

1

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory vs. The Bible

These first few pages are only here to make you think and question the theory of the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church. I have chosen to use text from Tim LaHaye's books as examples simply because he seems to be the most famous pre-tribulation teacher at this time. Tim LaHaye the man, his integrity, and his motives will not be questioned, only his teachings and beliefs pertaining to the return of Christ. I have not addressed every scripture that I feel has been misinterpreted because I've decided not to devote the majority of my time attempting to prove men wrong but to proving the Bible right. After these few pages, the real study will begin.

Passages are from the NIV unless otherwise noted. In some sections, I have italicized portions of the scripture citations for emphasis or clarity. These italics are mine and are not in the original text.

PRE-TRIBULATION THEORY: "One of the criticisms of the pre-tribulation rapture view is that the rapture is not directly mentioned very many times in Scripture. It appears in John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-56; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; and possibly Rev. 4:1-2."³

³ *Understanding the Last Days*, Tim LaHaye, Harvest House Publishers, 1998, p. 85.

Who Will Be Left Behind and When?

RESPONSE: The view isn't criticized because there aren't many rapture passages. The reason people like me question it is because we can't find one verse to support it. Look up the verses LaHaye just gave. Not one says we will be raptured before the Tribulation.

Here's one of the verses he just mentioned:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am (John 14:1-3).

Does this or any other verse LaHaye mentioned say we will be raptured before the Tribulation? This is an assumption based on no biblical proof.

PRE-TRIBULATION THEORY: The Second Coming will be in two phases. First, Christ will come to rapture us in a silent, mysterious event. This could happen at any moment. The second phase of His Second Coming will be a glorious return when all will see Him.⁴

RESPONSE: In order to make their theory work, teachers of the pre-trib theory have come up with distinctions between the rapture and Christ's glorious coming, separating them by at least seven years. As we will

⁴ Paraphrased from *Are We Living in the End Times?*, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999, pp. 98-103.

The Pre-tribulation Rapture Theory vs. The Bible

soon see, there is no seven-year separation. In fact, this theory actually requires a Second Coming at the rapture and a Third Coming at Armageddon—although proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture call this "the two phases" of the same event.

For now, just to whet your whistle, I will give you one of the main verses used to say Christ is unseen by the world at the rapture:

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (1 Cor. 15:51–52).

Because this verse states that we will all be changed in a twinkling of an eye, it is taught that Christ will not be seen by the unbelieving when He returns to rapture us. This is not taking scripture at face value, even though the teachers of the pre-tribulation theory claim to be the only ones to do so. A face value interpretation tells us simply that we will all be changed “in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye.” Why would Christ’s return have to be invisible for that to occur? This verse states no such fact.

Look now at a verse LaHaye uses to prove the doctrine of imminence (that Christ could return at any moment and nothing must happen first):

Who Will Be Left Behind and When?

“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).⁵

First of all, there is nothing here to say that we will be raptured at any moment (more on that later), and secondly, LaHaye has left out the verses before it:

After He said this, *He was taken up before their very eyes*, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. *They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going*, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them (Acts 1:9–10).

Did you notice what just happened? The very verse LaHaye used to prove that Christ could return at any moment actually proves him wrong about Christ being unseen at the rapture. Verses 9–11 say that Jesus will come back the way He left: *seen with the disciples' very eyes as He was going!* Only *after* He was seen leaving was He hidden in the clouds.

Ironically, LaHaye may have realized his error, at least on this point. In the *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*,

⁵ *Rapture Under Attack*, Tim LaHaye, Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 1998, p. 212.

which was published only two years after *Are We Living in the End Times?* and from which this quote was taken, LaHaye states that Acts 1:11 is *not* referring to the rapture but to “the return of Christ at the end of the seven-year Tribulation.”⁶

PRE-TRIBULATION THEORY: In 2 Thess. 2:5–7, the scriptures state there is one who holds back the man of lawlessness, and the man doomed for destruction (the Antichrist) cannot be revealed until this restrainer is taken out of the way. The restrainer is the Holy Spirit. This is because the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way when the Church is raptured because He is in the Church and He will go with them. Then the seven-year Tribulation can begin.

RESPONSE: Almost all pre-trib teachers say this. LaHaye states, “When the church is raptured at the beginning of the Tribulation, the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in the church, will be gone.”⁷ It is interesting to note that in 1975, he was just as dogmatic when he wrote, “The restrainer in this passage is not the Holy Spirit; the reference is to three of the kings of the revived

⁶ *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, Tim LaHaye, AMG Publishers, 2000, p. 1164.

⁷ *Rapture Under Attack*, p. 113.