

End Times, Part 1

10 Biblical Challenges to PreTribulation Rapture

How is it that pastors and scholars can scripturally support opposite views? This dichotomy is no more true than on the topic of end times, especially regarding the timing of the rapture. So, I've decided to try and solve this mystery and write down my discoveries in a three part essay, because frankly, for the hundreds of pastors, papers, sermons, debates, and interviews I've surveyed on this topic, no one has been a crazy heretic. Everyone has been sincere, smart and honest. How can this be? Well, this is my attempt to sort out the differences for my own future reference and to share with those who are interested.

For it seems to me, most people who have strong opinions about end times have not really studied it thoroughly, but rather, have simply repeated what they were taught, even pastors. Some teachers and pastors present well-reasoned arguments while skipping contrary scriptures. This should not be. In pursuing truth, we should not be afraid to look at these challenges with a humble spirit, while we hold our beliefs about end times loosely.

1) A Trigger Word

The first lesson is that the word “tribulation” itself is a trigger word. Whether Christian or not, most people have a fear of biblical tribulation due to what they’ve learned from movies, friends, and pastors. In every case, the imagery is scary and unknown; filled with horned beasts, plagues, terror and death, and a final judgement that is beyond frightening. However, the word “tribulation” itself is used to describe a **variety** of persecutions and trials, even what would be considered normal life. Paul even encouraged new disciples in Acts 14:22, saying “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” And Jesus says, “In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) In 1Thes 1:6 recent converts are described as “having received the word in much tribulation...” There’s no beast with horns or fire or huge hailstones from the sky. It’s just normal life as a Christian.

So, the word “tribulation” describes a variety of hardships and suffering.

In fact, the Greek word for tribulation is “thlipsis” and it’s translated 20 times as “tribulation.” But it’s also translated 20 times as “affliction.” (NASB) And in many verses, it seems appropriate to use either word, as in Phil 4:14 “Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction;” or it could be translated “tribulation.”

This point is made so that we would refrain from **assuming** that every time we see the word “tribulation” in the bible, or discuss it with others, that we’re triggered to assume it **only** means end-of-the-world annihilation. In many situations the meaning is obvious when we look at the context of the passage, but in other verses, as those given in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24, Mark 13) people often assume it’s **only** talking about end time tribulation, when in fact, some of it is about the tribulation of 70 AD, which is not a future event for us. (More on this in Part 2 of this series.)

“Oh, but those verses aren’t talking about the “GREAT tribulation,” you say. “That’s different.” Really?

When Jesus is on the Mount of Olives giving his famous warning about the end of the age, He says, “not one stone will be left upon another.” (Matt 24:21) This destruction in 70 AD was indeed a “**great tribulation.**” Ancient historians estimate 1.2 million Jews were killed in the resulting war, while the survivors were scattered in all directions. Josephus, a first-century historian, records that the violence was so great that fires were put out by the blood of Jewish believers. God truly brought an end to the old covenant thru’ a great tribulation.

However, this destruction may have a double meaning, because Jesus also says this great tribulation will be like no other, “since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will be.” This sounds like a tribulation at

the end of time when Jesus brings His final judgement. So, perhaps this prophesy has a double fulfillment.

In Revelation, chapter 6 describes the breaking of the Seal judgements where war, inflation, death by famine, and martyrdom are released. Then “after these things” (v7:1) it describes a great multitude dressed in white robes and an angel asks John, “who are these clothed in white?” John doesn’t know, so the angel says, “These are the ones who come out of the **great tribulation...**” But these Seal judgments describe rather ordinary events in today’s world: wars, inflation, and death, yet it’s described as a “great tribulation,” even tho’ the Bowl judgements that come later are much more terrible and universal. So perhaps we shouldn’t get hung up on the word “great,” because neither the timing nor the magnitude of a great tribulation is biblically defined only to one event. For we basically have only two references for “great tribulation,” 70 AD and the Seal judgements, and neither is as horrible as the tribulations described later in Revelation.

