A Case for the PreTribulational Rapture PPT

Jordan P Ballard

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A Case for the Pretribulational Rapture

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“I used to tell students that I would rather they come to some conclusion concerning what the Bible teachers about the future, even if it were not premillennialism, rather than be eschatological agnostics. An eschatological agnostic is one who says the biblical teaching about the future is unknown and unknowable and therefore a subject to be avoided.”
Why Study Eschatology?

- Stimulates believers to realize the urgency of evangelizing the lost.
- Increases their vision for worldwide missions
- Spurs them toward holy living in an increasingly unholy end-times world
- Left Behind series has reached tens of thousands of readers for Christ – more than LaHaye’s 60 years in ministry
Bad Practices (Mayhue)

- Putting non-biblical, historical documents on an equal par with Scripture to gain a greater sense of authority for one’s conclusion or even to refute a biblical presentation
- Reading current events into the Scripture to prove one’s point
- Inserting one’s predetermined position, without first proving it, into a Scripture passage to gain apparent biblical support
- Ad hominem arguments to discredit a view
Bad Practices (Mayhue)

- Straw men attacks
- Employing selective data, avoiding data that weakens
- 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.
Good Practices

- Recognize degrees of certainty in eschatological matters
- Be honest and humble. Admit stronger and weaker arguments.
- Caution against superimposing a system on Scripture
- Look for areas of agreement and preserve Christian unity.
- Studying vs. obsessing – exalting one doctrine above all others
Myths and Misconceptions
Myths and Misconceptions

- The Rapture is not taught in Scripture.
- The term “Rapture” comes from the Latin translation of *harpazo* which is found in 1 Thess 4:16.
- The concept is biblical. The question is when it will take place.
Myths and Misconceptions

- The Rapture was made up in the 19th century by J. N. Darby.

- “We can find no trace of pretribulationism in the early Church; and no modern pretribulationist has successfully proved that this particular doctrine was held by any of the Church fathers or students of the Word before the nineteenth century.” ~ G. E. Ladd

- John Bray’s wager
Myths and Misconceptions

- The Rapture was made up in the 19th century by J. N. Darby.
  - Fallacy of chronological snobbery: if it’s late in origin, it’s untrue
  - Genetic fallacy: discounts truth based on its origin
Myths and Misconceptions

- Darby did not adopt the Rapture doctrine from Margaret MacDonald
  - No documented basis for connection to MacDonald
  - MacDonald’s utterance is posttribulational/historicist
  - Only spiritually sensitive Christians would be raptured
  - Darby had already developed his system by then
Myths and Misconceptions

- The Rapture in ante-Nicene Fathers
  - Early Christian writers were predominantly chiliasts (premillennial).
  - They also thought that the Church would go through the Tribulation.
  - Did not have a systematic eschatology (Crutchfield)
  - “imminent posttribulationism” or “imminent intratribulationism”
  - Imminence important for pretribulationism
Pseudo-Ephraem (4th-6th century)

Sermon titled “On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World”: “All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.”

In this sermon, Pseudo-Ephraem develops an elaborate biblical eschatology, including a distinction between the rapture and the second coming of Christ. It describes the imminent rapture, followed by a three-and-one-half-year-long Great Tribulation under the rule of Antichrist, followed by the coming of Christ, the defeat of Antichrist, and the eternal state. His view includes a parenthesis between the fulfillment of Daniel’s sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks (Daniel 9:24-27). Pseudo-Ephraem describes the rapture as preceding the Tribulation and “imminent or overhanging.” ~Ice/Demy
The Rapture in Church History

- Codex Amiatinus (ca. 690-716)
  - Title to Psalm 22 (Psalm 23 in Vulgate): “Psalm of David, the voice of the Church after being raptured.”
  - Latin *post raptismum*
  - Not carried over from Jerome
  - Not conclusive, but interesting
The Rapture in Church History

- Brother Dolcino (d. 1307)
  - “The Antichrist was coming into this world within the bounds of the said three and a half years; and after he had come, then he [Dolcino] and his followers would be transferred into Paradise, in which are Enoch and Elijah. And in this way they will be preserved unharmed from the persecution of Antichrist.”
  - Latin *transferrentur* – “translation”
  - Similar to modern dispensationalism (Gumerlock)
The Rapture in Church History

- Increase Mather (1693-1723)
  - Saints would “be caught up into the air” before the Tribulation

- Morgan Edwards (1722-1795)
  - “The distance between the first and second resurrection will be somewhat more than a thousand years…because the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ’s ‘appearing in the air’ (I Thessalonians 4:17).”
The Rapture in Church History

- French Reformer Peter Jurieu
  - *Approaching Deliverance of the Church* (1687) taught that Christ would come in the air to rapture the saints and return to heaven before the battle of Armageddon. He spoke of a secret rapture prior to His coming in glory and judgment at Armageddon.

