tribulation rapture teaches that, prior to the seven-year tribulation, all members of the body of Christ, both living and dead, will be caught up in the air to meet Christ and then taken to heaven. ¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.* ¹⁵ *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶ *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive and remain **shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*** ¹⁸ *Therefore comfort one another with these words.* (1Th 4:13-18 NAS)

The Church will be removed from the earth BEFORE the appearing of the Antichrist ⁷ *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.* ⁸ *And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;* (2Th 2:7-8 NAS)

If we compare Scriptures having to do with the Translation of the Church (i.e., the Rapture), with those passages relating to the setting up of Christ's Kingdom, one can only reasonably conclude that it would be utterly **IMPOSSIBLE for these two events to occur simultaneously.** Let's look at some of the comparisons:

1. Matthew 25:31,32 - "*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations*" Carefully notice that Jesus is going to sit upon His throne in Jerusalem when He returns, and the nations of earth will be gathered before Him to be judged. How can this fact be reconciled with 1st Thessalonians 4:17, which states that the saints will be caught up together to meet with the Lord in the air?
2. Matthew 25:32 to 34 - "*And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" Please notice that there is NO translation (i.e., Rapture) of the sheep mentioned here. When the Lord returns to the earth at the Second Coming WITH His own, He is going to gather the nations of the earth together--separating the sheep from the goats (vs. 32), i.e., the righteous from the unrighteous. The sheep (saved) will simply enter the Kingdom, and the goats (unbelievers) be cast into everlasting fire.
3. It is important to recognize that when Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom there is NO Rapture, i.e., no one is caught up into the air to be with the Lord. **People who become Christians during the Tribulation Period** will enter with their earthly bodies into the Millennium. Proof of this is found in Isaiah 65:20-25, and in Zechariah 8:5 where children are mentioned playing during the Millennium. Those saved during the Tribulation will enter physically into the Millennial Kingdom. Where will these humans come from if the saints are ALL raptured and changed at the END of the Tribulation, i.e., a Posttribulation Rapture? Obviously this cannot be. The only logical conclusion is a Pre-tribulation Rapture!
4. Jude 1:14 - "*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.*" Carefully notice that NO mention is made of a Rapture at this time. Quite the contrary, here the Lord Jesus is returning with TEN THOUSANDS of His saints to the earth. That is drastically different than having our bodies changed, in the twinkling of an eye, and being "caught up" into the clouds to meet with the Lord. It would make no sense to say that Jesus is going to Rapture the saints, while coming to set up His Kingdom at the same time. Proof that this is not the case is the fact that Jesus will gather the nations and separate the sheep from the goats, i.e., the saved from the unsaved, at His Second Coming. Why would Jesus separate the saints TWICE? That is, why would Jesus Rapture the

saints to meet him in the air, and then re-gather the SAME people a short time later when He arrived on the earth? Do you see the dilemma of the Posttribulation?

5. Revelation 19:11 to 14 - "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Here we read about ARMIES from Heaven, riding upon white horses, following Christ into the Battle of Armageddon. There is NO mention of a Rapture. There is NOTHING in 1st Corinthians 15:51-54 or 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 about armies, or ten thousands of saints, coming to earth to war. The exact opposite is stated... we will be LEAVING this sin-cursed earth! Amen!

Further Evidence of a Pretribulation Rapture

God will NOT allow the Church to go through the *Tribulation Period*. It will be a time of atrocities as the world has never known! God wouldn't destroy the wicked in Noah's day until Noah and his family were all safely aboard the ark. Not one drop of rain fell until Noah and his family were on the ark, and God had shut the door. Afterwards, the rains fell and the wicked were utterly destroyed. The same is true of Lot and his family. Although Lot was a backslidden believer, he was nevertheless a "just man," a righteous man (2nd Peter 2:7,8). We read in Genesis 19:22, "**Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou become thither.**" These words were spoken by the angel whom God had sent to reign down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. No judgment could fall upon Sodom, until Lot and his family were removed. Likewise, the Church will be Translated (Raptured) away from this sin-cursed world before the Tribulation.

"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 upon the earth." -Revelation 3:10

The "word of my patience" in Revelation 3:10 is the Word of God. Here we have God's promise that because we have kept HIS WORD concerning salvation, i.e., because we have OBEYED the Gospel, He will keep us "from the hour of temptation" (i.e., the Tribulation Period). This seven-year period of tribulation is referred to in the Old Testament as *The Time of Jacob's Trouble* in Jeremiah 30:7-11...

