

WHY A PRETRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE?

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This article raises four key questions: (1) What does “rapture” mean?; (2) Will there be an eschatological “rapture”?; (3) Will the “rapture” be partial or full?; and (4) Will the “rapture” be pre, mid, or post in a time relationship to Daniel’s seventieth week? In answering the fourth question concerning the time of the rapture, seven major lines of reasoning produce the conclusion that a pretribulational rapture best fits the biblical evidence and raises the fewest difficulties. By way of conclusion, the article answers thirteen of the toughest objections to pretribulationism.

For over thirty years I have studied the Scriptures in a sincere attempt to formulate a satisfying biblical answer to the question, “Why should I believe in a pretribulational rapture?” In the process of research, reflection, and finally writing, I have attempted to eliminate the kinds of simplistic or twisted approaches and illogical thought patterns that might bring serious doubts on a conclusion, if not even directly invalidate the results.

Every rapture position has its overzealous defenders who have employed unacceptable reasoning or flawed methodology to prove the point. Some of the less-than-satisfactory approaches that I have observed in the rapture debate include:

1. Putting non-biblical, historical documents on an equal par with Scripture to gain a greater sense of authority for one’s conclusion or even to refute a biblical presentation.
2. Reading current events into the Scripture to prove one’s point.
3. Inserting one’s predetermined position, without first proving it, into a Scripture passage to gain apparent biblical support.
4. Attacking the character of one who holds a particular view in order to discredit the view.
5. Accusing an advocate of an opposing view of holding certain unacceptable

interpretations or beliefs, when in fact he does not, in order to demonstrate falsely his apparent poor scholarship.

6. Employing selective data to make one's point, when full disclosure would have actually weakened the conclusion.
7. Drawing unwarranted and erroneous implications from the Greek NT text that are used to override the more obvious and determinative conclusions derived from the passage's context.

The following four questions will be raised and answered in this attempt to present a convincing response to the ultimate question at hand, "Why a pretribulation rapture?"

1. What does "rapture" mean?
2. Will there be an eschatological "rapture"?
3. Will the "rapture" be partial or full?
4. Will the "rapture" be pre, mid, or post in a time relationship to Daniel's seventieth week?

The scope of this article does not allow for discussing the chief deficiencies of other positions. This task I leave to other writers for the time being. However, the central purpose of this discussion is to describe the superiority of pretribulationism as taught in major eschatological texts such as Matthew 24–25; 1 Thessalonians 4; 1 Corinthians 15; and Revelation 3, 6–18. It will not be the weight of any one reason that makes pretribulationism so compelling, but rather the combined force of all the lines of reasoning.

What Does "Rapture" Mean?

The English noun/verb "rapture" comes from the Latin noun *raptura*/verb *rapiō* which refers to the Greek word ἁρπαζῶ (*harpaζō*) that is used 14 times in the NT. The basic idea of the word is "to remove suddenly or snatch away." It is used by the NT in reference to stealing/plundering (Matt 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 10:12, 28, 29) and removing (John 6:15; Acts 8:39; 23:10; Jude 23).

There is a third use, which focuses on being caught up to heaven. It is used of Paul's third heaven experience (2 Cor 12:2, 4) and Christ's ascension to heaven (Rev 12:5). Obviously, *harpaζō* is the perfect word to describe God suddenly taking up the church from earth to heaven as the first part of Christ's second coming. However, the term itself contains no hint of the rapture's time in relationship to Daniel's seventieth week.

Will There Be an Eschatological "Rapture"?

First Thess 4:16-17 unquestionably refers to a rapture that is eschatological in nature. Here, *harpaζō* is translated "caught up" (NASB).

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. 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.

Without employing *harpazō*, but by using similar contextual language, 1 Cor 15:51-52 refers to the same eschatological event as 1 Thess 4:16-17.

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Thus, it can be assuredly concluded that Scripture points to the fact of an eschatological rapture, even though neither of these foundational texts contains an explicit time indicator.

Will the “Rapture” Be Partial or Full?

Some have suggested that the rapture spoken of in 1 Thess 4:16-17 and 1 Cor 15:51-52 will only be a partial rapture, not a rapture of all who believe. They reason that participation in the rapture is not based upon one’s true salvation but rather is conditional, based upon one’s deserving conduct.

