

END TIMES
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SPOILER ALERT!

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WE PRAY
FOR
PEACE!

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WHY CHRISTIANS DISAGREE ABOUT RAPTURE TIMELINES

The confusing biblical lingo surrounding the Rapture in Scripture is one of the biggest reasons we find disagreement on when this event takes place.

The “Second Coming” can be used in the Bible to describe the specific Second Coming of Jesus at the end of the Tribulation, but it can also be used when combining the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming. This naturally brings some difficulty when deciphering which event is being addressed at any given spot in the text.

To help make sense of this, think of the Second Coming as the “Big Reveal.” The Rapture and the Tribulation are the preliminary events leading up to Christ’s return. We could liken this to the events of childbirth. While the water breaking and contractions are each critical steps in childbirth, you wouldn’t refer to the water breaking as the childbirth, would you? Similarly, the contractions are not singled out as the childbirth itself. Rather, they make up key elements leading up to childbirth.

Think of the Rapture as the moment the water breaks in childbirth. It’s the first step that signals the Second Coming (birth) is imminent. The Tribulation is the labor pain leading up to delivery. We get confused because, for us as Christians, the Rapture looks like the most important thing because it happens to us. Not so in biblical terms! The Rapture is just the beginning of childbirth. The big deal in Scripture is Jesus’ return.

Once you understand that, End Times Scripture becomes clearer!



7 REASONS FOR A PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE:

REASON #1: Clear passages stating Christians will not be here during the Tribulation

- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 “and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”
- Revelation 3:10 “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.” Both passages promise Christians they will be spared the coming wrath (Tribulation).

REASON #2: The absence of the church during the Tribulation While the first three chapters of Revelation deal exclusively with the church, mentioning “church” or “churches” 19 times, we find in Revelation 4:1-2, John declares he was “caught up into Heaven” to see what would happen next.

Why was John taken to Heaven? In chapters one through three, John is already receiving his revelation. Why is he caught up into Heaven to see what would be next? With the next event being the Tribulation, we can see John being caught up into heaven as symbolic of Christians being caught up in the Rapture before the Tribulation.



REASON #3: The Holy Spirit removed from the world before Antichrist can be revealed

- 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 “For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.”

Theologians are almost unanimous in their agreement that the “man of lawlessness” is the Antichrist and that the one holding him back is the Holy Spirit. Scripture states the Antichrist will only be revealed after the one who holds him back is taken out of the way. It is impossible for the Holy Spirit to be taken out of the world with Christians still here. Ephesians 1:13-14 clearly states that the Holy Spirit was given to Christians as a “deposit” guaranteeing our inheritance in Heaven. Until we get to heaven, we will always have the Spirit.

- Ephesians 1:13-14 – “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

The deposit can’t be removed until we are in Heaven. Therefore, it is impossible for the Holy Spirit to be absent during the Tribulation while the Church is still here.

REASON #4: Based on the Scripture’s descriptions of the Rapture and the Second Coming, both could not occur simultaneously (as in the Post-Tribulation view)

The second most popular view from theologians regarding the timing of the Rapture is at the end of the Tribulation. Many believe the Rapture (the catching away of Christians) and Jesus’ Second Coming in judgement of the world are tied together in the same event. In their view, Christians would be caught up from the earth, meet Jesus in the clouds, and then immediately U-turn to return with Christ in the Second Coming. Thus, the Rapture and Second Coming are, in essence, a singular event.

This is problematic because Scripture describes the Rapture and Second Coming differently.

When describing the Rapture, Scripture says it will happen like a thief sneaking into a home in the night.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:2 “for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” In contrast, and to the exclusion of the Rapture, the Bible describes Jesus’ Second Coming by saying every eye will see Him.
- Revelation 1:7 “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”
- Matthew 24:25-27 “See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” If you attempt to combine the Rapture with the Second Coming, Scripture would be contradicting itself! A good thief doesn’t reveal himself to everyone!



REASON #5: If the Rapture does not happen before the Tribulation, there isn't a clear answer on who populates the Millennium. (You'll want to work through this one slowly and put on your thinking caps).

