The pretribulational rapture position, simply put, asserts that the church will be raptured by the Lord and taken to Heaven before a prophesied tribulation period begins on this earth. This pretrib position has been under scrutiny since its first being proposed. And rightfully so. Every interpretation of Scripture should be scrutinized by considering the context and by comparing Scripture with Scripture. The pretrib rapture position is no exception.

The task today, is to defend the pretrib rapture position by evaluating it in reference to the final arbiter of truth… the Scripture. Does it hold up to the scrutiny of Scripture?

To begin with, I believe this task is a little harder to do than we, at first, might imagine. Those who hold to the pretrib position may simply go to four key texts, and say: “See, these texts prove the pretrib rapture position”:

- **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**
  
  13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:10**
  
  “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”

- **1 Thessalonians 5:9**
  
  “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”

- **Revelation 3:10**
  
  “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

To me these texts do convincingly support a pretrib position, but they are only convincing when they are set in the proper context of Scripture as a whole. So the task is much more than exegeting four texts, or one text (e.g., Rev 3:10).
In Hermeneutics I always use this chart to show the importance of thinking through a particular doctrine from the whole of Scripture, while at the same time reinforcing the critical importance of context:

![Context Chart](chart.png)

We can begin at either end of this funnel... for the parts inform the whole, as well as the whole informs the parts. Certainly we want to get as big a picture as we can. The bigger... the better. But in any context, we start with the building blocks... words that form sentences. Thus, in any context we want to pull the red thread from the sentence through the whole of Scripture to make sure the interpretation we arrive at is coherent biblically. As such we ask questions like the following:

1) What is the flow of thought in the immediate context (words → sentences → paragraph)?
2) How does the immediate context fit into the surrounding sections?
3) What is the purpose and occasion of the book?
4) Are there any parallels?
5) How does our interpretation fit in with the whole of Scripture (analogia fidei)?
Let me demonstrate what I am saying in regards to interpretation from this broad and narrow perspective using a highly debated rapture text… Revelation 3:10:

Revelation 3:10 “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

First of all who is the “you” in “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance”? I believe the immediate context answers this question clearly. The “you” refers to the church of Philadelphia (3:7) and by extension what is promised to the church in Philadelphia is relevant to all churches…. Verse 13: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

But we must step back and place the church in its proper biblical context. What is the church? When did it begin? What is its role in God’s plan, etc.? And to answer these questions properly we must correlate many Scriptures in the New Testament.

Second, what does the phrase “I will also keep you from” mean? This is a hotly debated phrase in the rapture debate. Does it mean to be kept from harm while in the midst of the danger… akin to “keeping through” or “preserving in the midst”? Or, does it mean “to be kept away from”… akin to removal from the very presence of the harm to be inflicted? Interpreters have sought for the answer to these questions from a variety of contexts… which is appropriate. And these questions have also been answered by correlating this text with a variety of theological positions. So the reach of these questions move far beyond the immediate context.

Finally, what does the phrase… “the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth”… mean? Here, I would argue, that to understand this phrase one must turn to the Old Testament prophets, especially Daniel and use what one finds in Daniel to help understand the Olivet Discourse, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Revelation 4 and following.

Thus to properly defend any rapture position, let alone the pretrib rapture position will take a lot of work… and work which must begin in the Old Testament. For the Old Testament gives us our first look at the period of time… the tribulation… in question in the rapture positions… because all three rapture positions are distinguished by how they are correlated with the tribulation period. You are either a pre-tribulation rapturist, or a mid-tribulation rapturist (including the pre-wrath nuance), or a post-tribulation rapturist.

Thus to carry out our task to defend the pretrib position, we will start in the Old Testament, especially Daniel… and appropriately begin to lay a foundation for understanding what the tribulation period is… move to the Gospels, especially the Olivet Discourse… then to 1 and 2 Thessalonians… finally ending up in the book of Revelation.
Defending the Pre-Tribulational Rapture Position

Revelation
- Especially 3:10 and chapters 4–19

Epistles
- Especially 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Gospels
- Especially the Olivet Discourse

Old Testament Prophets
- Especially Daniel