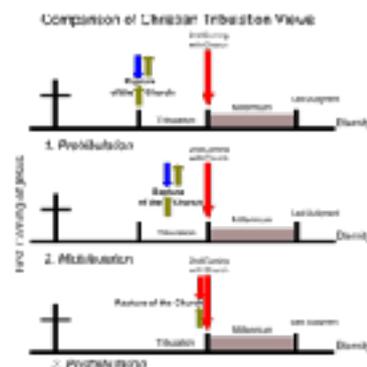
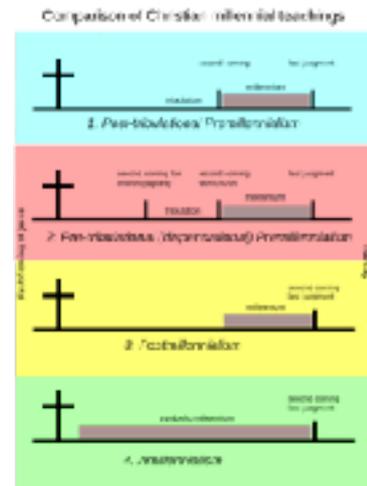


RAPTURE

1. All conservative evangelical views about the rapture should be considered.

- a. The term “rapture” derives from the Latin word *rapiō*, meaning “seize, snatch, carry away.”
- b. No rapture. This is the amillennial and postmillennial view.
- c. Pretribulation rapture: Before the tribulation, all church age believers will be caught up to heaven.
 - (1) “We believe that, according to the Word of God, the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself into heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming, and also all who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and that this event is the blessed hope set before us in the Scripture, and for this we should be constantly looking (Jn 14:1-3; 1 Co 15:51-52; Php 3:20; 1 Th 4:13-18; Tit 2:11-14).”¹
- d. Partial rapture: only spiritual believers will be raptured before the tribulation, or there will be a series of raptures at various times during the tribulation.
- e. Midtribulation rapture: at the middle of the seven-year tribulation, all believers will be caught up to heaven and so be saved from God’s direct wrath.
- f. Pre-wrath rapture: just before God pours out his direct wrath on the earth (Re 15-16), he will rescue his faithful saints.
- g. Posttribulation rapture: after the tribulation, believers who survived will be caught up to heaven either to immediately return or to reign with Jesus from heaven.
 - (1) God will “keep” the church during the tribulation, not “remove” the church from the tribulation.
 - (a) **Re 3:10** 10 Because you [the church in Philadelphia] have kept my word about patient endurance, I [Jesus] will keep/protect (τηρέω) you from the hour of testing (ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ) that is coming on the whole world, to try those dwelling on the earth (τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς).²
 - (b) **Jn 17:15** 15 I [Jesus] do not ask that you take them [the disciples] out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.
 - (2) The church in the tribulation is like Israel in Egypt during the ten plagues.
 - (3) The church, not Jesus, will turn around at the meeting.
 - (4) Jesus’ second coming is impending, not imminent.



¹ Dallas Theological Seminary doctrinal statement.

² In Revelation, “those who dwell on the earth” or “the earth-dwellers” is a technical phrase for unbelievers in the tribulation (Re 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14). **Jn 17:15** 15 I do not ask that you take (αἴρω) them out of the world, but that you keep/protect (τηρέω) them from the evil one.