2) Different Definitions

The second big lesson from my study is that many of the differences regarding end times doctrines, especially in regards to the rapture, come from different definitions of the same words, like “wrath” and “generation” and “age”. Here is a table to clarify some pre and post Trib definitions:

PRE-TRIB Doctrine	POST-TRIB Doctrine
“WRATH”	
<p>Wrath = any judgement from God, which includes all the judgements in Revelation. And since we will be rescued from the wrath to come (1Thes 1:10) and since we are not “destined for wrath,” (1Thes 5:9) and we are “saved from wrath thru Him.” (Rom 5:9), then believers can’t be around when God’s wrath is poured out. Therefore, we must be raptured beforehand.</p>	<p>Wrath = final judgement. In 1Thes 5:9 “wrath” is contrasted and compared to “salvation.” The opposite of salvation is damnation in hell. So wrath is the final judgement when God separates the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff. That is the wrath we are not destined for. It’s not about tribulations of war, inflation, famine, & death, which are common in the world already. Those people are going thru’ tribulations NOW, and they have not been raptured.</p>
“AGE”	
<p>Age = the age of mankind on earth, or some say the “church age,” which started at Pentecost and we’re still living in now. So when the disciples ask Jesus, “when will the end of the age be?,” (Matt 24:3) PreTribbers think they’re asking about the end of the world, and the whole Olivet Discourse, is therefore, only about end times.</p>	<p>Age = a long period defined by how God deals with his people, most notably, the age of Moses and the Law, verses the church age of grace under Christ; the old covenant vs the new covenant. So, when Jesus tells the disciples that no stones will be left upon another, it means the Temple will be destroyed, signifying the end of the age of Moses and the old covenant, which happened in 70 AD.</p>

PRE-TRIB Doctrine	POST-TRIB Doctrine
“LAST TRUMPET”	
<p>Last Trumpet = the last trumpet of that event. There is more than one last trumpet because there are several biblical events thru'out the bible where trumpets are used. So there's a last trumpet for the pre-trib rapture and a last trumpet for the Day of the Lord, when Jesus returns.</p>	<p>Last Trumpet = the last trumpet, period. There is only one last trumpet and it's the last one, which is probably the 7th trumpet in Revelation. 1Cor 15:52 says we will all be changed in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. And if you look at the last trumpet in Rev 11:18+, there is a gathering of the saints and a final judgement, which would logically come right after a rapture event. This means believers are present during the previous Seal and Trumpet judgements before the last trumpet.</p>
“GENERATION”	
<p>Generation = the Greek word <i>genea</i> literally means “race,” as in, human race. “This generation shall not pass away until all these things take place.” (Matt 24:34) When Jesus says this, he's speaking of the end when Jesus comes again, then the human race will be judged and heaven begins. This also agrees with “age” above.</p>	<p>Generation = in the Greek, it also means “the people of a given period,” 40 to 120 years, depending on which bible reference is used, as in “He must be rejected by this generation.” (Lk 17:25) To make it more clear, when “you” is used in the discussion, “generation” is referring to the generation of people being addressed at that time.</p>

PRE-TRIB Doctrine	POST-TRIB Doctrine
“TAKEN”	
<p>Taken = “taken UP.”</p> <p>Matt 24:40+, “Then there will be 2 men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.” The ones who are taken are taken up as a metaphor for the PreTrib rapture.</p>	<p>Taken = “taken AWAY.” The meaning of “taken” comes from the Noah example in the previous verse. (v39) “and they [the ungodly] did not understand until the flood came and took them away...”</p> <p>It was the unrighteous who were taken away to ruin. Luke 17: 27-29 confirms this. If we’re consistent, then the man in the field, the woman at the mill are also taken away.</p>
“TRIBULATION SAINTS”	
<p>Tribulation Saints = Saints who come to faith during the great tribulation. It is assumed the saints in Rev are only Jewish converts who came to Christ during the tribulation of the end times, because mostly gentile believers were already raptured PreTrib.</p>	<p>Tribulation Saints = No such thing. The distinction between church saints and tribulation saints is an invention that the bible does not provide. If our faith is in Jesus Christ, we are all saints. (Eph 2:19)</p> <p>This presumption, that tribulation saints are different, is necessary for the PreTrib narrative to work and allows them to dismiss dozens of references to believers in Revelation.</p>

Now that we’ve seen how the Pre and Post Trib doctrines define key words differently, let’s look at some passages and logic used to justify PreTrib rapture.

