

## DESCRIPTION OF THE POST-TRIB RAPTURE VIEW

The "post-tribulation" rapture view is the belief that Jesus will return visibly and bodily to raise the dead Christians and gather together the living Christians at the end of a period of intense tribulation, called by Jesus "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21). The post-trib view is the only rapture view which sees only a single future coming of Jesus. All other rapture views, pre-trib, mid-trib, and pre-wrath, see the rapture and resurrection prior to the second coming of Jesus by months or years. While these rapture views see the rapture as a means to take the Church to heaven to escape God's wrath, the post-trib view sees the rapture as a mechanism to gather together believers from both heaven and earth in a single location with Christ, to be revealed with Him in glory to the world at His coming. Therefore, in a post-trib scenario, the rapture is an integral part of the second coming. Upon Jesus' descent from heaven, the angels will be dispatched by the trumpet blast and gather together Jesus' elect to meet Him in the air. Then the whole gathering of angels and saints are revealed to the world along with Jesus in a blaze of glory.

## HISTORY OF THE POST-TRIB RAPTURE VIEW

Despite a variety of Millennial views in Christian history, until the last couple of centuries, Christians were unanimously "post-trib." Historic pre-millennialists and amillennialists have always been post-trib. Only within modern dispensational pre-millennialism do we find the idea of a "rapture" distinct from the second coming. The evidence from early Christian literature is exclusively post-trib. A few popular contemporary authors have made claims about pre-tribulationism being found in the writings of the early Christians. And many Christians repeat these claims without question. However, the claims are blatantly false. We have documented the pre-trib revisionism of Church history in the section entitled "[Historical Evidence](#)."

To my knowledge, the first to separate the rapture from the second coming was a Baptist minister named Morgan Edwards (1722-1795). He wrote a paper while in seminary that outlined a hypothetical form of mid-tribulationism, and years later published his thesis. Within forty years of his death, Edward Irving (Catholic Apostolic Church), and shortly thereafter John N. Darby (Plymouth Brethren), both of England, were teaching pre-tribulationism.

It is fair and accurate to say that, regardless of their views on the Millennium, the vast majority of those who have called themselves Christians held to a post-trib rapture and resurrection throughout Church history. They saw only a single future coming of Christ both to judge the "Man of Sin" and his followers, and to rescue the Church.

## THE RAPTURE QUESTION IN MODERN TIMES

In many parts of the western world, especially the USA and western Europe, the pre-trib view supplanted the post-trib view in the last two centuries. This was due largely to the Christian seminary movement, with large schools like Dallas Theological Seminary leading the way in promoting this view. But, probably the single most important reason for the widespread acceptance of the pre-trib view was the Scofield Reference Bible, which incorporated the dispensational / pre-trib scheme in the reference notes.

In the last several decades, there has been a considerable trend away from pre-tribulationism. I believe this trend is mostly due to individual Christians studying the Scriptures on their own and coming to the conclusion that the pre-trib view is simply not biblical. Another reason is the historical argument that post-tribbers have been increasingly advancing, that the post-trib view was exclusively the view of the early Church. Also, pre-tribulationism's recent roots have been exposed by the research of men like George Ladd, Robert Gundry, and especially Dave MacPherson.

The pre-trib establishment is taking this thinning out of their ranks very seriously. The **Pre-trib Research Center**, founded by Tim LaHaye, and currently headed by Thomas Ice, is dedicated to countering this trend and dealing with the powerful historical evidence that post-tribbers have put forward. Pre-tribbers are also responding with a blitz of propaganda in the form of fictional novels and prophecy films, like LaHaye's "Left Behind" series, in order to shore up their base. But, despite this effort, there is a steady exodus of Christians from the pre-trib camp.

**The Last Trumpet - Post-Trib Research Center** is dedicated to providing Christian pastors and laymen the biblical and historical reasons for adopting the ancient rapture view of the Church. It is our contention that the pre-trib view is not explicitly taught anywhere in Scripture, and is based solely on incorrect inferences and a faulty version of the dispensational system. It was not what Jesus commanded to be preached in all the world until the end of the age. Neither was it the view handed down by the Apostles to the next generation of Christians. The view presented on this website is essentially the same as what was held by the earliest Christian writers contiguous with the time of the Apostles. We are not suggesting that anyone should hold to the post-trib view simply because of its history or antiquity. We aim to show that it is the only biblical view of the rapture timing. The historical information is just further confirmation that the early Church trained by the Apostles understood the Scriptures in a similar way.