- h. Our church doctrinal statement says:
- (1) “We believe that Jesus will return in person to take His people to be with Himself, to set up His Kingdom in power and glory, and to judge all of mankind (Matthew 25:31-33; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:28).”
- 2. The pretribulation view derives from a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic.**
- a. It is also based on the dispensational view that Israel and the church are distinct.
 - b. See *Scripture Interpretation, Dispensationalism, and Church Age*.
- 3. Jesus’ second coming will occur in two phases: rapture and revelation.**
- a. The rapture and revelation are separated by the seven-year tribulation.
 - b. At the rapture, Jesus will come *for* the saints. At the revelation, he will come *with* the saints.
 - c. At the rapture, Jesus will come in the *air*. At the revelation, he will touch the *ground*.
 - (1) **Zec 14:4** 4 On that day [Messiah’s] feet shall stand on the mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.
 - (2) **Ac 1:11** 11 ...Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.
 - d. At the rapture, being left behind is *bad*. At the revelation, being left behind is *good*.
 - e. Three Greek words are important:
 - (1) παρουσία: “arrival as the first stage in presence, *coming, advent*...in a special technical sense...of Christ (and the Antichrist). The use of π. as a t.t. has developed in two directions. On the one hand the word served as a sacred expr. for the coming of a hidden divinity, who makes his presence felt by a revelation of his power, or whose presence is celebrated in the cult.... On the other hand, π. became the official term for a visit of a person of high rank, esp. of kings and emperors visiting a province.... These two technical expressions can approach each other closely in mng., can shade off into one another, or even coincide.”³
 - (2) ἀποκάλυψις: “the lit. sense ‘uncovering’ as of head...does not appear in our lit., which uses the term in transcendent associations...making fully known, revelation, disclosure...of the revelation of truth gener...of revelations of a particular kind, through visions...of the disclosure of secrets belonging to the last days.... Of the parousia.”⁴
 - (3) ἐπιφάνεια: “gener. ‘appearing, appearance’, esp. also the splendid appearance.... As a t.t. relating to transcendence it refers to a visible and freq. sudden manifestation of a hidden divinity, either in the form of a personal appearance, or

³ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 780-81.

⁴ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 112.

by some deed of power or oracular communication by which its presence is made known.”⁵

- f. There are three resurrections: the rapture resurrection, the first resurrection, and the second resurrection.
- g. There are three (or more) judgments: the judgment seat of Messiah, the sheep and goats judgment, and the great white throne judgment.

4. The rapture removes the church from the earth prior to the tribulation.

- a. The “wrath” (ὀργή) of God very often refers to the tribulation.
 - (1) **Ro 5:9** 9 ...Because we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath (ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς) [the tribulation].
 - (2) The church experiences the wrath of Satan and the world today, but it will not experience the wrath of God during the tribulation.
- b. God’s tribulation wrath is for unbelievers, not believers. See *Tribulation*.
- c. The rapture is when the “restrainer” is removed.
- d. After the rapture, God’s earthly focus transitions back from the church to Israel.
- e. The church is not present on earth between Re 4-18.
- f. Pentecost began the church age, and the rapture will end it.
- g. Tribulation believers, both Jews and Gentiles, are the elect of Mt 24:31.

5. The church will meet Jesus in the air and go with him to heaven.

- a. **1 Th 4:15-17** 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord [Jesus], that we who are alive, who are left until the coming (παρουσία) of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up/carried off/grabbed/seized/snatched/taken away (ἀρπάζω, fut. pass.)⁶ together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.
 - (1) Three sounds will be heard: a cry, a voice, and a trumpet.
 - (2) Church age believers who have died will rise first.
 - (3) Church age believers who are alive will then be caught up together with them to meet Jesus in the air.
- b. **1 Co 15:51-53** 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed [at the rapture], 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet [of the church age]. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this



⁵ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 385.

⁶ “Quint. Smyrn. 11, 291 [Aphrodite ‘snatches away’ Aeneas, who is in danger]...ἀ. τῷ grasp something quickly, eagerly, with desire” (*BDAG*, 134).

perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

(1) We will immediately and suddenly receive our resurrection bodies.