3) Left Behind Matt 24:37-41

For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ At that time there will be two *men* in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two *women* will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

This is a favorite passage often used in PreTrib doctrine and one of the key passages used to support the famous book and movie series *Left Behind*. It says the man in the field and the woman at the mill were **taken**.... What does that mean? If we **first presume** a PreTrib doctrine of being rescued from the tribulation, we think this means that they were taken **up** to heaven, or taken to be with God as a metaphor for the rapture. But look again, does it say that? No; this is assumed.

To find its meaning we have to look at the previous verses in the example that Jesus gave with Noah. Yes, it's logical to see Noah and his family as the righteous who were spared from God's wrath of the flood, so we might conclude they were **taken** to be rescued, right? But look at verse 39; who was taken? "They" is the **unrighteous** "who did not understand until the flood came and **took** them all away." Noah and his family were the ones left behind. Read it again. Noah and his family were the ones left behind to remain on earth and

remain with God. So the *Left Behind* movie is completely backwards and it has done much harm to influence our Christian culture incorrectly. The God-fearing righteous people of God are left behind while the wicked are taken **away** to their destruction in the flood.

If we look at the parallel verses in Luke 17:26-37, it confirms that “the flood came and **destroyed** them.” Likewise with Lot; the people of Sodom were eating and drinking, planting and building, then it rained fire and brimstone and it “**destroyed** them all.”

We can see that Noah and Lot were spared God’s wrath, but they were not taken up in some rapture-like event, or taken to be with God. They were simply told to get out of the way, much like when Jesus warned the disciples about the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation [her destruction] is near.” (Luke 21:20) So get out of town. Don’t go back for your coat or your boots or your Gordan Ramsey cookware. Flee to the mountains.

So now we know where the man in the field and the woman at the mill were taken... they were the **unrighteous** who were taken **away** to they’re destruction. Jesus said the same thing in Matt 13:49, “So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and **take out the wicked** from among the

righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

So, we **want** to be left behind to remain with God, just as Noah and Lot were.

This critical point, where the wicked are taken away or separated from the righteous, is also consistent with the parables. Let’s look just at Matthew: The evil servant who thinks his master will tarry a long time is cut down and assigned a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (24:48-51) The tares are first gathered to be burned up before the wheat is put in the farmer’s barn. (13:24-30) The man without wedding clothes is thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (22: 11-13). The 5 foolish virgins are shut out from the wedding feast. (25:1-13) The wicked servant who did not invest the master’s money is cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (25:26-30) When God separates the sheep from the goats, it is the goats who are taken away to eternal punishment (25:45-46) while the sheep remain. All are examples of the wicked being taken **away** to darkness and judgement, whereas, the righteous remain with God.

So, it is contextually consistent and logical to presume that these stories, including the man in the field and woman at the mill, are not about being raptured; they are warning us to stay true to God while the rest of the world is destroyed.

4) The Meaning of “Wrath” 1Thes 5:9

This was mentioned in the definitions, but let’s look at this closer....

Rom 5:9 “...having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

1Thes 1:10 “...and to wait for His Son from heaven,...that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”

1Thes 5:9 “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation thru’ our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Concerning “wrath,” these are the 3 verses used to confirm a pre-tribulation rapture. It is clear that God will protect us from some kind of terrible wrath. So what is this wrath? It seems important to figure this out.

The PreTrib doctrine proclaims that wrath is world-ending judgement from God. The flood during Noah’s time was the wrath of God. Likewise, all of the judgements in Revelation are seen as the wrath from God because it, too, is world ending judgement. So, if believers are to be saved and rescued from this wrath, then the church must not be around during Revelation.

This sounds nice and logical, but again, it doesn't clearly say that. This logic is inferred with great hope, no doubt, but it is still presumed. Are ALL the judgements in Revelation really the wrath of God?

First, a more clear definition can be found by looking closer at 1Thes 5:9. In this verse we have a contrasting comparison for "wrath." It is compared and contrasted with "salvation." It says, "We are not destined for **wrath**, but for **salvation**." Well, what is the contrasting comparison, or the opposite of salvation? Isn't it the final judgement of damnation and hell? So by this verse, wrath is not just any judgement from God, it's the **final** judgement, when the sheep and goats, the wheat and chaff, are separated.