## WHY IT MATTERS WHAT YOU BELIEVE

In contemporary western Christianity, post-tribbers are looked upon with pity and suspicion. Some think we have a "martyr complex." Others think we are just troublemakers, wanting to rock the boat. Post-tribulationism just doesn't seem to fit in with the prosperous lifestyles of contemporary western Christianity. The lack of real persecution and hardship has led many to assume that this is the normal Christian life. But, according to Scripture, persecution, tribulation, and hardship, is the real "normal" Christian experience. The comfort western Christians have enjoyed for the last few generations is an anomaly that will soon come to an end. The theological "comfort zones" we have constructed around this anomaly are about to come crashing down.

For those who are honestly considering the various views of the rapture timing, and are open to God's leading regarding this issue, there is plenty of opposition ahead for you. The "rapture question" has been a hot potato issue in the recent past. In some cases, splitting churches. Christians who have abandoned the pre-trib view and been the least bit vocal about it have often found themselves being offered the "right foot of fellowship." Many pastors who have abandoned pre-trib have lost their churches, and

missionaries have been abandoned by their mission boards and supporting churches because of their switch to the post-trib view. So, if you have no tolerance for hardship, you had better stop here. If you've got the guts to face the truth head on no matter what it is, then please continue.

Some say it really doesn't matter if Jesus is coming before or after the tribulation, as long as we are "ready." They think we should all just agree to disagree, and love one another. But, "ready" is a relative term! It begs the question, "ready for what?" There is a huge difference between being ready to be gently whisked away to heaven on a pillow, and being ready to become a martyr at the hands of Antichrist! Is surface harmony worth the risk of huge numbers of believers being caught totally unprepared spiritually, emotionally, and physically? What about the "many" believers whom Jesus mentioned in Matt. 24:9-13 who would fall away when the deception and persecution of the last days arrives? If Jesus' coming is several decades away, then perhaps the rapture debate is not all that critical. But, if Jesus is coming soon as the signs seem to indicate, one's views on the timing of the rapture are crucial to being prepared to be an overcomer in the difficult days before His coming.

Knowledge of what lies ahead motivates people to prepare. A rookie soldier, who knows he is about to be shipped to the front lines in a brutal war, will have a much different attitude about basic training than a new recruit who joined up to get a free education and a pension! The soldier who is about to engage the enemy knows his training may mean the difference between life and death. He learns survival techniques; he gets physically fit; he learns his weapons inside and out; he makes sure his weapons are in good working order; through countless hours of practice he becomes a marksman. He also prepares himself mentally for combat and the possibility of being a POW. His objective is clear; he is fully equipped; and he is mentally focused on getting the job done and coming home in one piece! On the other hand, the new peace-time novice, with big ideas of a comfortable career, could have a ho-hum attitude about basic training. If he is unexpectedly thrust into a fierce battle, he will find himself woefully unprepared. While staring down the barrel of the enemy's rifle is not the time to be fumbling around for your weapon's instruction manual. He might just conclude that this is not what he signed up for!

If it really doesn't matter what we believe about the last days, why did God devote such a large portion of His Word to end-time prophecy? Is it just filler material? Is it for intellectual entertainment? The answer is really quite simple. Prophecy was intended to provide the kind of motivation needed to turn flabby pew-potatoes into Christian soldiers. This website is an introduction to "basic training" for Christians, alerting them of the coming trials we will soon face in time to prepare themselves and their families spiritually and emotionally, and perhaps even physically at the proper time. And don't kid yourselves about your own or your family's ability to easily digest the emotional implications. Without strong spiritual character first, Christians who live at relative ease in the western world often react badly to the idea that they may soon face the Antichrist, and all the venom that hell can dish out on God's children.

## **METHODOLOGY IN BUILDING OUR BIBLICAL CASE**

The Bible is the progressive revelation of God to mankind. All of the information available to us in Scripture was not available to everyone in history. Some things were revealed through Moses, others through the prophets many generations later. More was revealed by Jesus, and still more through the writings of the Apostles. Finally, Revelation was given through John as the capstone of prophetic truth. The totality of biblical prophetic truth was progressively given over thousands of years.

