

Introduction

- The tribulation is an intense period of judgment and suffering on the earth.
- Is this something Christians will be delivered from?
- Will Christ return in stages?

Pretribulational Rapture

- Christ will return at any moment to secretly rapture the church and bring resurrection
- Deceased believers are resurrected at the rapture
- This preserves the imminence of the return of Jesus.
- There are now three different physical resurrections.
- The return of Christ is split into two phases.
- The church is delivered from wrath, but Jewish believers must endure it.

PostTribulational Rapture

- This is the position that I hold.
- The church will endure the period of tribulation and judgment on the earth.
- It does not see a difference between the second coming and the rapture.
- The promise of deliverance from wrath always references the final judgment.

Prewrath/Midtribulational Rapture

- This is a mediating position between pre and post-tribulationalism.
- The primary idea is that the church experiences some of the tribulation but is taken away before the real wrath is poured out.
- Most see this as the church being raptured before the 3 and half year reign of the anti-Christ.
- Some see individuals raptured as they come to faith in order to be spared.
- I think this view tries to solve some of the issues but maintains the same weaknesses.

Early Church

- Irenaeus and the Sheperd of Hermas both believed the church would be assumed before the time of tribulation.
- However, it was not a blessing for all baptized believers.
- Only mature and faithful Christians would be delivered from the tribulation.
- Full pretribulationalism did not develop until the 19th century.

Matthew 24:36-44

- This comes in the Olivet discourse where Jesus talks about the end of the age.
- "As were the days of Noah" and "swept them all away"
- Here being taken is a negative thing and seems to be towards judgement.
- The elect do see to be present during the time of tribulation (v. 22, 31).

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- This is the key passage for most rapture advocates.
- The church is caught in the air with Christ and remains there.
- Contextually seems to be about our final hope after death.
- To me, this seems to describe the final coming of Christ in Revelation 19.
- It could refer to the rapture, but it is vague and ambiguous.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

- The context is the hope of the resurrection for believers.
- Verse 52 is the key reference to the return of Christ.
- Our hope as Christians is the sound of the trumpet when the dead will be raised.

Other Passages

- "Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10)
- "God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation" (1 Thess 5:9)
- "I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world" (Rev 3:10).
- "They shall be given to his hand for a time, times, and half a time" (Dan 7:25).

Different Options

- Christians can hold any of these positions and still be premillennial.
- The commonality is that the return of Christ is the hope for the world.
- The difference is whether or not Christians should be prepared to endure trial and tribulation or if they will be delivered from it.

Application

- All are valid options, but I want you to see the Bible is more ambiguous than we might like or imagine.
- We should endure trials here trusting that God can preserve us by either removing us from them entirely or preparing us in them.
- We should live in such a way that if Christ returned now we would not be ashamed.