c. **Re 12:1-17** 1 And a great sign appeared in heaven:

a woman [Israel] clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3

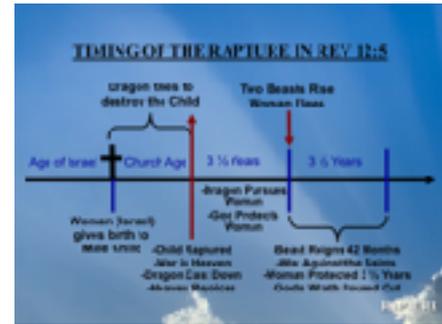
And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon [Satan], with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child [the church] he might devour it. 5 She [Israel] gave birth to a male child [the church],⁷ one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron,⁸ but her child [the church] was caught up/carried off/grabbed/seized/snatched/taken away (ἀρπάζω)⁹ to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days [3 1/2 years]. ... 17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman [Israel] and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring [tribulation believers], on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

(1) The male child, the church, will be caught up to God's throne (v. 5).

(2) "The child is Christ; it is also the Church, as associated with Christ. Like Christ she is to govern the nations.... The Church receives this power from her being associated with Christ; she will, notwithstanding, be also active in heaven. When the Lord Jesus comes again, it will be in the display of His authority, for He shall rule all nations with a rod of iron, and the Church will be with Him. (Ps. ii.6-9; Rev. ii.27)."¹⁰

(3) "Who, or what, does the man-child symbolize? If we allow Scripture itself to answer, we find there is a person and a company of people answering to this description.... Is there any incongruity in understanding the man-child to represent both Christ Jesus our Lord and His church? Surely not, for He is the Head of the body, the church, which is the fulness, or completion, of Himself."¹¹

(4) "There is no good reason to reject the view that the Male Child represents the Church in union with Christ. The identification of the Male Child as Christ alone



⁷ **Is 66:7-8** 7 Before she travailed, she brought forth. Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy. 8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons [the church].

⁸ **Re 2:27** 27 ...And [the one who conquers] will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. **Re 19:15** 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he [Jesus] will rule them with a rod of iron.

⁹ This verb doesn't seem to describe Jesus' ascension. **Ac 1:9** 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted/held/taken up (ἐπαίρω), and a cloud took him out of their sight.

¹⁰ John Nelson Darby, *Notes on the Revelation*, 57-58.

¹¹ H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Revelation*, 208-209.

does not account for all of the evidence, and actually contradicts the unaffected meaning of ἀρπάζω. The identification of the Male Child as the Church in union with Christ incorporates all of the evidence. Therefore, the best interpretation of Rev 12:5 is the rapture of the Church described in 1 Thess 4:17.”¹²

- d. The rapture may take place on the feast of trumpets.
- (1) **Le 23:24** 24 Speak to the sons of Israel saying, In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing [a shofar], a holy convocation.
 - (2) The last trumpet announces the day of Yahweh. The trumpet precedes the day of Yahweh as a final alarm. The day of Yahweh is a series of events that takes time.
 - (a) **Joe 2:1-2** 1 Blow a trumpet in Zion. Sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of Yahweh is coming. It is near, 2 a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people. Their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.
 - (b) **Hos 5:8-10** 8 Blow the horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in Ramah. Sound the alarm at Beth-aven. We follow you, O Benjamin! 9 Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of punishment. Among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure. 10 The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark. Upon them I will pour out my wrath like water.
 - (c) **Jer 4:5-6** 5 Declare in Judah, proclaim in Jerusalem, and say, Blow the shofar through the land. Cry aloud and say, Assemble, and let us go into the fortified cities! 6 Raise a standard toward Zion, flee for safety, stay not, for I bring disaster from the north, and great destruction.
 - (3) The last trumpet is not the seventh trumpet of Rev 11.
 - (a) **Re 11:15-18** 15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet [the same as the last trumpet in 1 Co 15:52?], and there were loud voices in heaven saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he shall reign forever and ever. 16 And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God 17 saying, We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.
 1. These verses could support the mid-trib rapture position.

6. The rapture will be “secret” in that Jesus will not reveal himself to the world.

- a. It will be noticed, of course, that believers have disappeared.
- b. The rapture likely corresponds to the snatching away of a Jewish bride.