- Philip Doddridge’s (1738) and John Gill’s (1748)
  - Both use the term *rapture* and speak of it as imminent. It is clear that these men believed that this coming will precede Christ’s descent to the earth and the time of judgment. The purpose was to preserve believers from the time of judgment.

- James Macknight (1763) and Thomas Scott (1792)
  - Taught that the righteous will be carried to heaven, where they will be secure until the time of judgment is over.
Myths and Misconceptions

- The Rapture was not taught by Jesus.
  - See the discussion of John 14:3 below.
  - Even if Jesus did not teach about the Rapture, this would not mean that the doctrine is not found in the epistles.
    - Jesus did not teach the length of the Millennium (Rev 20).
    - Jesus did not teach about the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments.
Myths and Misconceptions

- The Rapture leads to sensationalism and date-setting
  - Hal Lindsey and “this generation” (1948-1988)
  - Left Behind series as fiction
  - Pretribulationists sometime lumped together with cults and false prophets
Myths and Misconceptions

- The Rapture is pessimistic and “pseudoeschatology.”
- This has no effect on the truth of the doctrine (ad hominem).
- The “blessed hope” of believers is escape from the time of wrath.
1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.
The Rapture in the NT

- *harpazo*
  - used 14 times in the NT
  - basic meaning: “to remove suddenly or snatch away”
  - stealing/plundering (Matt 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 10:12, 28, 29)
  - seize (John 6:15; Acts 23:10; Jude 23)
  - catch up/snatch away (Acts 8:39; 2 Cor 12:2, 4; 1 Thess 4:17; Rev 12:5)
  - Translated in Latin as *rapere* or *raptus*
  - Perfect word for Rapture concept, but no timing inherent in word
apantesis

Used in the LXX for God’s meetings with Abraham (Gen 14:17), with the Israelites at Sinai (Exod 19:17), and with David (2 Sam 19:16).

The term “was frequently used in secular Greek as a technical term for the formal reception of a visiting dignitary, in which a delegation of citizens or city officials would go out to meet a guest on his way to the city and escort him back into town with appropriate pomp and circumstance” (cf. Matt 25:6; Acts 28:15).
The Rapture in the NT

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  - Nothing inherent in the word itself to require this meaning
  - Could refer to a meeting within the city (Mark 14:13; Luke 17:12)
  - Christ returning to a hostile world, not to a welcome party
1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
The Rapture in the NT

- A “mystery” previously unrevealed
  - Paul’s other uses of “mystery” (Cf. Rom 11:25; 16:25; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26; 2:2; 4:3; 1 Tim 3:16)
  - General resurrection revealed in OT (Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19; John 5:29; 11:24)

- Sleep = death

- We will all (deceased and living believers) be changed (cf. 1 Thess 4:16-17)

- Momentary translation – “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye”

- “Last trumpet”
John 14:1-3

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
The Rapture in the NT

- John 14:1-3
  - Jesus going to prepare a place
  - Jesus coming again to receive “you all” to Himself
  - No NT teaching about personal visitation at death
  - Jesus taking believers to be where He is (at the Father’s house)
The Rapture in the NT

Similarities to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- Troubled (14:1) Grieve (4:13)
- Believe (14:1) Believe (4:14)
- God, Me (14:1) Jesus, God (4:14)
- Told you (14:2) Say to you (4:15)
- Come again (14:3) Coming of the Lord (4:15)
- Receive you (14:3) Caught up (4:17)
- To Myself (14:3) To meet the Lord (4:17)
- Where I am…you may be (14:3) Always with the Lord (4:17)
Dissimilarities to Second Coming

- Jesus gathers believers Himself (John 14:3); angels gather the elect at the Second Coming (Matt 24:31; cf. 13:39).
- Jesus will take believers to His Father’s house here (John 14:2), but at the return, believers will stay on earth (Matt 25:34).
The Rapture in the NT

- Revelation
  - All views use Revelation to support their viewpoints on the Rapture (e.g., Three Views on the Rapture books).
  - Svigel - “One must ask where the Rapture is found in the Revelation before one asks the question of when the Rapture is said to take place.”
  - Proposals: Rev 3:10-11; 4:1-2; 4:4 and 5:9-10; 6:2; 7:9-17; 11:3-12; 11:15-19; 12:5; 14:14-16; and 20:4
The Rapture in the NT

- **Revelation 4:2**  
  “Come up here” (cf. 11:12)

- **Revelation 4:4**  
  24 elders = church
  - “elder” never used for angels
  - OT saints resurrect later (Dan 12:1-3; Rev 20:4-6)
  - Seated on thrones (cf. Rev 3:21)
  - Dressed in white (cf. Rev 3:4-5, 18)
  - Wearing crowns (Rev 2:10; 3:11; but cf. 14:14)
Revelation 13:6 - “Heaven-dwellers”

“He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.”