Also consider that many of the judgements in Revelation, especially the Seal judgements, are indistinguishable from ordinary events; war, famine, death, inflation, earthquakes, etc. So how do we know if these things are God's wrath or not? Some would say all such events are God's wrath. Others would say they might be the wrath of man, or the wrath of a sinful world. But the one wrath that we definitely know is from God is the wrath of the final judgement, the wrath of fire in hell. **THAT** is the wrath that Christians are spared from.

Now look at this – in Revelation 12, just after the 7th trumpet has blown, John sees a great sign in the heavens about a woman giving birth and there was a

dragon who wanted to devour the child. But the archangel, Michael, wages war with the dragon, who is called the devil and Satan, (v9) and Michael throws him down to earth. But still, Satan accuses us before God day and night. However, we overcome his accusations by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (v11).

And for this reason, rejoice O heavens, and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because **the devil** has come down to you, **having great wrath**, know that he has only a short time (v12). So the dragon was enraged with the woman [who gave birth to the child] and went off **to make war with the rest of her children** [the believers in the Christ child] who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (v17).

In this vision the dragon is Satan, the woman is Israel, and the child is, of course, Jesus. Israel gave birth to Jesus and Satan wanted to devour Him, but since he was unable to, he makes spiritual war, sometimes real war, on those who believe in Jesus.

Here is one example where the tribulations of war are attributed to the **wrath of Satan**, not God. This may also be true for the tribulations before the 7th trumpet, and possibly in our personal lives today. This doesn't mean wrath can't come from God, but it's interesting to note that in these verses it describes the wrath of the war against God's children as the wrath from Satan.

The Bowl Judgements are Different

Still trying to define “wrath,” we move into the Bowl Judgements and things change dramatically; for now we have 3 verses that clearly speak of the wrath of God.

Rev 15:1 “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because **in them the wrath of God is finished.**”

Rev 15:7 “Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls **full of the wrath of God,**”

Rev 16:1 “...Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of **the wrath of God.**”

These judgements on the earth are more severe than the previous Seal and Trumpet judgements. In the Bowl judgements we have painful “loathsome and malignant sores on the people who take the mark of the beast.” We have the seas and rivers turning to blood and all sea life dying; the sun “scorching with fierce heat,” then darkness falls on the kingdom of the beast as they gnaw their tongues in pain. In the 6th Bowl the Euphrates River dries up to prepare the way for the battle of Armageddon; then the biggest earthquake ever, and 100-pound hailstones that bring complete destruction to everything.

Since these judgements appear to be much worse than previous judgements and they are described 3 times as the “wrath of God,” it’s probably safe to assume that Christians will be spared from this wrath as promised in the “wrath” verses above.

So, if we are spared from this wrath of God, then perhaps the faithful are gathered together in a rapture event right before these Bowl judgements, which also aligns with the last trumpet that Paul talks about in 1Cor 15:52, and where Jesus Himself describes in Matt 24:29-31.

So, the next time you read about “wrath” verses, think of wrath as final judgement, or the Bowl judgements which truly seem to mark the horrible end of the world. Don’t think of ordinary tribulations of life or even the persecution we might face as Christians or even those of the Seal and Trumpet judgements. No doubt, the faithful in Christ will be spared the final judgement of God’s wrath, but that doesn’t mean we’re not going to go thru’ some tribulations in the end times.

5) Where is the “Church” in Revelation?

Pre-Trib folks frequently argue that the word “church” is not found in Revelation after John addresses the 7 churches (Rev 1-3). Therefore, since the word “church” is not found, they presume the church was raptured

before the tribulation starts. I'm not trying to be mean, but this is juvenile thinking.

It's true, the word "church" doesn't appear again in Revelation until the very end, but there are **several words** that describe believers in Christ. After chapter 3 in Revelation, the term "**saints**" is used 13 times, as in, "...the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the **saints** and those who fear Your name." (Rev 11:18) Who are these saints? It is **all** of us who fear His name.

"Bond-servants" is used 8 times, as in the previous verse and, "Give praise to our God, **all you His bond-servants**; you who fear Him, the small and the great." (Rev 19:5) Is this only a few believers from the tribulation, or does it say "**ALL** you His bond-servants?" So it makes more sense that these are **all** of us who fear Him, the small and the great.

The word "bride" appears 5 times, as in, "...the Lamb has come and His **bride** has made herself ready." (Rev 19:7) Is this bride only from the tribulation, as PreTribbers must claim according to their definitions above, or is it more likely the whole body of believers in Christ? Aren't we all the bride of Christ? Yes we are.

