

## The Tribulation - Saved From the Wrath of God

By Faber McMullen, Pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church ©2017

Over the last few weeks I've been talking about the "rapture" and the "tribulation". It occurs to me that some in this congregation without a background in Bible study don't really know what I'm talking about. So, this morning I will lay out for you the scriptures upon which I base my theological beliefs about how the world as we know it will come to an end. Without I will read two passages and then we'll read our focal passage of the day.



For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:12-18



“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. Daniel 12:1

→ Please stand as we read God's Word

Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. Revelation 3:10-11

### **What is the Rapture & the Tribulation?**

In the years following Jesus' resurrection His followers were looking for His return. Some were not working. Some were not engaged in living. So Paul was writing the little church in Thessalonica telling them to go ahead and get into the business of living and that at some point Jesus would return in the sky. The scripture we've just looked at in 1 Thessalonians says that in that hour that only the Lord knows, Jesus will descend from heaven and that believers that are alive at the time and those that have died in Christ will rise and meet him in the air. This is called "the rapture" coming from the Latin word "to seize".

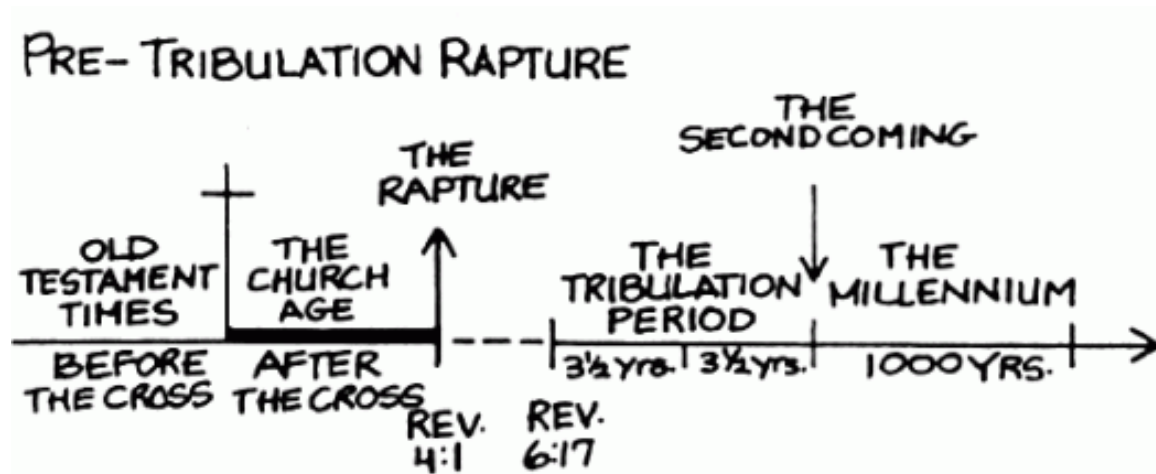
**Principle 1: At the moment of the rapture the Lord will seize us from earth.**

Then after this time when believers are removed from the earth a time of great trouble will come to the world such as the world has never known.

**Principle 2: This time of trouble after the rapture is what we call "The Tribulation".**

As I have explained, there are several different theories as to when these two events will occur. I subscribe to and believe in the theory called the "Pre-trib" theory. This means that I believe that the Church will be taken up to be with the Lord BEFORE the great tribulation comes. Here is a simple drawing of the timeline of events I'm talking about.

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In this diagram you will notice that we are living in the "Church age". This is the time after the resurrection of Christ. At some point the "Rapture" will occur, and then an indefinite time period will take place followed by seven years of Tribulation.

I believe the sequence of events to be so because of what the Bible says and this morning I'll explain to you why I believe in a Pre-Tribulation rapture. **Principle 3: Pre-Trib view means the rapture will happen before the tribulation.** Let's take a minute and look at what Romans 8: 1 and 2 has to say,

→ **Believers are NOT under Condemnation or Judgment**

1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.  
2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

The moment a person believes in Jesus he or she passes from death into life. When you are born again you are no longer under condemnation. God does not pass

judgment on His Church. **Principle 4: The purpose of the Tribulation is for God to judge unbelieving Gentiles and unbelieving Jews.**

1) Purge out the Jewish rebels Ezekiel 20:37-38

2) Punish Gentile who reject Him: "And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard." Micah 5:15

So during this 7 year period the wrath of God will come on the unbelieving Gentiles and the Jews. Church, I think one of the greatest keys to understanding who will be here during the tribulation is to look at the Book of Revelation. If you have your Bibles with you this morning turn over to Revelation chapter one. Many are sort of afraid of the Book of Revelation because they don't understand what it all means.

➔ In verse 19 of the first chapter of Revelation, Jesus tells the Apostle John a basic outline of the book. He says, "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things."

1) Chapter 1: 1-20 is the record of what John saw "The things that thou hast seen"

2) Chapters 2 & 3 are "The things that are" - these are the observations and warnings given to the seven churches that are mentioned in chapters 2-3

3) Chapter 4 through the rest of the book are "the things that are hereafter"

**Principle 5: In the Book of Revelation, chapters 4-19 deal the tribulation that is to be poured out on the earth.** In those chapters we see the vials, the trumpets, the seals, the scrolls, the horsemen, the plagues, all of the things that are horrific. Those things have to do with God's judgment on the earth at that time. Now I want you to notice something very interesting.