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him ... Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."

It will be when the Church is removed from the earth (i.e., after the Rapture) that God will again recognize the nation Israel in a special covenant relationship with Himself. During the Great Tribulation, a remnant out of Israel will repent and turn to their Messiah. They will become His witnesses (Revelation 7:3-8). Thus, the time of Jacob's trouble will cause many Israelites to turn to the God of the Bible. We read in Matthew 24:14 concerning the Tribulation Period, "**And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.**" We read in Revelation 7:4 who the 144,000 are going to be ... "**And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.**" The 144,000 will be Jewish soulwinners! These are the preachers spoken of in Matthew 24:14. They will win multitudes of lost sinners to the Lord (Revelation 7:9). As a result,

many of them will be martyred (Revelation 6:9).

The Abomination of Desolation

The Bible plainly states that **no man** knows WHEN the Lord will return (Mark 13:32), which means that the Rapture MUST come before the Tribulation Period. The reason is because the Bible plainly states that the Second Coming of Christ will happen 3 1/2 years AFTER *The Abomination of Desolation*, i.e., when the Antichrist declares himself to be god and demands worship from the masses of the world (Mark 13:14; Daniel 9:27). So it will be KNOWN exactly how much time remains before the Second Coming, once the Antichrist declares himself to be god from the temple in Jerusalem. If you study the Bible at face value, you can only conclude a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

Why the Tribulation Period?

Although the Tribulation will affect the entire earth, and everyone in the world--it will center primarily around the nation of Israel (Ezekiel 20:37; 22:18-22; Malachi 3:2,3). We read in Ezekiel 20:37-38, "**And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.**" This prophecy concerns Israel during the Tribulation Period. Ezekiel tells us "why" God will allow this horrible time of unimaginable suffering and horror for the Jews. It will be a time of judgment against the people who have rebelled against the Lord. He will cause them "to pass under the rod," i.e., the Shepherd's rod. God will SEPARATE the true remnant of Israel (i.e., saved Jews) from counterfeit Jews (i.e., unsaved Jews). No unsaved Jew will ever enter the *Promised Land*, which God promised to Abraham and his seed in Genesis 17:8. Consider yourself forewarned that this promise only applies to those who are BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS... "*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*" (Galatians 3:29). All Jews who follow the Christ-rejecting religion of JUDAISM will be cast in to Hellfire.

To clarify, the Tribulation Period will be a time when God pours out His wrath upon mankind for his wickedness; but the PRIMARY purpose of the Tribulation Period is to prepare Israel to receive her King, Jesus Christ.

Daniel 12:1 states concerning the *Great Tribulation*...

*"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be **a time of trouble**, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."*

Only those who are true believers in Christ, who have their name written in the Lamb's Book of Life, will be delivered from the horrors of God's wrath. In order for *The Time of Jacob's Trouble* to occur, the Antichrist needs to be present, which means the Church must be gone from the world. By the way, the only thing preventing America from total immediate destruction are it's Christian families, because we are fighting against the Devil's crowd. The Antichrist's hands will be tied with millions of Christians still in the world.

The Church Must be Removed from the World Before the Tribulation!

Thus, having laid the foundation; let me say that the Church (i.e., all believers) MUST be removed from the world before any of this can happen. 2nd Thessalonians 2:3-10 clearly tells us that the Antichrist (man of sin) cannot be revealed on earth until the Church is removed from the world. 2nd Thessalonians 2:7-9 state... "*For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **he** who now letteth will let, until **he** be taken out of the way. And then shall*

that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." It's as obvious as can be to any genuine believer, who is familiar with the Word of God, who "He" in verse 7 is referring to... the Holy Spirit of God! Jesus said in John 16:8 concerning the Holy Spirit... "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Where does the Word of God say that the Holy Spirit lives? 1st Corinthians 3:16 says... "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Are you starting to get the picture? The Antichrist doesn't stand a chance with Christians in the world.

⁷ 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. (2Th 2:7 NAS)

2nd Thessalonians 2:7 is incontrovertible PROOF that the Rapture must precede the Tribulation! There can be NO other Person for "He" than the Holy Spirit. Also, the events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ are irreconcilably different with the events concerning the Rapture--solid PROOF that the Bible teaches a Pre-tribulation Rapture! Some people today are claiming that the Rapture doctrine didn't exist until recent centuries. We are reading the exact same Words of God today which the Apostle Paul penned nearly 2,000 years ago!