So, to claim that God's people are not described in Revelation, and going thru' the tribulation, simply because the word "church" is missing, is just silly.

6) Tribulation Saints and Word Games

The way that PreTrib doctrine gets away with these many references to believers being present, and perhaps suffering thru the tribulation in Revelation, is they presume that these references must be the Jews who came to faith **only** during the tribulation, because they believe gentile Christians will be raptured before the tribulation. However, **nowhere does the bible make this distinction**. This is an invention needed to make the PreTrib doctrine work.

How convenient it is to dismiss dozens of references to believers enduring the tribulation in Revelation by simply saying, “That’s not us. Those are new-believers who came to Christ in the 7 year tribulation, after we’ve been raptured.” Nowhere else in scripture are we allowed these kind of word games, but in PreTrib doctrine, it’s allowed.

Dispensationalism

This is kind of getting into the weeds, but this idea about separating the regular saints from the tribulation saints also comes from Dispensationalism, which is a primary tenant of the PreTrib doctrine. This holds that God deals separately with Israel and the Church. Right now, according to them, God is dealing with mostly gentile believers in the church age. When God removes the Church saints in the PreTrib rapture, then and only

then, can He deal with the Jewish Tribulation Saints, who will be raptured **later** at the end of the tribulation.

Even if this were true, it's foolish to assume that God can't deal with Israel and the Church at the same time. He's God. Besides, wasn't God dealing with Israel in 1948, which is still during the church age by their own definition? It's another juvenile argument.

This logic creates a new problem because now we have two 2nd Comings of Christ (rapture and judgement), and we also have two rapture events, one for the church saints and one for the tribulation saints at the end of Revelation.

But scriptures never talk about two 2nd comings and two raptures. It only mentions one. They dismiss this logic by playing other word games. They'll say things like, "It's only one 2nd Coming, it's just in two phases or parts." Or, "When Jesus comes in the clouds (1Thes 4:17) to get us in the rapture, He doesn't technically come all the way to earth, so that's not considered a "coming." It's like doing gymnastics with your words.

Many also say that the "Day of Christ" (rapture) is different than the "Day of the Lord" (2nd Coming). All of these are little tricks they use to explain and justify how there is a rapture before the great tribulation when the bible never clearly says such a thing.

I have a better and simpler idea... how about we accept what the bible says; that believers who are called

saints, bond-servants, and the bride are indeed present during Revelation so that we don't have to play these word games.

7) Preparing a Place

John 14:2-3

In My Father's house are many rooms; if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going *there* to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, *there* you also will be.

For many PreTrib believers, this is where it all starts. To them, this is the first reference of a PreTrib rapture and they take this to mean that Jesus will come again, when we are raptured, to take us to heaven where there are many rooms in our Father's house. But there's no mention of tribulation in this verse. It does not clarify if we go before or after? This could just as well mean that Jesus is coming at the end of the age after much tribulation at the 2nd Coming. Here again, this is the subtlety of presumption and imposing a preferred doctrine into scriptures where it is not precise.

8) Philadelphia vs Smyrna

Rev 3:10

Because you have kept My word of perseverance, **I also will keep you from the hour of the testing**, that hour which is about to come **upon the whole world**, to test those who live on the earth.

This is another favorite verse PreTibbers use in their defense. They believe this letter to the Philadelphia

church is also meant for the whole church in general, including the world-wide Church during the end times. And it says right there that God will keep us from the hour of testing [presumed to be the great tribulation] that is about to come upon the whole world. So they believe this means God will keep us from the tribulation.

Ok, let's go with that logic...the letters to the churches in Revelation are also meant for us too, the whole Church throughout time. Let's see what the letter to the church of Smyrna says in Rev 2:10.

Do not fear what you are about to **suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into **prison**, so that you will be **tested**, and you will have **tribulation** for ten days. Be faithful until **death**, and I will give you the crown of life.

So, does that letter apply to the whole modern Church too, 'cause that sounds like we're going to go thru' some hard times. Or does PreTrib doctrine pick and choose only the verses that fit a PreTrib narrative?

It's more likely those early letters are meant for those early churches that John was writing to, and perhaps specific churches who are like them, even today, but it's not meant to be a general doctrine for all Christians throughout time.

