

The Rapture Debunked: A 19th-Century Invention

Exposing the origins and biblical problems with "Left Behind" theology

1. WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

Definition: The belief that Jesus will secretly return to "catch up" believers to heaven BEFORE tribulation, leaving unbelievers behind.

The word **"RAPTURE"** is NOT in the Bible. It comes from Latin *rapturo* (Vulgate translation of Greek *harpazō* in 1 Thess 4:17).

Who Believes It:

- Dispensational Evangelicals, many Baptists
- Pentecostals, Charismatics
- Non-denominational Bible churches

Who REJECTS It:

- **Roman Catholic Church** - No rapture doctrine
- **Eastern Orthodox** - No rapture tradition
- **Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican** - Reject pre-trib
- **LDS Church** - No rapture; gathering at Second Coming

The MAJORITY of Christians worldwide do NOT believe in a pre-tribulation rapture.

2. THE DIFFERENT VIEWS

Pre-Tribulation (Pre-Trib)

Rapture → 7 yrs Tribulation → Second Coming → Millennium

Believers escape ALL tribulation. Most popular today (Darby, *Left Behind*).

Mid-Tribulation (Mid-Trib)

3.5 yrs → Rapture → 3.5 yrs Great Trib → Second Coming

Believers go through first half, escape "Great Tribulation."

Post-Tribulation (Post-Trib)

7 yrs Tribulation → Rapture/Second Coming (same event)

THE OLDEST VIEW - held by most Christians throughout history. Believers caught up to meet descending Christ.

Amillennialism (No Literal Rapture)

No separate rapture. "Caught up" describes the ONE Second Coming. Held by Catholics, Orthodox, many Protestants.

3. HISTORICAL ORIGINS

SHOCKING TRUTH: The pre-tribulation rapture doctrine DID NOT EXIST before the 1830s.

| Era | What They Believed |
|---------------------------|--|
| Early Church (100-500 AD) | Christ returns ONCE, after tribulation |
| Medieval (500-1500) | No rapture doctrine |
| Reformation (1500-1700) | Luther, Calvin, Wesley - NO rapture |
| 1830s | Darby invents pre-trib rapture |
| 1909 | Scotfield Bible popularizes it |
| 1970 | Hal Lindsey's <i>Late Great Planet Earth</i> |
| 1995-2007 | <i>Left Behind</i> (80 million copies) |

Before 1830: Search Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley - ZERO references to secret pre-trib rapture. 1,800 years of church history WITHOUT this doctrine.

4. KEY FIGURES WHO INVENTED/SPREAD IT

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

"Father of Dispensationalism"

- Irish Anglican priest, joined Plymouth Brethren
- First systematically taught pre-trib rapture (1830s)
- Invented "Church Age parenthesis" theory
- Separated rapture from Second Coming as TWO events

C.I. Scofield (1843-1921)

Scotfield Reference Bible (1909)

- Kansas lawyer, NO formal theological training
- First Bible with dispensationalist notes ON SAME PAGE as Scripture
- "Perhaps the most influential annotated Bible in the 20th century"
- Trained generations to read Bible through rapture lens

Hal Lindsey & Tim LaHaye

Late Great Planet Earth (1970) - 28 million copies

Left Behind series (1995-2007) - 80 million copies

- Made pre-trib rapture mainstream popular culture
- Films, video games, children's books
- Jerry Falwell: "Greater impact than any book outside the Bible"

5. BIBLICAL TEXTS THEY USE

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (Main Text)

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the **voice of the archangel**, and with the **trump of God**... we which are alive... shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds."

Other Texts Cited:

- **Matt 24:40-41:** "One taken, other left"
- **John 14:2-3:** "I go to prepare a place"
- **Rev 3:10:** "Keep thee from the hour"
- **1 Cor 15:52:** "Twinkling of an eye"
- **1 Thess 5:9:** "Not appointed to wrath"
- **Rev 4:1:** "Come up hither"

6. WHY IT'S NOT BIBLICAL

Problem 1: 1 Thess 4 is LOUD, Not Secret

1 Thess 4:16: "With a **SHOUT**, with the **voice of the ARCHANGEL**, and with the **TRUMP of God**."

Compare Matt 24:30-31: "They shall **SEE** the Son of man coming... with **great glory**... **great sound of a trumpet**... gather together his elect."

