

The Rapture

The Bible teaches that after the present church age there will be a seven year Tribulation period (Dan 9:27). This will be followed by the return of Christ to earth (Rev 19:11ff.) to set up His kingdom during which He will reign for a thousand years, and we with him (Rev 20:4). This view that Christ will return before the inauguration of the Millennium is called premillennialism. Almost all Fundamental churches are premillennial in their doctrine. In addition, most Christians in Fundamental churches believe that the church will be raptured before the Tribulation period begins. This is called the pretribulation Rapture of the church. There are some, however, who hold that the Rapture will not take place until after the Tribulation (called posttribulationism). In this view the church will go through the Tribulation period, be raptured by Christ at the very end of the period, and, after meeting Christ in the air, immediately descend to the earth with him to begin the Millennium.

But how do we know that pretribulationism is right and posttribulationism is wrong? How can we be sure that the church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins? When asked this question, many Christians will turn to 1 Thess 4:13-18. Yet, while it is true that these verses describe the Rapture of the church, they do not indicate the time of this event in relation to the Tribulation period. So we must ask ourselves what evidence is there in the Scriptures that the pretribulation Rapture is correct.

Let's begin at John 14:2-3: "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." This passage speaks of Christ's coming at the Rapture to receive believers unto himself and clearly teaches that Christ will take believers back to heaven with him. This is contrary to posttribulationism which has Christ rapturing the church but immediately descending to earth for the inauguration of the Millennium.

Another important passage which shows that pretribulationism is correct is Rev 3:10. Speaking to the church in Philadelphia, which represents the true church in the church age, Jesus says: "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." The phrase "the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world" can be nothing less than the well-known Tribulation period. The phrase "keep you from" means to preserve in a position outside the hour of trial. It describes the results of the Rapture. This verse is only true of a pretribulation Rapture since in a posttribulation Rapture the church is not kept from "hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world," rather the church must endure it.

In posttribulationism there is no time between the Rapture itself and the second coming of Christ to the earth since Christ does not return till the very end of the Tribulation, raptures the church in the air, and both immediately descend to earth, at which point the Millennium begins. Pretribulationism, on the other hand, has seven years between the Rapture and the return to earth at the beginning of the Millennium. The Bible mentions certain events which take place between the Rapture and the return to earth which require time, time for which posttribulationism does not allow. For instance, the judgment seat of Christ where church saints are judged must take place after the rapture and before the Millennium begins. In addition, there must be time for people to be saved after the

Rapture who will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies. Everyone agrees that passages such as Isa 65:20, Zech 8:5, and Rev 20:7-9 describe normal human beings in the Millennium. But where do these people come from? According to posttribulationism all saved people are raptured at the end of the Tribulation and thus go into the Millennium in their glorified bodies. There would be no saved people left on the earth in their natural human bodies. Only pretribulationism can solve this dilemma. After a pretribulation Rapture there is the seven year Tribulation period in which multitudes will be saved who will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies.

These are only a few of the reasons we believe in the pretribulation Rapture of the church. And isn't it wonderful to know that He could even come today?