7. The rapture is imminent, so we must be ready.

- a. No prophecy remains to be fulfilled prior to the rapture.

¹² Dr. Michael Svigel.

- b. We are to be ready at any moment for Jesus to snatch us away.
- c. Attention (Mt 24:32-35) and readiness (Mt 24:36-25:13) are required both for the rapture and the revelation.
- d. It is unknown how long it will be between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation.
- e. We are not to go after date-setters.

8. There are signs the rapture may be approaching.

- a. Political/economic/religious globalism.
- b. China's social credit system.
- c. Church age apostasy.

9. The rapture is to be the “blessed hope” of the Church.

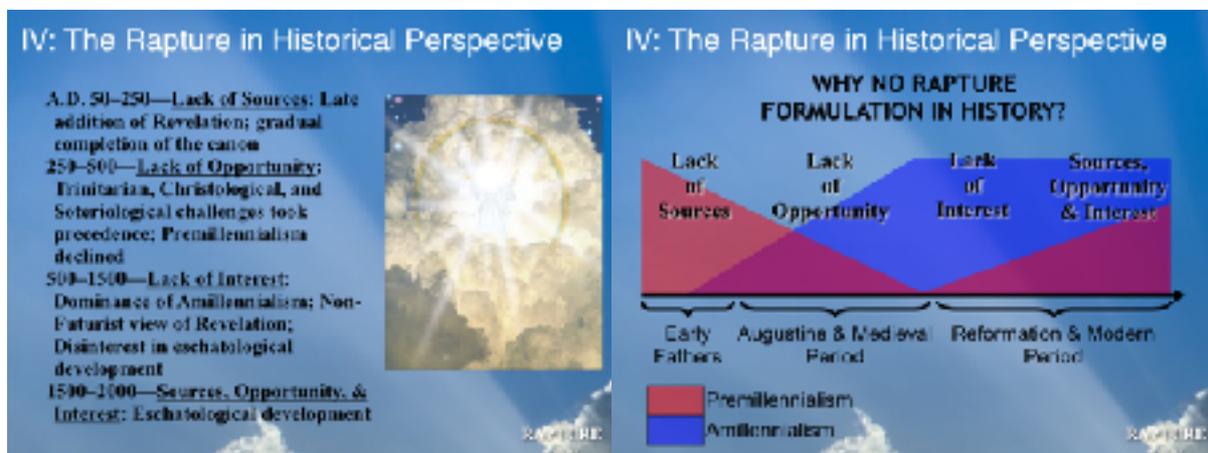
- a. We are to remind and encourage one another the rapture approaches.

10. There are reasons why the rapture was not taught for many centuries.

- a. “Twenty days after the former vision I saw another vision, brethren—a representation of the tribulation that is to come.... and, lo! I see a mighty beast like a whale, and out of its mouth fiery locusts proceeded. But the size of that beast was about a hundred feet, and it had a head like an urn. I began to weep, and to call on the Lord to rescue me from it. Then I remembered the word which I had heard, ‘Doubt not, O Hermas.’ Clothed, therefore, my brethren, with faith in the Lord and remembering the great things which He had taught me, I boldly faced the beast. Now that beast came on with such noise and force, that it could itself have destroyed a city. I came near it, and the monstrous beast stretched itself out on the ground, and showed nothing but its tongue, and did not stir at all until I had passed by it. Now the beast had four colours on its head—black, then fiery and bloody, then golden, and lastly white. Now after I had passed by the wild beast, and had moved forward about thirty feet, lo! a virgin meets me.... She saluted me, and said, ‘Hail, O man!’ And I returned her salutation, and said, ‘Lady, hail!’ And she answered, and said to me, ‘Has nothing crossed your path?’ I say, ‘I was met by a beast of such a size that it could destroy peoples, but through the power of the Lord and His great mercy I escaped from it.’ ‘Well did you escape from it,’ says she, ‘because you cast your care on God, and opened your heart to the Lord, believing that you can be saved by no other than by His great and glorious name. On this account the Lord has sent His angel, who has rule over the beasts, and whose name is Thegri, and has shut up its mouth, so that it cannot tear you. You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly. Cast your cares upon the Lord, and He will direct them. Trust the Lord, ye who doubt, for He is all-powerful, and can turn His anger away from you, and send scourges on the doubters.