This theory rests on NT passages that stress obedient watching and waiting, e.g., Matt 25:1-13; 1 Thess 5:4-8; Heb 9:28. The result would be that only part of the church is raptured and those who are not raptured would endure through a portion of or through the entire seventieth week of Daniel. However, these biblical texts which supposedly teach a partial rapture are better understood as differentiating between true believers who are raptured and merely professing ones who remain behind. Texts that refer to the final aspect of Christ’s second coming are often used mistakenly to support the partial-rapture theory.

The partial rapture theory not only fails to be convincing because of a conclusion that the context of allegedly supporting passages will not support, but it also fails to be compelling for numerous other reasons. First, 1 Cor 15:51 says that “all” will be changed. Second, a partial rapture would logically demand a parallel partial resurrection, which is nowhere taught in Scripture. Third, a partial rapture would minimize and possibly eliminate the need for the judgment seat of Christ, because judgment would have already taken place by virtue of a “partial” rapture. Fourth, it creates a purgatory of sorts on earth for those believers left behind. Fifth, a partial rapture is nowhere explicitly taught in Scripture. Therefore, it is concluded that the rapture will be full and complete, not just partial.

Will the “Rapture” Be Pre, Mid, or Post in a Time Relationship to Daniel’s Seventieth Week?

The following seven evidences point to a pretribulational rapture. In this

writer's opinion, they create a far more compelling case than the reasoning given for any other time of the rapture.

The Church Is Not Mentioned in Revelation 6–18 as Being on Earth

The common NT term for “church” (ἐκκλησία, *ekklesia*) is used nineteen times in Revelation 1–3, a section that deals with the historical church of the first century toward the end of the apostle John's life (ca. A.D. 95). However, “church” is then used only once more in the twenty-two chapter book and that at the very end (22:16) when John returns to addressing the first-century church. Most interesting is the fact that nowhere during the period of Daniel's seventieth week is the term for “church” used for believers on earth (cf. Rev. 4–19).

It is remarkable and totally unexpected that John would shift from detailed instructions for the church to absolute silence about the church in the subsequent 13 chapters if, in fact, the church continued into the tribulation. If the church will experience the tribulation of Daniel's seventieth week, then surely the most detailed study of tribulation events would include an account of the church's role. But it does not! The only timing of the rapture that would account for this frequent mention of “church” in Revelation 1–3 and total absence of the “church” on earth until Revelation 22:16 is a pretribulation rapture which will relocate the church from earth to heaven prior to Daniel's seventieth week.

Looking at this observation from another perspective, it is also true that nowhere in Scripture is it taught that the church and Israel would coexist as the centers for God's redemptive message and yet remain mutually exclusive.

Today, the church universal is God's human channel of redemptive truth. Revelation gives certain indications that the Jewish remnant will be God's human instrument during Daniel's seventieth week. The unbiased reader would certainly be impressed by the abrupt shift from the “church” in Revelation 2–3, to the 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes in Revelation 7 and 14. He would certainly ask, “Why?”

Further, because Revelation 12 is a mini-synopsis of the entire tribulation period and because the woman who gave birth to the male child (Rev 12:1-13) is Israel, then logically and topically the Tribulation period focuses on the nation of Israel and not the church. How could this be? Because a pretribulation rapture has removed the “church” from the earth prior to Daniel's seventieth week.

The Rapture Is Rendered Inconsequential if It Is Posttributional

First, if God miraculously preserves the church through the tribulation, why have a rapture? If it is to avoid the wrath of God at Armageddon, then why would God not continue to protect the saints on earth (as is postulated by posttribulationism) just as He protected Israel (see Exod 8:22; 9:4, 26; 10:23; 11:7) from His wrath poured out upon Pharaoh and Egypt. Further, if the purpose of the rapture is for living saints to avoid Armageddon, why also resurrect the saints who are already immune at the same time?

Second, if the rapture will take place in connection with the Lord's posttribulation coming, the subsequent separation of the sheep from the goats (see

Matt. 25:31ff.) will be redundant. Separation will have taken place in the very act of translation.