POINTS TO PONDER –

The Rapture of the church involves all believers being caught up to heaven -- those just resurrected, together with those alive at the time (**1 Thes 4:13-18**). *If it occurs at the beginning of the tribulation period, then clearly Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation to rescue Israel in the midst of Armageddon is a separate event.* According to Zechariah 14:3-5, "all the saints" must accompany Christ back to earth. But if the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, it must be simultaneous with the Second Coming, making them one event. *Which is it: two events separated by seven years, or one event with two diverse purposes?*

This question, though it has nothing to do with the gospel of salvation, divides much of the evangelical church. Happily, it can be settled rather easily. The descriptions in Scripture of the Rapture and Second Coming respectively are so different in so many details that they could not possibly be describing the same occurrence. We can't cover all of these distinctions, but here are a few:

1) At the Rapture, Christ does not return to earth but catches believers up to meet Him above the earth, taking them directly to heaven: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn 14:3); "caught up...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes 4:17).

In contrast, at the Second Coming Christ returns to this earth to rule Israel and the world from David's throne in Jerusalem: "his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem" (Zec 14:4); "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk 1:32, 33); "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him....The armies which are in heaven followed him....Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rv 19:11-15).

2) At the Rapture there is a resurrection of all believers who have died up to that time: "the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (1 Cor 15:52, 53); "the dead in Christ shall rise first..." (1 Thes 4:16).

In contrast, at the Second Coming there is no resurrection until Antichrist is defeated, he and the false prophet have been "cast alive into a lake of fire" (Rv 19:20) and Satan has been bound in the "bottomless pit [for] a thousand years" (20:1-3) -- none of which is even remotely related to the rapture of believers to heaven. Then, to "the first resurrection" which occurred at the Rapture are added a unique group: "them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither

had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (4, 5).

3) At the Rapture, the bodies of living believers (like those who are resurrected) will be changed to become immortal: "We shall not all sleep [i.e., die], but we shall all be changed...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [who are living] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:51-53); "we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them [the resurrected saints]...to meet the Lord in the air [clearly requiring immortal bodies]" (1 Thes 4:17).

In contrast, at the Second Coming all of the saints return with Christ from heaven and will therefore already have been changed into immortality: "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zec 14:5); "I saw heaven opened [and one] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood...and the armies which were in heaven followed him [to] smite the nations" (Rv 19:11-15).

4) The Rapture occurs during relative peace and prosperity, when the world does not expect judgment from God: "And as it was in the days of Noah [the last thing they expected was Gods judgment]...they did eat, they drank...married wives...were given in marriage [and as in] the days of Lot...they bought, they sold...planted...builded....Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Lk 17:26-30).

Again in complete contrast, the Second Coming occurs in the midst of the worst war the world has ever seen and following the greatest devastation this planet has ever suffered or ever will: "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world...nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Mt 24:21, 22); "behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed...power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger....There was a great earthquake...every mountain and island were moved out of their places...[men] hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks...for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rv 6:8-17); "and the four angels were loosed...to slay the third part of men" (9:15); "and the...sea...became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And...the rivers and fountains of waters...became blood...the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and...men were scorched with great heat...and...there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth....And every island fled away and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail [of large stones]...every stone about the weight of a talent" (16:3-21); "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True....And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen....And I saw the beast [Antichrist], and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and...the false prophet [and they] were cast alive into a lake of fire..." (19:11-21).

5) The Rapture occurs when conditions in the world seem to indicate that all is well, when very few expect Christ to return and He catches even the church by surprise: "of that day and hour knoweth no man...in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Mt 24:36, 44).

In contrast, when the Second Coming occurs, not even Antichrist is caught by surprise -- the many visible signs alert everyone that Christ is right at the door: "when ye shall see all these things, know that it [Christs coming] is near, even at the doors" (Mt 24:33); "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse" (Rv 19:19).

6) The Rapture occurs when the church is sleeping, with little expectation of the Lords return: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Mt 25:5); "Watch ye therefore...lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mk 13:35, 36).