Perhaps, the "hour of testing which is about to come" is when Jerusalem was surrounded by Roman armies in 70 AD. Perhaps the "whole world" is not literal in the

sense that **we** know the whole world, but is actually the known world of that time, which was mostly the Roman Empire. Many scholars hold these arguments as possibilities and do not think that the church letters in Revelation are meant for all believers throughout time.

9) Imminence

Many PreTrib believers profess that there are no signs preceding the PreTrib rapture. This is what they call imminence, which means, the rapture could happen at any time. This idea comes from 1Thes 5:2, where Paul says we “know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.” Jesus gives the same warning in Matt 24:42-44. PreTrib doctrine presumes the “thief in the night” is only about a PreTrib rapture, again, because it fits the narrative.

But these are warnings about the **day of the Lord** and are not about a rapture. They’re about the 2nd Coming. And some of these verses are paired with the gathering of the saints, as if they were on the same day. Just prior to “the thief in the night” warning, Jesus says in v30-31 that the Son of Man will appear in the sky... **AND** He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet **AND** they will gather together His elect from the four winds.” Again, Paul says, “with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **AND** our gathering together to Him.” (2Thes 2:1) So, since we don’t know the day or the hour, it seems more like imminence is actually about the

coming of the Lord **and** a rapture event that occurs with the 2nd Coming.

PreTrib rapture imminence also infers that the rapture could have happened at any time in history, but this is not so. Jesus told us that “when we see ALL these things [the convergence of the signs], recognize He is near, right at the door.” (Matt 24:33) So, we should be watching for many signs before the coming of the Son of Man.

Prophecies Must Be Fulfilled Before the End

This point needs to be made because God is not a liar; He can't speak of future events and not have them come true. Yet people often dismiss (as I did for a long time) what might be end time events because there have been many horrible events in history, the Black Plague and the Holocaust, where people must have felt like the end of the world was near, yet the end did not come. Therefore, we conclude that we can't rely on the signs to know where we're at in God's timeline or when the end is near. This is why it's good to know and learn about biblical prophecy.

We must take into account the signs of prophecy being fulfilled when discerning the signs of the end of time. For example, many prophecies foretold the return of the Jewish people back to the land of their fathers, Israel. That prophecy was fulfilled in 1948. So, even tho' there have been many horrible and miserable tribulations in

history; world wars, famines, the black plague, the Holocaust, etc., the rapture could not have happened until these prophecies came to pass, and still future prophecies which will soon come to pass. So historical imminence of a rapture is a false doctrine.

So, we do as Jesus commanded, watching for the signs in our time, and the season we're in, yet not knowing the day or the hour, so that we will not be deceived; so that our hope will grow even stronger as we urgently expect His return as we see the world falling apart. This is truly an amazing time we're living in.

10) Lack of Historical Evidence

At this point, if the reader has been raised in a church where they teach PreTrib rapture, these contrary challenges may be shocking. For over 100 years the PreTrib doctrine has been taught at seminaries and from the pulpit of most churches. This view continues to be taught by most modern celebrity preachers and pastors like Chuck Swindoll, Jack Hibbs, David Jeremiah, Rick Warren, Jan Markell, most Calvary pastors like Chuck Smith and Mike Winger, and the list goes on; who am I to contradict these well-educated, well-respected, and experienced pastors?

It's true, nobody knows me, but I'm still able to read the bible, just as you are, just as the saints of old did. And

you might be surprised to learn that PreTrib doctrine is fairly new, not gaining wide popularity until the 1920's.

While many modern celebrity pastors preach PreTrib rapture, it is **not** in the records of Eusebius of the early church, Saint Augustine of the Catholics, Martin Luther of the Protestants, John Calvin of the Reformers. None of the leaders of Christianity for 1,800 years wrote or preached about this notion of being rescued from any tribulation.

It was not until John Darby got this idea (some say from a girl's dream) in 1832 and started preaching about it, that it gained some following. Then John Scofield came along and published the first study bible which included Darby's PreTrib doctrine. The Scofield bible (published in 1909) was widely circulated among church leaders and seminaries, and used exclusively for almost 60 years, as it was the only study bible available. This is how PreTrib doctrine became so widely accepted.