- Contrast to the earth-dwellers (Rev 12:12; 13:8, 14)
- Greek verb and noun imply corporeality
- John 1:14; 2 Cor 5:1, 4
- Never used of spirits
Revelation 3:10

“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. 8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 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 upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.”
The Rapture in the NT

 Revelation 3:10: Removal or Emergence?

- *tereo ek*
  - John 17:5: My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you **protect** them **from** the evil one.
  - *tereo en* in NT (Acts 12:5; 1 Pet 1:4; Jude 21) = keep within

- If emergence, then why the martyrs in Revelation 6-11; 7:14?

- “hour of trial that is **about** to come upon the whole world”
The Best PreTrib Arguments
The Best PreTrib Arguments

Thesis Statement:

- Differences in Rapture passages and Second Coming passages
- Preserves the doctrine of imminence
- The church and the Tribulation
- Populating the Millennium
Hermeneutics

- High view of Scripture (predictive prophecy)
- Scripture fits together
- **Consistent**, literal hermeneutics
  - Church is not Israel
  - Cannot change the rules where you like
  - Still recognize figures of speech
  - Precision in interpretation
The Best PreTrib Arguments

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Rapture vs. Second Coming

- **Rapture passages**

- **Second-Coming passages**
Rapture vs. Glorious Appearing

- **R**: Christ comes in the air for His own (1 Thess 4:14-17)
  - **GA**: Christ comes with His own to earth (Rev 19:11-16)

- **R**: Rapture/translation of all Christians (1 Thess 4:16-17; 1 Cor 15:50-54)
  - **GA**: No one raptured

- **R**: Christians taken to the Father’s house (John 14:1-3)
  - **GA**: Resurrected saints do not see the Father’s house

- **R**: No judgment on earth
  - **GA**: Christ judges inhabitants of earth (Matt 25:31-46)
Rapture vs. Glorious Appearing

- **R:** Church taken to heaven (1 Thess 4:16-17)
  - **GA:** Christ sets up His kingdom on earth (Rev 19-20)

- **R:** Imminent – could happen any moment (Matt 24:42-44)
  - **GA:** Cannot occur for at least 7 years (Dan 9:26-27)

- **R:** No signs
  - **GA:** Many signs for Christ’s physical coming (Matt 24:3-36)

- **R:** For believers only (1 Thess 4:14)
  - **GA:** Affects all of humanity (Rev 1:7)
Rapture vs. Glorious Appearing

- **R**: A time of joy (Titus 2:13; 1 Thess 2:19-20; 4:18)
  - **GA**: Time of mourning (Rev 1:7)

- **R**: Before the “day of wrath” (Rev 3:10; 1 Thess 5:8-9)
  - **GA**: Immediately after Tribulation (Matt 24:29-36)

- **R**: No mention of Satan
  - **GA**: Satan bound in abyss for 1,000 years (Rev 19:20-20:3)

- **R**: The judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:11-15; 4:5; 2 Cor 5:10)
  - **GA**: No time or place for judgment seat of Christ
Rapture vs. Glorious Appearing

- R: Marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-10)
  - GA: His bride as an army descends with Him (Rev 19:11-14; Jude 14)

- R: Only His own see Him (1 Thess 4:14-17)
  - GA: Every eye will see Him (Rev 1:7)

- R: Tribulation begins (Matt 24:9-32; 2 Thess 2:3-13)
  - GA: 1000-year kingdom of Christ begins (Rev 19:11-15; 20:4-6)

- R: Christ gathers His own (1 Thess 4:16-17; John 14:3)
  - GA: Angels gather the elect (Matt 24:31)
Rapture vs. Glorious Appearing

- R: No mention of establishing Christ’s kingdom
  - GA: Kingdom established (Matt 25:31, 34)

- R: Believers taken out (1 Thess 4:16-17)
  - GA: Unbelievers (tares) taken out (Matt 13:30, 40; Luke 17:34-37)

- R: Believers removed from unbelievers (1 Thess 4:16-17)
  - GA: Unbelievers removed from believers in dragnet (Matt 13:48-50)
Rapture vs. Glorious Appearing

- How do we account for these differences?
- They either refer to the same event (?) or to two events.
The Best PreTrib Arguments

- Differences in Rapture passages and Second Coming passages
- Preserves the doctrine of imminence
- The church and the Tribulation
- Populating the Millennium
Imminence

- Imminence in the NT
  - Matt 24:44; Matt 25:13; Mark 13:32-33; Luke 12:35-48; 1 Cor 16:22; 1 Thess 5:2
    - Unexpected hour;
    - Be ready! Be alert!
    - Thief in the night
    - Maranatha!