Woe to those who hear these words, and despise them: better were it for them not to have been born.”¹³

- b. “Those nations however, who did not of themselves raise up their eyes unto heaven, nor returned thanks to their Maker, nor wished to behold the light of truth, but who were like blind mice concealed in the depths of ignorance, the word justly reckons ‘as waste water from a sink, and as the turning-weight of a balance—in fact, as nothing;’ so far useful and serviceable to the just, as stubble conduces towards the growth of the wheat, and its straw, by means of combustion, serves for working gold. And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, ‘There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.’ For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.”¹⁴
- c. “Now the privilege of this favour awaits those who shall at the coming of the Lord be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints; as he writes to the Thessalonians: ‘For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, ...then we too shall ourselves be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.’”¹⁵
- d. “Within a premillennial, futurist eschatological orientation, I have presented biblical, theological, and exegetical arguments for a pre-tribulational rapture of the church. Though history supports certain elements of this argument, the testimony of the early church is unclear. Thus, the earliest church does not have a clearly-articulated view of the timing of the rapture. However, based on the exegetical argument from Revelation 12:5, I hold firmly to a pre-tribulational rapture of the church.”¹⁶
- e. Slides by Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary:



IV: The Rapture in Historical Perspective

A.D. 50–250—Lack of Sources: Late addition of Revelation; gradual completion of the canon

250–500—Lack of Opportunity: Trinitarian, Christological, and Soteriological challenges took precedence; Premillennialism declined

500–1500—Lack of Interest: Dominance of Amillennialism; Non-Futurist view of Revelation; Disinterest in eschatological development

1500–1000—Sources, Opportunity, & Interest: Eschatological development

WHY NO RAPTURE FORMULATION IN HISTORY?

Lack of Sources Lack of Opportunity Lack of Interest Sources, Opportunity & Interest

Early Fathers Augustine & Medieval Period Reformation & Modern Period

Legend: Red = Premillennialism, Blue = Amillennialism

¹³ *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 80–140), *Vision 4*. Supports the partial rapture view, and was likely written in the first century A.D. (Dr. Svigel).

¹⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.29.1.

¹⁵ Tertullian (c. 210), *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 41. He is clearly post-tribulational.

¹⁶ Dr. Svigel.

Bibliography

Archer, Gleason, et al. *Three Views on the Rapture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

Gumerlock, Francis X. *The Day and the Hour*. 2000.

XXX

Classic premillennialists (e.g., Irenaeus) hold that at the end of the tribulation Jesus will return to a multitude of saints who survived the tribulation still in their mortal flesh. These are not the unsaved wicked (Mt 25:31-46) or last-second converts (Re 16:9-11). These survivors will repopulate the earth during the millennium. The descendants of these tribulation survivors will be among those who rebel at the end of the millennium (Re 20:7-10).¹⁷

“...[W]ith respect to those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting Him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the Wicked one. For it is in reference to them that the prophet says: “And those that are left shall multiply upon the earth,” and Jeremiah the prophet has pointed out, that as many believers as God has prepared for this purpose, to multiply those left upon earth, should both be under the rule of the saints to minister to this Jerusalem, and that His kingdom shall be in it.”¹⁸

Only with a midtribulation or pretribulation rapture will there be a *righteous* remnant of *mortal* humans to repopulate the millennium. This weakens the posttribulation and pre-wrath views.¹⁹