But many biblical scholars know different. Joel Richardson says, "all of the early church, up until a couple hundred years ago, they were all **Post-Tribulation**al. They believed the church is raptured when Jesus returns... And then, if we happen to still be alive when He returns, we will be raptured, caught up to meet Him in the air,... because there's only one 2nd Coming, there's only one return... But what that means is that we, as the church, will face the Great Tribulation" (YouTube interview with Charisma Magazine).

It seems this argument about PreTrib doctrine being a new thing has ruffled a lot of feathers, because there are now teachings of “newly discovered documents” of old church fathers teaching PreTrib. Most of the lessons are not convincing because they only profess certain points of PreTrib doctrine, like “imminence,” but the lessons fail to explain what the church fathers meant. What is their definition of imminence or tribulation? As noted, that can mean a lot of things, from the ordinary to the extreme. Most people would not go thru’ the trouble of studying this to find out.

In one case, a sermon from Joel Richardson clearly showed in his research how William C. Watson mishandled the writings of church father, Andrew of Caesarea (563 AD), taking quotes out of context, ignoring large passages, and picking vague statements to try and say Andrew was a PreTribber. Richardson’s analysis is so revealing that we can claim that Watson was just being dishonest in his efforts to claim PreTrib theory was ancient. (YouTube, Refuting the False Claims of PreTribbers, Joel Richardson.)

I use this example because some current authors and videographers on the Internet are holding Watson’s claim as true in order to legitimize an ancient PreTrib doctrine, but it is not true.

If people are still inclined to believe that PreTrib doctrine is old, they will have to explain why Darby himself says it was new. In 1834 Darby wrote a letter to

a friend about his new Dispensational/PreTrib doctrine, saying it was “new wine” and that the established church “would not appreciate it.” (YouTube, Against Dispensationalism, Jeff Swayzee.)

So, the origins and age of PreTrib doctrine have been declared, then challenged, and still found to be a new doctrine compared to church history. And if that’s true, we have to ask, “Why didn’t church fathers believe in PreTrib doctrine?” The answer: if we simply accept the normal definitions of key words and not invent new words like “tribulation saints,” and if we just read the bible for what it says, then the bible does not teach a PreTrib rapture. It is assumed and contrived in an attempt to absolve, especially Western, Christians from believing they might have to endure tribulations or even experience discomfort.

Corrie ten Boom wrote a book called *The Hiding Place* recounting her family’s mission to save Dutch Jews from the Nazis; more than 800 were rescued. But Corrie and her family were eventually captured and sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany. Corrie was the lone survivor in her family by a miracle of God when a clerical error had set her free only a week before all the women of her age in the camp were executed. After the war Corrie continued to share love and forgiveness as an author, world-renowned speaker, advocate for the disabled, and a missionary to hostile countries. Let’s hear what Corrie has to say about being rescued from tribulation...

“There are some among us teaching that there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be able to escape all this [because of the rapture]. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China the Christians were told by American bible teachers, ‘Don’t worry, before the tribulation comes, you will be raptured. Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a bishop from China say sadly, ‘We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them that Jesus would come first.’” Corrie continues, “Tell the people how to be strong in persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes, to stand and to not faint.” ~ Corrie ten Boom, 1974

The challenge for the reader is to now read the relevant end times passages for yourself and ask, “Does it say what I think it says? Does it say what I’ve been told?” I hope this booklet can be a guide on your path to truth and that since it appears we may indeed go thru’ at least some tribulation, that we will prepare our hearts and homes for that possibility.

Summary

In a nutshell, these are the 10 biblical challenges to PreTrib rapture...

- 1) “Tribulation” is a word that represents a variety of struggles and trials.
- 2) Key words concerning end times like “age, generation, and last trumpet” have different definitions and meanings depending on which side of the argument you’re on.
- 3) It is the ungodly who are “taken AWAY” to their destruction, not the godly who are “taken UP” in a rapture-like event. *Left Behind* books and movies are wrong.
- 4) The meaning of “wrath” is the final judgement of hell, not every tribulation. (1Thes 5:9)
- 5) Believers in Christ are mentioned throughout Revelation using terms like saints, bond-servants, and bride. They have not been raptured.
- 6) There is no biblical distinction between ordinary saints and tribulation saints. This is a man-made invention required to make PreTrib doctrine work.
- 7) “I will come again and receive you to Myself...” (John 14:3) does not necessarily imply a PreTrib rapture. It could just as well be a reference to a rapture at the 2nd Coming, or at the last trumpet.
- 8) “I will keep you from the hour of testing.” (Rev 3:10) is specific to a particular church, not the church of Christ throughout history, just as Rev 2:10 also is.