- Warnings to churches in Revelation 2-3
Signs of His coming
- Preaching of the Gospel to all nations (Mark 13:10; Matt 24:14)
- Great tribulation (Mark 13:19-20)
- False prophets with signs and wonders (Mark 13:22; Matt 24:23-24)
- Signs in the heavens (Mark 13:24-26; Matt 24:29-30; Luke 21:25-27)
- The coming man of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:1-10; 1 John 2:18; Rev 13)
- The salvation of Israel (Rom 11:25-26)
Possible Solutions

- Christ cannot come at any time since the signs must precede His return.
  - Ignores the warnings to be watchful and imminence passages

- Christ could come at any moment for the church (pretrib)
  - Rapture & Day of the LORD imminent (1 Thess 1:10)

- All the signs have been fulfilled, so Christ could come at any moment (preterism)
  - The events of the first century do not correspond to the worldwide signs predicted.

- It is unlikely but possible that the signs already been fulfilled (Grudem).
The Best PreTrib Arguments

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Israel as the focus of the Tribulation
- Time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7)
- Daniel’s 70th week (Dan 9:24-27)
- Olivet Discourse focused on Israel, not the church
  - Abomination of desolation in the holy place (Matt 24:15)
  - Those in Judea flee to the mountains (Matt 24:16)
  - Sabbath observed (Matt 24:20)
The Church and the Tribulation

- Difference between Israel and Church in God’s plan
  - Church is a mystery not revealed in OT (Eph 3)
  - If no difference, then no need for Rapture
  - Problem with progressive dispensationalism

- Romans 9-11

- No clear NT verse where church = Israel
  - “Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.” ~ 1 Cor 10:32

- OT promises to Israel left hanging
The Church and the Tribulation

- Church not warned to look for signs in the NT epistles
  - False prophets (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1-3; Jude 4)
  - Ungodly living (Eph 4:25–5:7; 1 Thess 4:3-8; Heb 12:1)
  - Endure present tribulation (1 Thess 2:13-14; 2 Thess 1:4; 1; 2 Tim 3:12; Peter 4:12-19)
The Church and the Tribulation

- Church spared from 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.”
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:9
    - “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
The Church and the Tribulation

- Church spared from the Tribulation
  - 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 upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.
  - Luke 21:36
    - “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”
  - The “blessed hope” of the church is not Tribulation (Tit 2:12-13; cf. 1 John 3:2-3).
The Church and the Tribulation

- Church absent from Revelation 6-18
  - “church/churches” mentioned 17 times in Revelation 1-3
  - “churches” not mentioned again until 22:16
  - Admonition “unto the churches” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) absent in similar admonition in Revelation
    - Rev 13:9 “He who has an ear, let him hear.”
  - Church present in heaven (Rev 18:20)
    - “Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets!”
The Church and the Tribulation

- Time needed for Church events
  - Judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor 5:10)
  - Marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-8)
  - Greek *gune* in Eph 5:22-23
  - Church in heaven *before* return in 19:11-16
The Best PreTrib Arguments

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Populating the Millennium

- Mid-Trib, Prewrath, and Post-Trib leave no one behind

- Christ will slay the wicked and rapture believers, but there will be others who will submit to Christ during the Millennium (Grudem).
  - Separation of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25
    - “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”
  - Rapture would be redundant (two gatherings?)
  - Parable of the wheat and tares separation (Matt 13:40-43)
    - “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”
  - Only those who are born again can see the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5).
  - The wicked cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9).
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A Case for the PreTrib Rapture

Questions or comments?
A Case for the Pretribulational Rapture

Jordan P. Ballard
Objections to Pretribulationism

- Pretribulationism teaches two comings of Christ.

Response: All positions teach two parts to Christ’s second coming – the Rapture of believers in the air and His coming to judge the earth and establish His kingdom.
Objections to Pretribulationism

- Pretribulationism teaches two comings of Christ.

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
Matthew 24:37-42 teaches a posttribulational Rapture.

Response: The ones taken field/house go to judgment (Matt 24:40-41; Luke 17:37)

Wicked taken out of the world in Noah’s day (Matt 24:38-39)
What relevance does Revelation have to the church if the church will be removed from the Tribulation?

Response: The meaning of a text does not necessarily depend on the relevance it has to the original readers. Like the Old Testament Prophets, there are many great truths to learn from prophecies which do not directly refer to the church. Additionally, Tribulation saints will benefit from the futuristic teachings of Revelation and other NT prophecies.