→ **SAME EVENT** - visible Second Coming, not secret rapture

Problem 2: "One Taken" = JUDGMENT

Matt 24:37-39: "As the days of Noah... the flood came, and **took them all away**."

Who was "taken" in Noah's day? **The WICKED** (drowned). Who was "left"? **Noah** (safe in ark).

Luke 17:37: Disciples ask "Where, Lord?" Jesus: "Where the body is, there will the **vultures** gather."

→ "Taken" = taken to DEATH/JUDGMENT, not heaven!

→ **OPPOSITE of rapture theology**

Problem 3: Gathering is AFTER Tribulation

Matthew 24:29-31: "**Immediately AFTER** the tribulation... they shall see the Son of man coming... shall **gather together his elect**."

Clear sequence: Tribulation → Cosmic signs → Christ's coming → Gathering

→ **No pre-tribulation rapture**

Problem 4: Rev 3:10 Doesn't Prove Pre-Trib

Rev 3:10: "I will **keep thee from** [tēreō ek] the hour of temptation."

John 17:15: "I pray NOT that thou shouldst **take them out of** [ek] the world, but that thou shouldst **keep them from** [tēreō ek] the evil."

→ Same Greek phrase = protection DURING, not removal BEFORE

Problem 5: "Church Absent" Argument Fails

They claim: "Church" not in Rev 4-19, so church was raptured.

Problems:

- "Church" also absent from Mark, Luke, John, 2 Tim, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude
- **"SAINTS"** mentioned repeatedly (Rev 13:7, 14:12, 16:6, 17:6) - believers ARE there
- **Rev 4:1** "Come up hither" addressed to JOHN, not the church

Problem 6: Early Church Didn't Believe It

Irenaeus (180 AD): Called tribulation "the last contest of the righteous" - church goes THROUGH it.

Augustine (400 AD): Described "caught up" as part of SINGLE Second Coming.

Didache (100 AD): No prior secret rapture mentioned.

→ **ZERO early church fathers taught pre-trib rapture**

7. LDS POSITION: GATHERING, NOT RAPTURE

LDS Church teaches **NO pre-tribulation rapture**. **Instead: gathering to Zion, one visible Second Coming, saints endure tribulation with God's protection.**

Gathering to Zion

D&C 45:68-69: "Every man... must needs **flee unto Zion for safety**. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation... it shall be the **only people that shall not be at war**."

D&C 115:6: "The gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a **defense, and for a refuge from the storm**."

→ Righteous gather to Zion (stakes) for PROTECTION - not raptured away

Visible Second Coming

D&C 45:44: "They shall **see me in the clouds of heaven**, clothed with power and great glory."

→ NOT secret - visible to all

"Caught Up" at Second Coming

D&C 88:96-98: "The saints... shall be **quicken and be caught up to meet him**."

→ Same "caught up" language as 1 Thess 4:17, but context is VISIBLE Second Coming - no 7-year gap

8. SUMMARY

| Claim | Reality |
|------------------------------|---|
| "Rapture is in Bible" | Word not in Bible; concept invented 1830s |
| "Christians always believed" | NO ONE taught pre-trib before 1830 |
| "1 Thess 4 = secret rapture" | LOUD event: shout, trumpet, archangel |
| "One taken = raptured" | Context: taken in JUDGMENT (Noah) |
| "Escape tribulation" | Jesus: "ye SHALL have tribulation" |
| "Church absent Rev 4-19" | "Saints" mentioned repeatedly |

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture:

- **Invented by John Nelson Darby (1830s)**
- **Popularized by Scofield Bible (1909)**
- **Made mainstream by Left Behind (1995)**
- **200-year-old doctrine masquerading as ancient biblical truth**

Why This Matters: If you're waiting to be raptured, you won't prepare for tribulation. Jesus said to ENDURE to the end (Matt 24:13), not escape before it starts. LDS doctrine: Prepare, Gather to Zion, Endure with faith. "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).