Let's understand some key context before we dive into this point:

At the Rapture: The bodies of Christians are changed, and we will neither marry nor have children (1 Corinthians 15:52 and Matthew 22:29-30).

At the Millennium (1000-year reign of Jesus): Humans are living on Earth, getting married, having kids, holding jobs, and under the reign of Jesus.

At the Second Coming: Antichrist and the False Prophet will be killed and thrown into the lake of fire. Everyone who followed them will be killed as well (Revelation 19:19-21).

If the Rapture happens simultaneously with the Second Coming, based on those key descriptions above, there would be no one left to experience the life we read about during the 1000-year reign. Who would be marrying and having children if the raptured bodies are transformed and the non-believers are killed? There isn't anyone left... The only plausible answer is that the Rapture happened at the beginning of the Tribulation. Christians are gone, but during the Tribulation there are those who trust in God. We know this is true because Scripture says many Tribulation believers will be martyred for their faith.

Revelation 7:13-14 "Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?' I answered, 'Sir, you know.' And he said: These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

So, there are new believers during the Tribulation, "Tribulation Believers." When Jesus returns in His Second Coming and defeats Satan, Antichrist, and all non-believers, these Christians will be left alive. They will go on to live in the Millennium. But, the only possible way for this scenario to work is the Rapture has to happen before the Tribulation, a separate event from the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation.

REASON #6: Jesus said the end times would be like the days of Noah and Lot, and this points to being spared from the coming tribulation.

- Luke 17:26-30 “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”

First, let's unpack the time of Noah. Many “Post Tribbers” point to this passage as confirming their view. Since Noah went through the flood, they assert that this means Christians will also go through the Tribulation. This interpretation is actually a miss. I agree the flood is a picture of the Tribulation but there is an incredible event preceding the flood linked together in the original story that we often omit in the telling of the account of Noah. In the chapter preceding the flood, (remember originally there were no chapter divisions) we are introduced to the genealogy of all mankind. It's an interesting placement. Why a genealogy just before the flood? The answer is in verses 22-24.

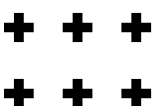
- Genesis 5:22-24 “After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”

Listen to that description. Enoch walked with God, then was no more, because God took him away! So, Moses' great grandfather was “raptured” just before the story of Noah and the Tribulation. As it was in the time of Noah, so shall it be at the end of days.

Now we turn to the times of Lot. Again, God is planning on bringing judgement. In the story of Lot, God sends angels to remove Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah before he brings judgement. As a matter of fact, when Lot hesitates to leave, the angel speaks something important to him in Genesis 19.

Genesis 19:21-22 “He said to him, ‘Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.’ (That is why the town was called Zoar.)”

In both stories, someone is removed and then comes judgement. Jesus said just like it was with Noah and Lot, so shall it be at the end.



REASON #7 – Daniel’s prophecy for Israel, not the church, is still to come.

In Daniel 9:20-27, Daniel prophesied about 69 weeks of years (or 483 years) then one more week of years (7 years) in Israel’s future. Not the church’s future, Israel’s future. The prophecy revealed 69 weeks of years from the time Israel would go into captivity until the “anointed one” would be put to death. Historically, we know from the time Israel is taken into captivity by the Babylonians till the death of Jesus “The Anointed One” was exactly 483 years, as in the prophecy. That leaves one more week of years, the 70th week, unfulfilled. To this day, Israel has not experienced the 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy. Listen to the description of that final week of years.

Daniel 9:26b-27 “The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

This is a description of Antichrist and the Tribulation. Here is the important thing to remember: Daniel’s prophecy was for Israel alone, not the church. The first 69 weeks were fulfilled with Israel’s captivity and culminated with the death of Jesus on the cross. The 70th week will be fulfilled with the Tribulation’s seven years (week of years). It’s Israel’s last chance to turn to God. The church will not be any more involved in the 70th week than we were in the original 69. The church will already be gone, and God will be having a final conversation, for 7 years, with Israel about returning to Him.

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