“...And as in the sea there are islands, some of them habitable, and well-watered, and fruitful, with havens and harbours in which the storm-tossed may find refuge,—so God has given to the world which is driven and tempest-tossed by sins, assemblies—we mean holy churches—in which survive the doctrines of the truth, as in the island-harbours of good anchorage; and into these run those who desire to be saved, being lovers of the truth, and wishing to escape the wrath and judgment of God.”²⁰

“Though Christians are detained in the world as if in a prison, they in fact hold the world together.”²¹

“And, for all that is said, if we compare the calamities of former times, they fall on us more lightly now, since God gave Christians to the world; for from that time virtue put some

¹⁷ Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.35.1.

¹⁹ Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary.

²⁰ Theophilus of Antioch (c. 170-185), *To Autolytus* 2.14

²¹ *To Diognetus* (c. 150-200) 6.10.

restraint on the world's wickedness, and men began to pray for the averting of God's wrath."²²

“Although you allege that those wars which you speak of were excited through hatred of our religion, it would not be difficult to prove, that after the name of Christ was heard in the world, not only were they not increased, but they were even in great measure diminished by the restraining of furious passions.”²³

The restrainer is the Spirit's ministry through the church. This only fits a pretribulation or midtribulation view.

Jesus will take the church to be with him in heaven for what appears to be a prolonged period (Jn 14:1-3).

Jesus will return with the saints after the tribulation (Rev. 19:11-14; cf. 17:14).

Re 17:14 14 They will make war on the Lamb [Jesus], and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called, chosen, and faithful [church age believers and tribulation believers who have died].

Some passages describe Jesus returning “for” his saints, to rescue them and remove them from the earth. Other passages describe Jesus returning “with” his saints, to reign with him over the earth. The pretribulation and midtribulation views best resolve these two distinct phases of Jesus' return.²⁴

The church is addressed repeatedly in Re 1-3. In the description of *future* things (seals, trumpets, and bowls), *tribulation believers* appear, but the “church” is never specifically mentioned. The “saints” only appear again at Jesus' second coming in Re 19–22, as the army of heaven and the bride of Messiah.²⁵

“The head and the body must be united before He can act as having this title before the world; because the mystic man as a whole cannot take it until the Church is taken up to Him. For not until then—until the Church, the body, is united to the Head, Christ, in heaven—is the mystic man in that sense complete; and therefore, the Church must be taken up before Christ can come in judgment.”²⁶

“The term ‘Christ’ includes head and body (Eph. 1:2-23; 5:23; Rev. 12:5) and the body is allotted to suffering, as well as the head.... Nothing is said here about the resurrection of these [enthroned saints in Rev 20:4]. And why not? Because they had been raised long

²² Tertullian (c. 200), *Apology* 41.

²³ Arnobius of Sicca (c. 300), *Adversus Gentes* 1.6

²⁴ Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary.

²⁵ Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary.

²⁶ John Nelson Darby, *Seven Lectures on the Prophetic Addresses to the Seven Churches*, 3d rev. ed. (London: G. Morrish, c. 1855), 153-154.

before, at the Rapture of the church. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 12:5. They had escaped the great tribulation.”²⁷

“[Chronological snobbery is] the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited. You must find why it went out of date. Was it ever refuted (and if so by whom, where, and how conclusively) or did it merely die away as fashions do? If the latter, this tells us nothing about its truth or falsehood.”²⁸

Is 66:7-8; Da 7:13-14, 18, 26-27; Is 26:16-27:1; Re 2:26-27

In the account of the Male Child’s birth, the text makes no mention of his death and resurrection prior to ascension. There seems to be no good explanation of why these essentials of the Gospel would be missing from this text if the passage refers to Christ.²⁹

There are seven years left in Daniel’s calculation. These seven years fit the age of Israel, not the age of the church.

²⁷ William Blackstone, *The Millennium*, 34, 49.

²⁸ C. S. Lewis.

²⁹ Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary.