

## Premillennialism: The Rapture

**Rapture Texts** (1 Thess 4:13-18; John 14:2-3; 1 Cor 15:51-52)

### Timing of the Rapture

#### Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:4-25:46)

- Disciples – Church or Israel? First century or church history?
- Signs of the end (Tribulation) (Matt 24:4-35)
  - Birth Pangs of the New Age (Matt 24:8; Isa 13:6-10)
  - Abomination of Desolation (Matt 24:15-21; Dan 9:26-27; Dan 12)
  - Fig tree (Matt 24:32-33)
- When will Christ return? (Matt 24:36-25:46; Dan 7:13)
  - Living believers enter the kingdom (Matt 25:31-46)

Matthew	Event	Paul
24:5	warning about deception	2 Thess. 2:2
24:5, 11, 24	lawlessness, delusion of the nonelect, signs and wonders	2 Thess. 2:6–11
24:12	apostasy	2 Thess. 2:3
24:15	disturbance in the temple	2 Thess. 2:4
24:21–22	tribulation preceding the end	2 Thess. 1:6–10
24:30–31	parousia of Christ on clouds at the time of trumpet blast with angelic accompaniment	1 Thess. 4:14–16
24:30–31	coming of Christ in power	2 Thess. 2:8
24:31	gathering of believers	1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 2:1
24:36, 42, 44, 50	unexpected and uncertain	1 Thess. 5:1–4
25:4	exhortation to watch	1 Thess. 5:6–8

**1 Thess 4:13-5:11**

**Rescue vs. Delegation**

- Dead saints rescued from death
- Living saints rescued from the wrath to come (see also 1 Thess 1:10)
- Meeting the Bridegroom (Matt 25:6)

**2 Thess 2: 1-12**

- End will not come until after Abomination of Desolation

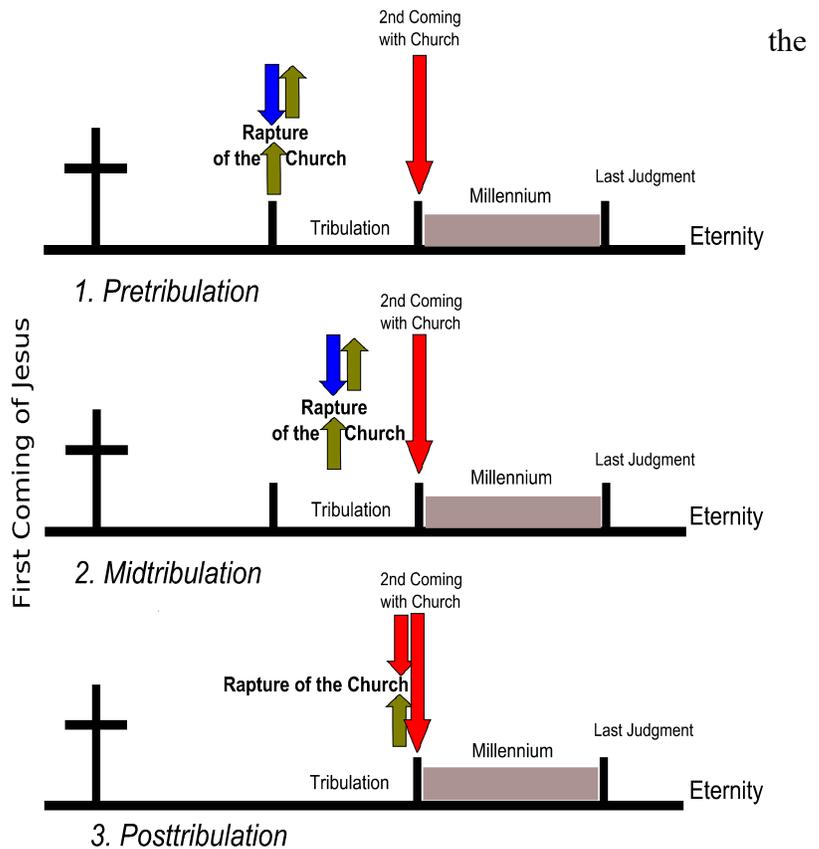
**1 Thess 5: 1-11**

- Unexpected Arrival (1 Thess 5:2)
- Birth Pangs (1 Thess 5:3)

**Rev 6**

- Seals parallel Olivet Discourse
- Saints promised to be kept from hour of trial (Rev 3:10-11)
  - Answer to Jesus' prayer (John 17:15)
- Sixth Seal – Pouring out of God's wrath

**Comparison of Christian Tribulation Views**



	Pretribulational	Prewrath	Postribulation
Daniel 9:25–27	The seventieth week is the future, seven-year tribulation. It is antitypical of a period called in Daniel “the time of the end,” “the time of wrath,” and is marked by the rise of an imperial persecutor (Antichrist) who makes a covenant with Israel, and by wars, a desolating sacrilege in the temple after three and a half years, intense persecution, and the destruction of the persecutor.	The seventieth week is the final seven years of history before the coming of Christ. The “wrath” of this period is that of the final imperial persecutor (Antichrist) and focuses on the intense persecution of the last three and a half years of the week, the period following the abomination of desolation. This period was typified by the Antiochene persecution of the Jews.	The seventieth week, including the tribulation, is probably about the interadvent age, though there will also probably be a final Antichrist and tribulation. The time of tribulation in Daniel is the second half of the week.
Matthew 24:4–25:46	The Olivet Discourse divides into 24:4–35 and 24:36–25:46. The first part answers the “sign” question, the second part the “when” question. Verses 4–31 integrate Daniel’s seventieth week structure with features of the day of the Lord as the pattern of the parousia. 24:32–35 offers a teaching point concluding the first part of the discourse. Jesus applies the typed pattern to the soon destruction of Jerusalem, but cautions that it may not be the parousia. The sign that distinguishes the pattern as the parousia is the glorious appearing of the	The Olivet Discourse divides into 24:4–14, 15–35; and 24:36–25:46. 24:4–14 is about normal catastrophes of the church age, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem and allied events. 24:15–31 is explicitly contrasted with 24:4–14, beginning with the significant eschatological event of the abomination of desolation (perhaps typified by the destruction of the temple by the Romans) and concluding with the parousia (day of the Lord) complex in 24:29–31. 24:36–25:46 is about watching for and living in	The Olivet Discourse up to 24:28 is about the church age, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem. 24:29–35 is about the parousia at the end of the age. 24:36–25:46 consists of exhortations based on the parousia of 24:30–31. The “gathering” there is not just of the church but is the regathering of Israel as well (to be resurrected and raptured with the church). The disciples represent all Christians. Matt. 24:40–41 may refer to the rapture.

<p>Son of Man at its conclusion. Parousia in 24:27 has a narrow reference to Jesus' glorious appearing at the end of the day of the Lord. In 24:36 it refers more broadly to the whole day of his coming. 24:31 is the regathering of Israel. The disciples represent all believers (the church), pre- and post-rapture.</p>	<p>light of the parousia of 24:30-31. "Cutting short" the tribulation (24:22) may indicate the 24:29-31. 24:36-25:46 is about watching for and living in light of the parousia of 24:30-31. "Cutting short" the tribulation (24:22) may indicate the church's rescue from the midst of the tribulation by rapture. Disciples represent all Christians, including the first and final generations.</p>
--	---

John 14:1-4

Jesus will come again and rapture his saints to be with him. The parallels with 1 Thess. 4:17 favor pretribulationism.

Jesus raptures his saints at his parousia; no indication of timing.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 50-58

"Last" trumpet means merely the eschatological trumpet of the day of the Lord. Both the rapture descent (1 Thess. 4:16) and the regal descent (Matt. 24:31) are signaled by a trumpet but are distinct. 1 Cor. 15 parallels 1 Thess. 4:16 with resurrection, so is pretribulationist. No allusion to Dan. 12:1 or Matt. 24:30-31.

"Last" trumpet means merely the eschatological trumpet of the day of the Lord. The relationship of the rapture to the resurrection of OT saints is not clear here. Isa. 25:8 seems concurrent with the "second" resurrection of Rev. 20:11-15. Paul probably doesn't distinguish the two resurrections.

"Last trumpet" (Isa. 27:12-13) and quote from Isa. 25:8 probably indicate resurrection of OT saints is concurrent with the rapture. Allusions to Dan. 12:1 and Matt. 24:31 make this posttribulationist.

1 Thessalonians 1:10

Rapture rescues the church from God's parousia wrath mentioned in 1 Thess. 5.

Rapture rescues the church from God's parousia wrath mentioned in 1 Thess. 5.

Jesus rescues the church from God's final judgment; says nothing about the rapture.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	<p>The Thessalonians were concerned about those who die before the parousia. Paul assures them that when the Lord comes, their dead will be raised and raptured together with living believers. Though the idea of a meeting is inherent, the language focuses more on a rescue. The timing of the rapture must be determined from the relationship of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 to 5:1-11. Differences in textual features preclude a clear parallel with Matt. 24:31.</p>	<p>Relies on the Olivet Discourse tradition and places the rapture at Matt. 24:31. A “delegation meeting” may be implied, but it says nothing about timing. The word of the Lord may be a post-Easter prophetic utterance teaching the rapture in conjunction with the Olivet Discourse tradition. The Thessalonians had been led to believe, perhaps by the OT, that the dead would be resurrected after the earthly reign of Christ. Paul clarifies that they would be raised at the parousia.</p>	<p>Thessalonians worried their dead would not be taken to be with Jesus at the parousia, not whether believers would undergo tribulation. Paul assures them that their dead would participate in the benefits of the parousia. Parallels with Olivet Discourse and Dan. 12:1-2 make this Posttribulational. A “delegation meeting” is probably implied and suggests a return to earth, not to heaven.</p>
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	<p>With respect to the timing of the rapture, Paul alludes to Jesus’ teaching in the second part of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:36-25:46), which speaks to the coming of the entire event complex outlined in the first part (24:4-35). That event complex is the day of the Lord structured with the pattern of Daniel’s seventieth week. 1 Thess. 5:1-11 speaks of believers in relation to the day of the Lord as understood in the Olivet Discourse. The day of the Lord will come suddenly during a time of calm,</p>	<p>Continues to rely on Olivet Discourse tradition underlying 4:13-18. Paul is discussing the timing of rapture/parousia. He refers to the parousia as the day of the Lord and notes that it will overtake believers with salvation and unbelievers with wrath. Unbelievers will be caught unawares, but not believers. The salvation of believers in the day of the Lord will be the rapture. “Peace and safety” alludes to Jer. 6:14 and refers to unbelievers’ inability or refusal to recognize impending doom. Paul moves from salvation</p>	<p>Continues to rely on Olivet Discourse tradition underlying 4:13-18. 1 Thess. 4 gives comfort about dead believers; 1 Thess. 5 exhorts living believers. The day of the Lord is the parousia (and is probably preceded by the tribulation). Both believers and unbelievers experience the day of the Lord; the one expectedly and benignly, the other unexpectedly and destructively. Believers are to guard themselves against the day by living holy lives. The switching between pronouns in 5:9-10 indicates the</p>

bringing destruction on unbelievers and rescue from destruction for believers (v. 9). A comparison of 5:9–11 with 4:14–17 shows the rescue to be the rapture. Since the rapture occurs at the onset of the day of the Lord, and the day of the Lord refers to the entire tribulation, the rapture is pretribulational. 1 Thess. 5:1–5 and exhortations to watch link to Matt. 24:36–25:13. Destruction of unbelievers points to the tribulation, and allusion to Jer. 6:14 makes this an extended event. Paul exhorts believers to live in light of their salvation, not to avoid wrath.

from parousia wrath in 5:1–9 to salvation more globally considered in 5:10.

salvation from wrath experienced by living believers is from God’s final judgment, not parousia wrath. “Peace and safety” refers to Jer. 6:14 and indicates finding false security in the face of imminent judgment.

2 Thessalonians 1:5–10

All believers past, present, and future receive “rest” and vindication when Jesus brings final judgment upon their persecutors. This text gives no indication of the timing of the rapture.

Paul conflates the extended parousia of rapture and wrath into a single event. Believers are raptured when Jesus comes to pour out his judgment on their persecutors.

Rapture and wrath constitute a single, posttribulational event.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–15

Paul argues against rumors that the day of the Lord had arrived (without the rapture). The ellipsis in 2:3–4 should be “the day of the Lord would not be here, would not have come, unless”

Paul argues against undue enthusiasm that the rapture is soon to occur. The Thessalonians have been misled to believe that the day of the Lord had begun and are thus expecting the

Paul argues against undue enthusiasm that the rapture is soon to occur. The Thessalonians had been led to believe that their suffering indicated the complex of events culminating in the

<p>the “apostasy” and the “revelation” of the Man of Lawlessness (his appearance as an imperial figure) had occurred “first” (as beginning features of the day of the Lord). The session in the temple of the Man of Lawlessness is the culmination of his blasphemous claims. 2:13–17 deals with the rapture and refers explicitly to 1 Thess. 4:13–17; 5:9. “Appearance of his coming” specifies a particular event (the glorious appearing) at the end of the complex parousia.</p>	<p>rapture as an initial day of the Lord event. Paul disabuses them of the notion by noting that the Day cannot come until after the apostasy and the Antichrist’s revelation (which is the abomination of desolation). The ellipsis should be “the day of the Lord will not come.” Paul establishes a sequence: “first” comes the apostasy and the revelation of the Man of Lawlessness; then the day of the Lord begins sometime later. In 2:13–17, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he had in fact taught them in his earlier letter that the day would begin with the rapture.</p>	<p>parousia (the day of the Lord) had begun. Paul disabuses them of the notion by noting that the Day cannot come until after the apostasy and the Antichrist’s blasphemy. The ellipsis should be “the day of the Lord will not come.” Paul establishes a sequence: “first” comes the apostasy and the revelation of the man of lawlessness; the day of the Lord begins after this.</p>
--	---	---

Revelation 3:3, 10

<p>The “hour of trial” is the seven-year tribulation/day of the Lord. “Keep you from” the hour of trial means “keep you away from,” not “keep you through.”</p>	<p>The “hour of trial” is probably the tribulation that begins after the abomination of desolation, the pressure to worship the Beast. The protection of the church is spiritual, not physical.</p>	<p>Rev. 3:3 parallels 1 Thess. 5:4–6 and Matt. 24:42–44 and refers to the return of Christ in glory. Rev. 3:10 suggests spiritual protection during the final tribulation.</p>
---	---	--

Rev. 6:1–17

<p>Seals 1–6 are based on the Olivet Discourse and also integrate the day of the Lord and Daniel’s “time of the end.” The day of the Lord/day of God’s wrath begins with the first seal. “Has come” in Rev. 6:17 has summative force for the entire series</p>	<p>Seals 1–6 are based on the Olivet Discourse. Seals 1–5 are the normal catastrophes of Matt. 24:4–14. The day of the Lord/day of God’s wrath is portended in seal 6 (Matt. 24:29). “Has come” means “has now arrived.” The earthquake of the</p>	<p>The sixth seal is the parousia and bears no particular chronological relationship to scenes of Rev. 7 and the seven trumpets. The earthquake of the sixth seal is identical to that of the seventh seal, seventh trumpet, seventh bowl,</p>
--	--	--

of seals, answering the calls to “come” beginning with the first seal. sixth seal is probably that of 11:13 and certainly not that of the seventh seal, trumpet, and bowl. The wrath of the day of the Lord is summarized in seal 7 and portrayed in the seven trumpets. Though the trumpets are not necessarily sequential, they require time to have their effect and certainly precede the theophany of 8:5; 11:15–19.