Because of the progressive nature of Bible prophecy, when interpreting a given passage, we cannot assume things (that we know from later prophecy) that had not yet been revealed to mankind when that particular prophecy was written or spoken. For example, when examining what Jesus taught His disciples about His coming and the end of the age, we need to place ourselves in their shoes. We should take into account what they already knew from their Jewish training in the Old Testament Scriptures. They were certainly not aware of later prophecy, such as the book of Revelation given six decades later! When Jesus taught His disciples, He was quite aware that their understanding was limited to PAST revelation. Jesus built on and added to their current foundational understanding with more detailed revelation. This is clear in the Olivet Discourse, where Jesus referred the disciples to what Daniel had written about the "Abomination of Desolation" [Matt. 24:15]. Many other passages could be cited in the New Testament, where the writer or speaker quoted or alluded to Old Testament prophecy when teaching about eschatology.

In our study, we will not hop-scotch all over the Bible in order to interpret a passage. We will try our best to understand a passage in the way the original audience would have understood it given their current level of learning. This assumes that Bible prophecy was first and foremost intended for the audience to whom it was first given. Of course, all Bible prophecy is beneficial to us who live thousands of years later. But, it was not originally written specifically to us. Therefore, we need to resist the temptation to interpret earlier prophecy in light of later revelation. The original hearers of that prophecy did not have the benefit of later revelation. When giving new revelation, which was obviously meant to be properly comprehended by the intended audience, we assume the writer was fully aware of what his audience knew and did not know. He expected his hearers or readers to interpret the prophecies correctly, given their limited understanding. This approach to interpretation is called the "historical" method.

We will also pay close attention to the grammar. It is important to understand that the mechanism for God's transferring knowledge to people is the use of nouns, pronouns, articles, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, and prepositions. The use of language has certain rules which must be followed if we expect to properly understand the original intent of the speaker or writer. And after all, **original intent** is the goal we are striving for in our study. Therefore, we will try our best not to violate the rules of grammar with our interpretations of Scripture. This approach is called the "grammatical" method.

Because we intend to follow the "grammatical - historical" methodology, we have built our case for the post-trib rapture progressively, avoiding logical fallacies. We assume that the original hearers were aware of older revelation, never newer revelation. Let me give a couple of examples of sequential fallacies to illustrate the point, one fallacy made by some post-tribbers and one made by some pre-tribbers.

**Post-trib fallacy:** Some claim that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians of Jesus' coming at the "last trumpet," he meant the seventh trumpet in Revelation. The problem with this reasoning is Paul wrote in such a way that his readers would know what he was talking about. They had no idea of the seven trumpets in Revelation, because that was not revealed until several decades later. We should look backward in the prophetic record for "trumpets" with which to identify or compare the "last trumpet," rather than forward, because that is what the original audience was expected to do. Otherwise, we assume things that the original audience could not possibly know, and therefore would certainly not understand. Our premise is that the original audience was expected to understand what they were told.

**Pre-trib fallacy:** Some claim that Jesus taught a pre-trib rapture in John 14:1-3. Yet, nothing in that passage specifically indicates the "coming" is pre-trib, or is separate from the "second coming." Jesus had just told the same disciples to be watching for the signs of His coming "immediately after the tribulation" in Matt. 24, and to be expecting the coming of His Kingdom to earth in Luke 21. The only "coming" Jesus spoke of prior to this (and the only one in the Old Testament) is post-tribulational. Some pre-tribbers try to superimpose a pre-trib rapture in John 14, claiming that the passage fits the pre-trib scenario better, and conclude it is new revelation about the rapture. But, what would the disciples think of such an interpretation given their current understanding? Would they think Jesus was speaking of a new and different coming before the tribulation after He had just told them to watch for His post-trib coming two days earlier? Hardly!

These two examples illustrate the absolute necessity of keeping the original audience in view at all times in their particular historical setting. By doing this, we will guard ourselves against the typical fallacies committed by many students of Bible prophecy.

As you read the articles in the first section, you will notice that they follow a sequential path through the New Testament. It is beyond the scope of this website to do the same with Old Testament prophecy. However, when appropriate, we will look at Old Testament prophecy and consider its implications regarding the knowledge of the original audience of the New Testament prophetic Scriptures. By using this format, we will build our case sequentially, and demonstrate the level of reliance on previous prophecy, as well as examine new revelation when given. By default, we will assume that prophetic details given have a foundation in past prophecy. Where unique details are given that have no apparent basis in past prophecy, we can assume that this is new revelation. Often, the text itself tells us when new revelation is being given and when old revelation is being reiterated. For example, when Paul wrote, "behold I show you a mystery" (1 Cor. 15:54), we can conclude he was about to reveal something not previously understood. But, when Peter wrote that he was reminding his readers of the "words of the prophets" (2 Peter 3:1,2), we can conclude he was referring to previous prophecy.