Third, if all tribulation believers are raptured and glorified just prior to the inauguration of the millennial Kingdom, who then will populate and propagate the Kingdom? The Scriptures indicate that the living unbelievers will be judged at the end of the tribulation and removed from the earth (see Matt 13:41-42; 25:41). Yet, they also teach that children will be born to believers during the millennium and that these children will be capable of sin (see Isa 65:20; Rev 20:7-10). This will not be possible if all believers on earth have been glorified through a posttribulational rapture.

Fourth, the posttribulational paradigm of the church being raptured and then immediately brought back to earth leaves no time for the Bema, i.e., the Judgment Seat of Christ to occur (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10), nor for the Marriage Supper (Rev 19:6-10). Thus, it can be concluded that a posttribulational time of the rapture makes no logical sense, is incongruous with the sheep-goat nation judgment, and, in fact, eliminates two critical end-time events. A pretribulational rapture avoids all of these insurmountable difficulties.

The Epistles Contain No Preparatory Warnings of an Impending Tribulation for Church-Age Believers

God's instructions to the church through the epistles contain a variety of warnings, but never do they warn believers to prepare for entering and enduring the tribulation of Daniel's seventieth week.

They warn vigorously about coming error and false prophets (see Acts 20:29-30; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1-3; Jude 4). They warn against ungodly living (see Eph 4:25-5:7; 1 Thess 4:3-8; Heb 12:1). They even admonish believers to endure in the midst of present tribulation (see 1 Thess 2:13-14; 2 Thess 1:4; all of 1 Peter). However, there is absolute silence on preparing the church for any kind of tribulation like that found in Revelation 6-18.

It is incongruous, then, that the Scriptures would be silent about such a traumatic change for the church. If any time of the rapture other than pretribulational were true, one would expect the epistles to teach the fact of the church in the tribulation, the purpose of the church in the tribulation, and the conduct of the church in the tribulation. However, there is no teaching whatsoever. Only a pretribulational rapture satisfactorily explains such obvious silence.

First Thess 4:13-18 Demands a Pretribulational Rapture

For discussion's sake, suppose hypothetically that some other rapture timing besides pretribulational is true. What would one expect to find in 1 Thessalonians 4? How does this compare with what is actually observed?

First, one would expect the Thessalonians to be joyous over the fact that loved ones are home with the Lord and will not have to endure the horrors of the tribulation. But the Thessalonians are actually grieving because they fear their loved ones have missed the rapture. Only a pretribulational rapture accounts for this grief.

Second, one would expect the Thessalonians to be grieving over their own impending trial rather than grieving over loved ones. Furthermore, they would be inquisitive about their own future doom. But the Thessalonians have no fears or questions about the coming tribulation.

Third, one would expect Paul, even in the absence of interest or questions by the Thessalonians, to have provided instructions and exhortation for such a supreme test, which would make their present tribulation seem microscopic in comparison. But not one indication of any impending tribulation of this kind appears in the text.

First Thessalonians 4 fits only the model of a pretribulational rapture. It is incompatible with any other time for the rapture.

John 14:1-3 Parallels 1 Thess 4:13-18

John 14:1-3 refers to Christ's coming again. It is not a promise to all believers that they shall go to Him at death. It does refer to the rapture of the church. Note the close parallel between the promises of John 14:1-3 and 1 Thess 4:13-18. First, the promise of a presence with Christ: ". . . that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3) and ". . . thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17). Second, the promise of comfort: "Let not your heart be troubled . . ." (John 14:1) and "Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess 4:18).

Jesus instructed the disciples that He was going to His Father's house (heaven) to prepare a place for them. He promised them that He would return and receive them so that they could be with Him wherever He was.

The phrase "wherever I am," while implying continued presence in general, here means presence in heaven in particular. The Lord told the Pharisees in John 7:34, "Where I am you cannot come." He was not talking about His then-present abode on earth but rather His resurrected presence at the right hand of the Father. In John 14:3 "where I am" must mean "in heaven" or the intent of 14:1-3 would be wasted and worthless.

A posttribulational rapture demands that the saints meet Christ in the air and immediately descend to earth without experiencing what the Lord promised in John 14. Since John 14 refers to the rapture, only a pretribulational rapture satisfies the language of John 14:1-3 and allows raptured saints to dwell for a meaningful time with Christ in His Father's house.