In contrast, the Second Coming occurs at the end of the Tribulation in the midst of worldwide devastation and hopeless distress; the Antichrist and his armies are attacking Israel, much of Jerusalem is already captured (Zec 14:1, 2), and Israel is on the verge of annihilation. It is inconceivable that the church, if it were still here, would be slumbering in complacency and under the delusion that "surely Christ wouldn't come now"!

7) Since the Rapture instantly takes us, without dying, out of this world of sin, pain and sorrow to be forever with Christ and like Him, never more to grieve Him, it is called the "blessed hope": "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Ti 2:13); "every man that hath this hope" (1 Jn 3:3).

In contrast, the Second Coming (or a post-trib rapture at that time) could hardly be called a "blessed hope," inasmuch as very few Christians (if the church were still here) would survive to enjoy it. Having refused to receive the 666 mark of the beast "in their right hand, or in their forehead" and therefore being unable to "buy or sell," and refusing to "worship the image of the beast [they would] be killed" (Rv 13:15-17). 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 Antichrists world police death squads, "Blessed hope! You'll be raptured at Armageddon!"

8) As for the Rapture, unquestionably, the early church was taught to expect it at any moment and to eagerly watch, wait and look for Christs return, when He will catch all believers up into His Fathers house to be with Him eternally: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord..." (Lk 12:35, 36); "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil 3:20); "...ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven...even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thes 1:9, 10); "looking for that blessed hope" (Ti 2:13); "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb 9:28). One does not watch, wait and look each day for something that cannot happen until Antichrists advent or the end of a seven-year tribulation. Thus, there must be a coming of Christ that could happen at any moment.

In contrast, the Second Coming, by very definition as described in Scripture, cannot be expected momentarily. Therefore, none of the scriptures just quoted concerning watching and waiting and looking for the Lord could refer to the Second Coming or to a post-trib rapture of the church. These scriptures could therefore refer only to a pre-trib rapture.

9) The pre-trib Rapture has a powerful, purifying effect upon those who have this hope in Him. The fact that it is to be expected at any moment can only mean that it must come before Antichrist is revealed and before the Tribulation. If Christ could come at any moment, there is no time to waste, no time to delay witnessing, no time to indulge in sin with the idea of repenting and changing ones ways later: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 Jn 2:28); "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (3:3).

In contrast, anticipation of the Second Coming (or a post-trib rapture at that time) could hardly have a purifying effect, because it can't take place for at least seven years -- plenty of time to delay witnessing, getting right with the Lord and holy living until later. In fact, the Lord said that believing he couldn't come at any moment would have the opposite effect from purifying believers: "If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants...and to eat and drink and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come at an hour when he is not aware (Mt 24:48, 49; Lk 12:45, 46).

10) The Rapture is not only an event that we are to expect momentarily and to eagerly anticipate, but we are to ask our Lord to come immediately. Here is how the Bible ends: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come....Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rv 22:17, 20).

In contrast, the Second Coming is not of such a nature and timing that we could ask Christ to effect it right now. Since Christ obviously cannot return to the earth in judgment to rescue Israel, stop the destruction at Armageddon and destroy the Antichrist along with his kingdom and his armies until the end of the Tribulation, for us to cry out to Christ, "Come, Lord Jesus!" would be like demanding payment on a debt that isn't due for seven years. Yet, "the Spirit and the bride" do cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus." We can only conclude that there must be a coming of Christ that could occur at any moment. It cannot be the Second Coming or a post-trib rapture. It can only be a pre-trib rapture.

11) There are at least two events which occur in heaven for which the church must be present and which, therefore, cannot take place until the Rapture occurs: the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage of the Lamb to His bride: "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom 14:10); "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10); "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted [to] be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white [as a result of her cleansing at the judgment seat of Christ]" (Rv 19:7, 8). Both these events occur prior to Christ's return to earth and thus demand a prior rapture.

It is clear that the Second Coming cannot occur until these two vital events, which demand the presence of the church in heaven, have taken place. It is only after the Lamb has been married to His bride that she accompanies Him back to earth to rescue Israel and to destroy Antichrist and his armies: "And the armies which were in heaven followed him...clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rv 19:14).

We know not why the Bridegroom tarries, but exactly as He foretold, the church is asleep. In that context, our Lord added: "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Mt 25:6). May each of us be listening eagerly for that cry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Indeed, we ought to be sounding it aloud, for the Lord could come at any moment to take us to Himself. So let us watch and wait and look for Him in eager anticipation -- and encourage others to do the same. It will have a purifying and motivating effect in our lives.