

Pretribulational Rapture?

Revelation

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
(see also John 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52)

Arguments FOR Pretribulational Rapture	
<i>Use of the Word “Rapture” [ἁρπάζω] in the New Testament</i>	“And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away [ἁρπάζω], and the eunuch saw him no more” (Acts 8:39) I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up [ἁρπάζω] to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. (2 Cor. 12:2) She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up [ἁρπάζω] to God and to his throne (Rev. 12:5)
<i>The Church Is Promised Deliverance from Wrath</i>	“how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” (1 Thess. 1:9b-10) “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9)
<i>Meaning of “Kept From”</i>	“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.” (Rev. 3:10) <i>Consider this analogy: To be “kept through” a math test at school would be like given the answer key from which to copy during the test, but to be “kept from” is to be exempt from even taking the test.</i>
<i>Thessalonian Expectation</i>	“¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless...” (2 Thess. 2:1-3a) <i>The Thessalonians were disturbed because they thought that they were already in the Day of the Lord (the tribulation). But, if they were taught a post-tribulational rapture, they would have no reason to be concerned because they would expect a coming tribulation.</i>

<i>No Mention of the “Church” in Revelation 4—18</i>	The word “church” is used twenty times in the book of Revelation – nineteen times in chapters 1—3, a final time in Rev. 22:16, but not once in 4:1—22:15. Though believers both on earth (7:3-8; 9:4; 11:3; 12:13, 17; 13:7, 10; 14:1, 12; 17:6, 14; 18:4, 20, 24) and in heaven (6:9-11; 7:9-10, 14-17; 15:2; 19:1, 9, 14) are referenced frequently within this section, they are never referred to as “the church.”																
<i>No Mention of the Rapture in Revelation 19:11-21</i>	As a posttribulational rapture would be a cosmically important event vindicating the suffering saints in the tribulation, it is odd it is excluded from the account of Jesus’ second coming.																
<i>Preserves Imminence of Christ’s Return</i>	The doctrine of the imminence of Christ’s return is both important and highly attested (Luke 12:26; 1 Cor. 1:7; 16:22; Phil. 3:20; 4:5; 1 Thess. 1:5-10; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; James 5:7-9; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 17, 20). This doctrine is typically defined as ‘no other prophetic fulfillment must come before the second coming’. However, if all the tribulation events must precede the second coming, then can Christ’s return truly be called “imminent”?																
<i>Childbirth in the Millennium</i>	There will be childbirth (Isa. 65:20; Zech. 8:4-5) in the millennium, though not in the eternal state (Matt. 22:30). Therefore, we gather, only non-glorified bodies can reproduce. It is from the progeny of these non-glorified individuals in the millennium that the final mass of rebels will come who will be deceived by Satan to wage war against Jerusalem one final time (Rev. 20:7-8). However, if all believers are raptured and glorified (1 Cor. 15:51-52) at the end of the tribulation and all unbelievers are judged and killed (Matt. 25:31-32, 41), where will these unglorified people in the Millennium come from?																
<i>Differences Between Rapture and Second Coming Passages</i>	<table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Second Coming</u></th> <th><u>Rapture</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Preceded by signs</td> <td>1. Present as imminent (no signs)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Coming in judgment</td> <td>2. Coming in blessing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Establish kingdom afterwards</td> <td>3. No mention of kingdom</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. No mention of glorified bodies</td> <td>4. Results in glorification</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Clear OT prophecy</td> <td>5. Defined as a “mystery”</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Come “with” saints</td> <td>6. Come “for” saints</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Descend → Defeat → Raise</td> <td>7. Descend → Raise/glorify</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Second Coming</u>	<u>Rapture</u>	1. Preceded by signs	1. Present as imminent (no signs)	2. Coming in judgment	2. Coming in blessing	3. Establish kingdom afterwards	3. No mention of kingdom	4. No mention of glorified bodies	4. Results in glorification	5. Clear OT prophecy	5. Defined as a “mystery”	6. Come “with” saints	6. Come “for” saints	7. Descend → Defeat → Raise	7. Descend → Raise/glorify
<u>Second Coming</u>	<u>Rapture</u>																
1. Preceded by signs	1. Present as imminent (no signs)																
2. Coming in judgment	2. Coming in blessing																
3. Establish kingdom afterwards	3. No mention of kingdom																
4. No mention of glorified bodies	4. Results in glorification																
5. Clear OT prophecy	5. Defined as a “mystery”																
6. Come “with” saints	6. Come “for” saints																
7. Descend → Defeat → Raise	7. Descend → Raise/glorify																
<i>Nature and Purpose of the Tribulation</i>	[#1] <i>Resume God’s program with Israel</i> The tribulation is the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7; cf. Dan. 12) during which time Israel will be persecuted by the antichrist (Dan. 7:20-21) and assaulted by the nations (Zech. 12:2-3), though finally delivered by the personal return of Jesus Christ (Zech. 14:2-5a, 9) at which time Israel will “look on Him whom they pierced” (Zech. 12:10) and finally and fully believe and follow their Messiah (Rom. 11:26). [#2] <i>God’s wrath on unbelievers</i> The whole seven-year tribulation is a time of God’s wrath on an unbelieving, God-rejecting world. The Lamb opens the seven seal judgments commencing this wrath. The church does not fit these purposes																

Arguments AGAINST Pretribulational Rapture	
<i>Modern Theological Development</i>	Not clearly articulated by anyone until the early 1800s
<i>Roman General Imagery</i>	It's very possible that Paul in 1 Thess. 4:16-17 is using Roman imagery to depict citizens joining their returning king outside the city and the following him back in (see Matt. 25:6; Acts 28:15)
<i>Similarities between Rapture and Second Coming passages</i>	The rapture and the return of Christ occur simultaneously at the end of the tribulation. The two rapture passages (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:17) are housed within teaching by Paul about the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12; 1 Thess. 4:16b). The same word for Christ's "coming" [παρουσία] is used in 1 Thess. 4:15 and all second coming passages (Matt. 24:27; 1 Cor. 15:23; James 5:8; 1 John 2:28) including clear second coming passages in the Thessalonian correspondence (1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8). Matthew 24:30-31 states that angels will "gather the elect" at the sound of a "trumpet" after the "Son of Man comes on the clouds." This same language of clouds, and angel and a trumpet is used in 1 Thess. 4:16-17.
<i>Same Trumpet</i>	The trumpet blown at the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-52) is the same trumpet announcing the second coming (Matt. 24:31)
<i>Believers in the Tribulation</i>	Are we to believe that Scripture's frequent reference to tribulation saints (Matt. 24:22, 31; Rev. 7; 13:7; 20:9) are all converted during this time? The claim that the Olivet Discourse refers to Israel (Matt. 24:15-16, 20) and not the church is unconvincing as Jesus is speaking to the apostles and founders of the church