The Nature of Events at Christ's Posttribulational Coming Differs from That of the Rapture

If one compares what happens at the rapture in 1 Thess 4:13-18 and 1 Cor 15:50-58 with what happens in the final events of Christ's second coming in Matthew 24-25, at least eight significant contrasts or differences are observable. These differences demand that the rapture occur at a time significantly different from that of the final event of Christ's second coming.

1. At the rapture, Christ comes in the air and returns to heaven (1 Thess 4:17),

but at the final event of the second coming, Christ comes to the earth to dwell and reign (Matt 25:31-32).

2. At the rapture, Christ gathers His own (1 Thess 4:16-17), but at the final event of the second coming, angels gather the elect (Matt 24:31).
3. At the rapture, Christ comes to reward (1 Thess 4:17), but at the final event of the second coming, Christ comes to judge (Matt 25:31-46).
4. At the rapture, resurrection is prominent (1 Thess 4:15-16), but at the final event of the second coming, resurrection is not mentioned.
5. At the rapture, believers depart the earth (1 Thess 4:15-17), but at the final event of the second coming, unbelievers are taken away from the earth (Matt 24:37-41).
6. At the rapture, unbelievers remain on earth, but at the final event of the second coming, believers remain on earth (Matt 25:34).
7. At the rapture, there is no mention of establishing Christ's Kingdom on earth, but at the final event of the second coming, Christ has come to set up His Kingdom on earth (Matt 25:31, 34).
8. At the rapture, believers will receive glorified bodies (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-57), but at the final event of the second coming, no one will receive glorified bodies.

Additionally, several of Christ's parables in Matthew 13 confirm differences between the rapture and the final event of Christ's second coming.

1. In the parable of the wheat and tares, the tares (unbelievers) are taken out from among the wheat (believers) at the climax of the second coming (Matt 13:30, 40), but believers are removed from among unbelievers at the rapture (1 Thess 4:15-17).
2. In the parable of the dragnet, the bad fish (unbelievers) are taken out from among the good fish (believers) at the culmination of Christ's second coming (Matt 13:48-50), but believers are removed from among unbelievers at the rapture (1 Thess 4:15-17).

Finally, the rapture is unmentioned in either of the most detailed second-coming texts—Matthew 24 and Revelation 19. This is to be expected in light of the observations above, because the pretribulational rapture will have occurred seven years earlier.

Rev 3:10 Promises That the Church Will Be Removed Prior to Daniel's Seventieth Week

The issue here is whether the phrase “keep you from the hour of testing” means “a continuing safe state outside of” or “safe emergence from within.”

The Meaning of Ἐκ (Ek)

The Greek preposition *ek* has the basic idea of emergence, but this is not true in every context. Two notable exceptions to the basic idea are 2 Cor 1:10 and 1 Thess 1:10. In the Corinthian passage, Paul rehearses his rescue from death by God. Now Paul did not emerge from a state of death but rather was rescued from that potential danger.

Even more convincing is 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Here Paul states that Jesus is rescuing believers out of the wrath to come. The idea is not emergence out of wrath, but rather protection from entrance into wrath.

Therefore, *ek* can be understood to mean either “a continuing state outside of” or “emergence from within.” Thus no rapture position can be dogmatic at this point. At best, all positions remain possible.

The Meaning of Τηρέω Ἐκ (Tēreō Ek)

It has been argued that if John had meant “to keep from,” he would have used *τηρέω ἀπό* (*tēreō apo*, cf. James 1:27). But it is more than equally true that if John had meant “protection within,” he would have used *tēreō* with *ἐν* (*en*), *εἰς* (*eis*), or *διὰ* (*dia*). The greater burden of proof lies with the mid- and post-tribulational positions since their solution of immunity within does not explain the use of *ek*.

First, *ek* is much closer to *apo* in meaning than it is to *en*, *eis*, or *dia*. The two frequently overlap, and in modern Greek *apo* is absorbing *ek*. When combined with *tēreō*, *ek* much more closely approximates *apo* than it does *en*, *eis* or *dia*.

Second, the phrase *tēreō en* is used three times in the NT (see Acts 12:5; 1 Pet 1:4; Jude 21). In each instance, it implies previous existence within with a view to continuation within. Now, if *tēreō en* means continued existence within, what does *tēreō ek* mean? Since they are anything but synonymous, it quite logically means to maintain an existence outside.