➔ **Principle 6: In chapters 1-3 the church is mentioned 19 times. But if you look at chapters 4-19 the church is never mentioned again.** Why is this happening? Guys, it's happening because we won't be here. We will be taken up to be with the Lord as we read in our first reading this morning in 1st Thessalonians.

**Principle 7: The Church will not be subject to the wrath of God.**

When Paul was writing that church in Thessalonica later in his second letter he got into the details of what needed to happen before Jesus would return. Let's now turn in our Bibles to 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2 verses 1 and following:

Paul says, "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2

Paul is saying, "Don't be shaken up by a letter you got from me about whether or not we are in the tribulation now. Then he goes on to answer the question:

→ 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

**3** Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;  
**4** Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

So Paul is saying that first, there will be a great apostasy. It will be a time when the church at large will leave the faith. There will be a huge falling away. I don't believe we are yet seeing such a "falling away". The church is diminishing, but it has not been abandoned. That day is coming.

Secondly, Paul says that "the man of sin that son of perdition be revealed"... and who is he talking about here? Guys, he's talking about the Antichrist. He is saying that the Church that remains near the end will get a glimpse of the Antichrist. Paul is saying that the Antichrist will have to be revealed before the tribulation comes. Paul is reassuring the Thessalonian church that they're not in the tribulation yet.

V. 5-6 describes the "man of sin" and another interesting point about what restrains him.

→ 2 Thessalonians 2:5-7

5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?  
6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.  
7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. AND THEN shall that wicked man be revealed.

So church what is the restrainer or better said WHO is the restrainer? Some think it's government and some think it's a religious system, but I believe the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. So when is the Holy Spirit going to be taken away? Let me ask you, "Where does the Holy Spirit live?" Where does He reside? He resides in each believer that is here on earth. Just imagine what the world will be like without any Christians on planet earth. I wouldn't want to live in that world. Would you? The only thing holding things together presently is the Holy Spirit that is in the hearts, minds, and lives of every believer.

The restrainer will be gone and then all hell will break loose here on planet earth. This viewpoint can ONLY fit the idea of a Pre-Tribulation rapture.

So in summary, there are only three conditions for the tribulation to come. Whether or not they all come prior to us going to be with the Lord isn't exactly clear, but these three things will happen before the tribulation.

→ **Principle 8: The three things that will happen before the tribulation are**

**1-falling away**

**2-man of sin be revealed**

**3-and when the restrainer is taken out of the world**

Let's look at a different piece of scripture that supports that believers will already be in heaven. Remember chapter 4 begins the description of the tribulation happening. Let's now look at Rev 4:1-4 *Scene in Heaven (Listen as I read)*

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| 1 | After these things I looked, and behold, a door <i>standing</i> open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like <i>the sound</i> of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." |
| 2 | Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.   |
| 3 | And He who was sitting <i>was</i> like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and <i>there was</i> a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.  |
| 4 | Around the throne <i>were</i> twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones <i>I saw</i> twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.  |

This is being talked about by John after his messages to the churches. John is talking about the 24 elders. These 24 elders are seated, robed, they have crowns upon their heads. As Sandy so aptly explained in our recent study of Revelation at First Baptist Navasota, these elders are a symbolic representation of the church. The church has been describe these three ways in the following verses:

**Eph 2:6** "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places"

**Rev 19:8** "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

**2 Tim 4:8** "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

These teach us that these 24 elders are representatives of the church. So where is the church? **Principle 9: As the Tribulation begins (Rev Ch 4) the church will be seated, clothed, and crowned in heaven.** Rev. 3:10 may be the best pre-tribulation verse in the Bible.

→ **Principle 10: You will be kept from the hour of testing (Rev 3:10)**

10 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that <i>hour</i> which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Revelation 3:10
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The church in Philadelphia is a prophetic picture of the true believing church in the last days. The letter says "I will keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole world". This is a promise that the faithful church will be "kept from the

hour of testing". It doesn't say he will help us survive it. It says we won't even see it. We will be kept from that VERY hour.

Are we saved from the wrath of God? If we are, then how can we interpret scripture saying we will live through God's wrath? We won't.

**God spared Enoch.** He was taken out before God judged the earth with the flood.

**God spared Lot** in the story of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah.

2 Peter 2:6-9 God appreciated Lot. "and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter; and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

**God spared His own righteous people** when the first born of the Egyptians were slain. The put blood on their doorposts. God spared His people the wrath and judgment of God.

**Principle 11: God's pattern is consistent. When God brings judgment; He removes His own. (Examples: Enoch, Lot, First born Jews in Egypt)**

When Jesus humbled Himself and allowed Himself to be put on the cross, did Jesus pay it all? Of course He did. I don't owe anything. I can't pay anything. If I have to go through the tribulation then what God did is not enough.

**➔Principle 12: When Jesus allowed Himself to be put on a cross, He paid it all. I don't owe anything. I can't pay anything.**

Hymn: Jesus Paid it All

*And when before the throne I stand in him complete  
"Jesus died my soul to save" my lips shall still repeat  
Jesus paid it all  
All to him I owe  
(Sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow)  
(He washed it white as snow)<sup>2</sup>*

Do you believe that Jesus is coming back?  
Do you think He could come this morning?  
Well if you do, then you are a believer with a "Pre-Trib" viewpoint of man's last days on earth.

INVITATION - To know Him, to love Him, to serve Him.

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<sup>2</sup> Hymn: Jesus Paid it All