Rev. 7:1–17

Distinctive features of the rapture are not present in Revelation 7. The vision of the 144,000 refers to a remnant of Jewish believers during the tribulation. The vision of the innumerable multitude may refer to eternal blessing in the new earth rather than temporary blessing in heaven during the tribulation. The innumerable multitude are the martyred tribulation saints. Forms not just a narrative interlude but a step in the action from the call for vengeance in seal 5 to the outpouring of wrath in seal 7 and the seven trumpets. Portrays the protection of God’s people from the impending judgment: the Jewish remnant (144,000) by “sealing” and the church (innumerable multitude) by rapture. The church has been raptured out of the tribulation. The 144,000 probably indicates the church sealed to go through God’s wrath before the end of the age, while the innumerable multitude is the church raptured at the end of the tribulation. “The great tribulation” is the whole church age. John does not make the chronological relationships clear. The trumpet sequence is not clearly God’s wrath.

Revelation 11:11–13

There is no clear reference to the rapture in this passage. Not clear whether the two witnesses are symbolic of the church or are two eschatological individuals. If not the church, their “rapture” may still be concurrent with the rapture of the church. The 42-month The witnesses may be symbolic of the church and their “rapture” of the rapture. The 42-month prophetic ministry may be the first half of Daniel’s seventieth week, while the three and a half days may be the second

prophetic ministry is the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. The three and a half days are a relatively shorter period after the beginning of the second half. The great earthquake is probably that of the sixth seal, which precedes that of the seventh seal, trumpet, and bowl.

half. The great earthquake accompanying the "rapture" is indicative of the arrival of God's kingdom and identical with that of the sixth seal, seventh trumpet, and seventh bowl.

Revelation 13

The final tribulation prosecuted by the Antichrist.

The war of the Beast against the saints refers both to first-century Roman persecution and the eschatological tribulation under the Antichrist. It indicates that the church will experience the tribulation.

Suffering of the church age, including the final tribulation.

Revelation (15:1–16:21)

14:14–20 Distinctive features of the rapture are not present in this passage. Harvest by the one like a son of man is more likely a reference to judgment. The one like a son of man is not an obvious reference to Christ.

Shows the same sequence as 6:12–8:5 (11:19) of rapture-wrath-return. Rev. 14:6–12 announces impending parousia wrath, 14:14–16 (= 15:2–4) portrays the rapture, and 14:17–20 (= 16:1–21) is the outpouring of wrath. (The seventh seal, trumpet, and bowl all bring the reader to the glorious appearing, though the seventh seal encompasses the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet the seven bowls.)

Rev. 14:1–5 is parousia. 14–16 is a possible reference to the rapture but not chronological. 14:17–20 is the final judgment. The bowl judgments are the culmination of God's judgments in history.

Revelation 17:14; 19:11-14	The rapture is not in view in these passages.	Jesus will come with his raptured saints to defeat the Beast at his glorious appearing. Rev. 14:14-20; 17:14; 19:7-9, 11-21 indicate a sequence of rapture-wrath-return.	May refer to angels accompanying Christ at his second advent. The bride is the church, but the scene is not chronological. All of 17:1-19:10 and 19:11-20:6 are recapitulated images of parousia and associated events.
Revelation 20:4-6	Key features of the rapture are not present here. This resurrection is only temporarily "first" in relation to a second resurrection at the end of the millennium; it is not absolutely first, since John acknowledges that Christ's resurrection precedes it (1:18; 2:28). It is the resurrection of believers martyred during the tribulation. It is also first in quality in that it does not lead to the second death.	Either the resurrection of tribulation saints or, better, resurrection of all saints "misplaced" for thematic reasons (to tie the resurrection to the reign of Christ).	The resurrection of all saints is concurrent with the rapture. Though in the visionary sequence it occurs following the return of Christ, the visionary sequence is not chronological. <sup>1</sup>

•

---

<sup>1</sup> Craig Blaising, Alan Hultberg, and Douglas Moo, [\*Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation\*](#), ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Alan Hultberg, Second Edition., Zondervan Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 276-282.