Tēreō Ek in John 17:15

John 17:15 is the only other passage in the NT where *tēreō ek* occurs. This word combination does not occur in the Septuagint. It is assumed that whatever the phrase means here, it also means the same in Rev 3:10.

If *tēreō ek* means “previous existence within,” it contradicts 1 John 5:19 which states that believers are of God and unbelievers are in the evil one. Now if 1 John 5:19 implies that believers are not in the power of the evil one, John 17:15 could not possibly imply that they are in the power of Satan and needing protection. John 17:15 records the Lord’s petition to keep them outside of the evil one.

Since John 17:15 means to keep outside of the evil one, the parallel thought in Rev 3:10 is to keep the church outside of the hour of testing. Therefore, only a pretribulational rapture would fulfill the promise.

The Martyrs in Rev 6:9-11 and 7:14

If Rev 3:10 means immunity or protection within as other positions insist, several contradictions result. First, if protection in Rev 3:10 is limited to protection from God’s wrath only and not Satan’s wrath also, then Rev 3:10 denies the Lord’s request in John 17:15.

Second, if it is argued that Rev 3:10 means total immunity, then of what worth is the promise in light of Rev 6:9-11 and 7:14 where martyrs abound? The wholesale martyrdom of saints during the tribulation demands that the promise to the Philadelphian church be interpreted as “keeping out of” the hour of testing, not “keeping within.”

Summary

1. *Ek* can mean “emergence from within,” or it can mean “a continued state outside.”
2. *Tēreō en* is used in Acts 12:5, 1 Pet 1:4, and Jude 21, and implies “previous and continued existence within.” Therefore *tēreō ek* logically must be understood as “continued existence outside.”
3. If the immunity of saints to wrath through the tribulation was intended to teach a posttribulational rapture, then John would have used *tēreō en, eis,* or *dia* in Rev 3:10.
4. Consistent with the previous observation, *tēreō ek* meaning “to keep within” in John 17:15 would contradict 1 John 5:19 if, in fact, it implied “previous existence within.”
5. If *tēreō ek* in Rev 3:10 implies “previous existence within,” it contradicts the prayer in John 17:15 in limiting immunity to God’s wrath. Or its alleged promise of total immunity is rendered null and void by the slaughter of saints in Rev 6:9-11 and 7:14.
6. Only the interpretation of *tēreō ek* in Rev 3:10 which understands that the Philadelphian church will not enter the tribulation, that is, they will be kept out or guarded from entering, satisfies a consistent exegesis of the phrase. This finding is in perfect harmony only with a pretribulational understanding of the rapture.

Answers to Difficult Questions

1. *Since the phrase “to meet the Lord” in 1 Thess 4:17 (ἀπαντᾷω [apantaō] and ἀπάντησις [apantēsis]) can refer to a friendly city going out to meet the visiting king and escorting him back to the city, does not this phrase point decidedly to a posttribulational rapture?*

First, this Greek verb/noun can refer to either meeting within a city (Mark 14:13; Luke 17:12) or going out of the city to meet and return back (Matt 25:6; Acts

28:15). So the use of this particular word is not at all decisive. Second, remember that Christ is coming to a hostile people in general who will eventually fight against him at Armageddon. So, the pretribulation rapture best pictures the king rescuing, by a rapture, His faithful followers who are trapped in a hostile world and who will later accompany Him when He returns to conquer His enemies and set up His Kingdom (cf. Rev 19:11-16).

2. *Why does Paul write in 1 Thess 5:6 for believers to be alert to “the day of the Lord” if according to pretribulationism they would not be in it?*

Paul exhorts believers in 1 Thess 5:6 to be alert and living godly in a DOL context just as Peter does in 2 Pet 3:14-15 where the DOL experience is clearly at the end of the millennium when the old heavens and earth will be destroyed and replaced with the new. In both cases, they are exhortations to present godly living for true believers in the light of God’s future judgment on unbelievers. These texts really are not determining factors for any positions on the time of the rapture.

3. *Does not Matt 24:37-42, where people are taken out of the world, teach a posttribulation rapture?*

In fact, Matt 24:37-42 teaches just the opposite. First, the historical illustration of Noah (vv. 37-39) teaches that Noah and his family were left alive while the whole world was taken away in death and judgment. This is exactly the sequence to be expected at Christ’s second coming as taught in the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt 13:24-43), the parable of the dragnet (Matt 13:47-50), and the sheep-goat nation judgment (Matt 25:31-46). In all of these cases, at the final event in Christ’s second coming, unbelievers are taken away in judgment and righteous believers remain. No, this passage does not teach about the rapture.