- 9) Imminence, coming “like a thief in the night,” is always a reference to the 2nd Coming of Jesus, AND some verses pair it with rapture language at the same time.
- 10) The history of PreTrib doctrine is less than 200 years old and most church fathers believed in a rapture event at the 2nd Coming of Christ after some tribulation.

If we just look at the scriptures without our preconceived notions, PreTrib doctrine appears to be very weak. It’s primarily based on loose definitions of key words, dismissing obvious references to believers in Revelation, and ignoring several scriptures that clearly have rapture language occurring when Jesus returns, not before the “great tribulation.”

In recent years PreTrib doctrine is losing popularity due to a multitude of lessons and sermons on the internet, phone apps with helpful search features, and greater interest in eschatology as we see evil increase in the news every day. No longer are we held captive to church leaders who’ve only been taught PreTrib doctrine. The more that people study this topic for themselves, the more they see that PreTrib doctrine has little biblical support.

Recent polls show that Christians who believe in PreTrib doctrine amount to 43% of Evangelicals and only 36% of Protestant pastors (Christianity Today,

4/26/16). In my studies, many people have commented on how and why they've changed their mind from PreTrib to something else, but no comments were heard claiming the reverse. So perhaps it is not being taught as much as it used to be, which probably indicates that more of those who believe in PreTrib rapture are of older generations.

One more important thing to remember is that eschatology is a non-essential issue. No one's salvation is dependent on how they believe the rapture and 2nd Coming are going to unfold. And really, for those who are serious Christians; who hold their faith in high regard, read their bibles, pray often, help those in need, fellowship with others, and generally follow the commands of Jesus, this topic probably won't change their devotion. This is the way Christians ought to live.

But many Christians don't live like that. It's more like punching a time clock for an hour and a half on the weekend when they have nothing better to do, and their relationship with Jesus is shallow and casual. They treat God like a vending machine when they want something or they only cry out to Him during hard times. For these Christians it would be valuable to adjust their expectations on end-times doctrine. Would their attitudes change if they realized the signs of the end are fast approaching?

Perhaps they would let their hearts be convicted when Paul says, “Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation [and Jesus’ return] is nearer to us than when we believed.” (Rom 13:11)

When Jesus was in the garden, only hours before He would go to trial before religious and state leaders, He lifted His eyes to heaven to pray one last time for His followers. He prayed that we would have eternal life, that we would be kept safe in His name, and that we would become One with Him and each other. Then, almost as if He were looking at us 2,000 years later, Jesus says, “**I do NOT ask You to take them out of the world**, but to keep them from the evil one.” (John 17:15)

Friends, our calling is to remain. We are to “dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.” (Ps 37:3) The world needs us to be God’s hands and feet, His peace and truth as the world increases in evil and devastation. Our lives are but a vapor compared to eternity, so let’s prepare our hearts, minds, and homes to expect some tribulation and share the blessing and good news of Christ before Jesus returns. Even today there are many signs and prophecies converging and being fulfilled. To quote a line from Jesus in *The Chosen*, “The Kingdom of God is at hand. Too many in this generation are missing it. Do not miss it.”

NOTES

This is an incomplete list of sources used in this study: **NASB Bible.**

PreTrib Sources: Pastors Chuck Smith, Mike Winger, Skip Heitzig, Jack Hibbs, Derek Walker, Andy Wood, Gene Kim, Jan Markell, Chuck Swindoll, David Jeremiah, and more. Author Max Lucado.

YT & IG channels: Remnant Radio (Jimmy Evans), The Beat by Allan Parr, Jessica Speas, certainty4uncertaintimes, and more.

PostTrib Sources: Pastors Jeff Durbin, Michael Brown, Doug Wilson, Joel Richardson, Vladimir Savchuk, Alan Kurschner, Craig Keener, Daniel Caram, and more. **YT & IG channels:** Above Reproach Ministry, The Line of Fire, Apologia Studios, FAI Studios, North Avenue Church, Zion's Hope (David Rosenthal), MissionaryMikeW, Victory Church, and more.