Pre-tribbers often claim to be the champions of the "literal" method of interpretation. While literalism necessarily leads to a pre-millennial understanding of prophecy, it does not favor the pre-trib rapture view within the pre-millennial camp. I realize that this is a radical statement in today's eschatological climate. But, we mean to prove our assertion in the following articles. It is pre-tribbers themselves who frequently appeal to non-literal interpretations as the primary support for their view. Some examples of this are:

- a) John's being caught up to heaven in Rev. 4:1 represents the rapture
- b) the 24 elders in heaven represent the whole Church in heaven
- c) the 7 letters in Revelation represent 7 consecutive "church ages"
- d) Enoch's and Elijah's catching up are "types" of a pre-trib rapture

The articles on this website will prove conclusively that post-tribbers can far surpass pre-tribbers in holding to a consistent "grammatical - historical" or "literal" methodology. And a consistent literal methodology will necessarily lead to a post-trib rapture (within a pre-millennial framework).

The second major section of this website presents our historical argument from the post-Apostolic early Church. We do not claim perfection for the post-Apostolic Church, nor any of the early Christian writers. However, our intent is to demonstrate that the second generation Church was solidly post-trib, and that no hint of pre-tribulationism can be found in their writings. While this is a secondary argument, and does not carry the weight of the Biblical arguments, it is the natural extension of our premise. Since we are viewing prophecy progressively, always building on previous revelation, it is logical to conclude that students (or disciples) of the Apostles would reflect the view handed down to them by Apostolic oral tradition. **The second generation Church was the product of the lifetime teaching ministries of Jesus' Apostles.** The early Church not only possessed the written documents of the New Testament, but also a considerable body of oral personal instruction from their mentors, the Apostles. We will demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that the second generation Church was unanimously post-trib regarding the rapture. The implications of this fact are enormous. **If the pre-trib view is correct, the Apostles of Jesus were miserable failures in transmitting sound doctrine to the very next generation of Christians, and grounding them in the Word, since no hint of pre-tribulationism can be found in the post-Apostolic Church.** That means, the entire Church succumbed to a false view of the rapture virtually overnight, and no record can be found of any kind of resistance or rebuttal of this alleged post-trib error. All this despite the fact that the early Christian apologists, like Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, wrote volumes against the contemporary heresies that threatened the Church, appealing to the Scriptures and Apostolic oral tradition. If pre-tribulationism is true, we are forced to conclude that as soon as the Apostles died (actually while John was still alive), the whole Christian Church abandoned the Apostles' doctrine and substituted a false eschatology that required them to go through the tribulation.

The third section of this website addresses the arguments advanced by the pre-trib side. Post-tribbers in the past have been accused of arguing our case by merely tearing down pre-trib, rather than advancing a positive presentation of the Biblical basis for our view. Unfortunately, this is a fair analysis in many cases. At **The Last Trumpet - Post-Trib Research Center** we intend to

take the high road by first building our case from Scripture alone, then dealing with the historical arguments, and lastly providing our rebuttal of the pre-trib arguments.

The process of developing our eschatology first and foremost from a progressive handling of Scripture using the grammatical - historical (literal) method, and then adding the testimony of the early Church, leads firmly to a post-trib understanding of the rapture. One of the reasons the pre-trib view cannot be correct is because it is derived from reading many ideas (some biblical and some not) into the text that the original hearers could not possibly know. Pre-tribulationism is the result of a long series of post-hoc arguments, and largely ignores the historical setting and progressive nature of prophecy. It is "reverse engineered" and forced onto the Scriptures rather than built progressively on a proper foundation. Because we have built our case progressively, you will benefit the most by reading the articles in sequence, at least in the first section titled "**Post-Trib Rapture.**"

#### **CHALLENGE**

#### **TO**

#### **PRE-TRIBBERS**

If you are pre-trib, all we ask of you is to give us a fair hearing. As you consider our arguments from Scripture with an open mind, ask yourself the following questions. "**If the pre-trib rapture is true, where was it introduced in the progressive revelation of Biblical prophecy?**" Such a major event, that is not to be found in Old Testament prophecy or even in Jesus' own teaching, must have been unveiled to the Christian world at some point in time. When? Where? What passage of Scripture indicates this new radical departure from the rest of Bible prophecy? As you contemplate the historical evidence provided on this site, ask yourself this question. "**Why was the pre-trib rapture view only discovered, and documented in the history of Christianity, many centuries after the founding of Jesus' Church?**" If it is truly part of the "*Faith once delivered to the saints,*" why did the early Church know nothing of it?