4. *Does not a pretribulation rapture result in two second comings of Christ while Scripture teaches only one second coming?*

Not at all. No matter what rapture position one holds, Christ’s second coming is one event which occurs in two parts—Christ coming in the air to rapture the church and Christ coming to earth to conquer, judge, and set up His kingdom.

5. *When Jeremiah writes (30:7), “And it is the time of Jacob’s distress, but he will be saved from it,” is this not the same kind of language used in Rev 3:10 (kept from) and would not Rev 3:10 then point to a posttribulation rapture?*

The Septuagint (37:7, LXX reference) translates the Hebrew text of Jeremiah

(30:7, Hebrew and English reference) with the verb and preposition combination σῶζω ἀπό (sōzō apo) in regard to Israel. They will actually be saved through the judgment and emerge out of it as the people of God over whom Christ will reign as promised to David (2 Sam 7:8-17) and prophesied by Ezekiel (37:11-28). Because sōzō apo means “protected in the midst of,” this has no bearing on the meaning of a different verb and preposition used in Rev 3:10 (ἔρεθō ek). See the earlier discussion on the actual verb/preposition combination in Rev 3:10. Finally, there is no necessary equation of the outcome to Israel and God’s plan for the church.

6. *If pretribulationism is true, why is there no mention of the “church” in heaven in Revelation 4–19?*

It is true that the word for “church” (ἐκκλησία, *ekklesia*) is not used of the church in heaven in Revelation 4–19. However, that does not mean the church is invisible. There are at least two distinct appearances of the church in heaven. First, the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4–5 symbolize the church. Second, the phrase “you saints and apostles and prophets” in Rev 18:20 refers clearly to the church in heaven. So, what rapture scenario best accounts for the church being in heaven in these texts at this time? A pretribulational rapture.

7. *Why is Revelation addressed to the church, if the church will not experience the tribulation of Revelation 6–19 due to a pretribulational rapture?*

God frequently warned Israel in the OT of impending judgment, even though the generation who received the prophecy would not experience it. As mentioned in the previous answer to Question 2, both Paul (1 Thess 5:6) and Peter (2 Pet 3:14-15) used a future judgment, which the people to whom they wrote would not experience, to exhort God’s people to present godly living. The exact same pattern was followed by John in Revelation. The church was alerted to God’s future judgment of sin on earth as a basis for the church to teach pure doctrine and live holy lives (Revelation 2–3).

8. *If the Day of the Lord occurs at the end of Daniel’s seventieth week, does not the chronological sequence of 1 Thessalonian 4 and 1 Thessalonian 5 teach a posttribulational rapture?*

First, regardless of whether the DOL begins at the beginning or the end of Daniel’s seventieth week, this point does not necessarily determine the time of the rapture. Second, the grammar of 1 Thess 5:1 argues against a close chronological sequence with 1 Thess 4:13-18 by the use of περὶ δέ (*peri de*, 18 times in the NT). In all but four cases an obvious change in time or topic is implied (see Matt 22:31; 24:36; Mark 12:26; 13:32). This prepositional phrase is used by Paul eight times. Every other Pauline use indicates a change in topic. Therefore, it is expected that Paul’s use of *peri de* in 1 Thess 5:1 also indicates

a change in topic and time. This is consistent with his earlier use of *peri de* in this epistle (cf. 4:9).

In 1 Thess 4:13-18, Paul has answered the question concerning the experience of dead loved ones when the rapture comes. But in 5:1 and the following verses, Paul shifts to the day of the Lord and the subsequent judgment upon unbelievers. This is a totally different topic than the rapture and an event that will occur at a different time than the rapture. If 1 Thess 4:13-5:11 is to be taken as one unit of thought, as some have suggested, then Paul's use of *peri de* means nothing. However, if *peri de* is to be explained, it is best interpreted as a major shift in thought within the broad topic of eschatology; only a pretribulational rapture would account for this.

9. *Is there any relationship between the rapture trumpet of 1 Thess 4:17/1 Cor 15:52 and the trumpet of Joel 2:1, or the trumpet of Matthew 24:31, or the trumpet of Revelation 11:15? If so, does this not contradict a pretribulational rapture?*

A careful study of the almost one hundred uses of "trumpet/trumpets" in the OT will quickly advise the student of Scripture not to equate the trumpets in any two texts hastily, without a great deal of corroborating contextual evidence. For example, there is the trumpet used for warning (Jer 6:1), the trumpet used for worship/praise (2 Chr 20:28; Pss 81:3; 150:3; Isa 27:3), the trumpet used for victory (1 Sam 13:3), the trumpet used for recall (2 Sam 2:28; 18:16), the trumpet used for rejoicing (2 Sam 6:15), the trumpet used for announcements (2 Sam 20:1; 1 Kgs 1:34; 2 Kgs 9:13), and the trumpet for dispersement (2 Sam 20:22) to name a few.

After looking at the texts in question, it appears that each trumpet is used for a purpose that is unique and different from the other three. The trumpet of Joel 2:1 is a trumpet of warning that the DOL is near (cf. Jer 6:1). The trumpet of 1 Thess 4:17/1 Cor 15:52 is a trumpet which announces the approaching king (cf. Ps 47:5) so that people may go out to greet Him. The trumpet of Matt 24:31 is a trumpet call to assembly (cf. Exod 19:16; Neh 4:20; Joel 2:15). The trumpet of Rev 11:15 is the seventh in a series of seven and is a trumpet that announces victory (cf. 1 Sam 13:3). There is no compelling reason to equate the rapture trumpet with any of these other three trumpets. Therefore, these texts cannot be used to determine the time of the rapture.

10. *Does not the promise of deliverance for church saints in 2 Thess 1:6-10, at the time when Jesus returns with His angels to judge the world, point to a later rapture time than pretribulational?*

Paul is not writing a detailed, chronological, or even precise prophetic treatise here, but rather is wanting to give the Thessalonians hope that, in the end, God's righteousness will prevail. Like OT prophets (cf. Isa 61:1-2; 2 Pet 1:10-11) Paul has compressed the details so that the range of time is not apparent, nor are all

of the details. The apostle is plainly assuring the Thessalonians that there will certainly be a coming day of retribution for their persecutors. This text really has no bearing on determining the time of the rapture.

11. Does not Rev 14:14 teach a midtribulational rapture?

While the language certainly refers to Christ, the context is of judgment, similar to Rev 19:11-16. The context of the rapture is one of blessing for the saints. Earlier in this article, eight major differences/contrasts between the rapture and the last event of Christ's second coming were discussed. No, Revelation 14:14 does not refer to a midtribulational rapture.

12. Is not a midtribulational view actually a pretribulational view since the "great tribulation" (Matt 24:21; Rev 7:14) does not begin until the middle of Daniel's seventieth week?

To say that real "tribulation" does not begin until the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week is to make an arbitrary delineation, not to mention contradicting the testimony of at least the first four seals of Rev 6:1-8, which picture the tribulation on earth that will be triggered by Christ from heaven. These seals are described as "birthpangs" and "tribulation" in Matt 24:8-9. Though the ultimate intensity of tribulation will come in the final half of Daniel's seventieth week, the entire period is marked by tribulation. Thus, the only true pretribulational position is the one that places the rapture prior to Daniel's seventieth week.

13. If the church partakes of the first resurrection and if the first resurrection is described in Revelation 20:4, does this not point to a posttribulational resurrection/rapture?

The use of the phrase "first resurrection" in Rev 20:5-6 refers specifically to the posttribulational resurrection of those who will believe in Christ during Daniel's seventieth week, as made clear by the language of Rev 20:4. However, nothing in this phrase limits the "first resurrection" only to this group of people or to this time. The "first resurrection," which is contrasted with the "second death" (Rev 20:6, 14; 21:8)—i.e., the resurrection of all unbelievers—is made up of several additional categories of people who will be resurrected at various times. These include: (1) Christ the first fruits (1 Cor 15:23), (2) church saints (1 Cor 15:23, 50-58) at the rapture, and (3) OT saints (Ezek 37:12-14; Dan 12:2) at the end of Daniel's seventieth week. Therefore, this text does not point to a posttribulational resurrection/rapture.