

Then there is Irenaeus from 180 A. D. who wrote the following,

“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.’”

Now let me also say this about Irenaeus. Sometimes it seems like he is speaking of the church going through the Tribulation Period and other times they are removed. But as you look at this writing it seems to be saying that he believed in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church!

I think it is important for us to understand that the early church did speak of the Rapture before the Tribulation period and the Lord’s return was eminent or it can happen at any time.

Now just because the early church taught it or believed it does not make it right. What makes it right is because that is what the Scriptures are saying, that is what the Scriptures are teaching!

First of all, we see that **ALL** believers will be gathered together **BEFORE** the Tribulation Period begins! Notice that this writing teaches that the Tribulation Period did not begin yet, before the end of the first century!

Now let me show you why I believe the Scriptures teach the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

To do that let me take you to the book of Revelation. Let’s begin reading in Revelation 4, starting in verse 1 where John tells us, “**After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’ Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.**” Revelation 4:1-2.

Notice that John opens up this chapter with the phrase, “**After these things . . .**” or **META TAUTA** in the Greek. After what things? After the things of the Church, I believe that is what John is telling us here. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 deal with the Church and Church Age!

Interestingly enough, the book of Revelation gives to us an outline. In Revelation 1:19. Jesus tells John, and us what this outline is all about. He said, “**Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.**”

Thus, the things that John **HAS SEEN**, are the events found in Revelation chapter 1. They are the things that God has shown him so far, the description of Jesus.

The **THINGS WHICH ARE**, speak of the events which are taking place now, the things of chapters 2 and 3, the things of the Church or the Church Age, as I have said.

Keep in mind that these letters Jesus wrote to these seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, modern day Turkey, actually existed during the time of John.

But as you read these letters you will see that they also portray church history from the first century up and through today and on into the last days church of Laodicea or the apostate church as well as the faithful church or the church of Philadelphia.

And lastly, this book is divided into **THE THINGS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS**, or after the Church Age comes to a close, the age of grace. You see, it is the same Greek word used in Revelation 4:1, **META TAUTA**.

And thus, we see the last division of this book divided like this. Chapters 4-18 deal with the events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ, including the seven years of tribulation.

Chapter 19 deals with the Second Coming.

Chapter 20 deals with the aftermath and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

And chapters 21 and 22 deals with the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth.

In Revelation 4:1, as the Church Age comes to an end, John sees a door open in heaven. And then a voice, **LIKE** a trumpet is calling to him to come as God will show him what **WILL** or **MUST** transpire after the Church is removed from the earth. This is a picture of the Rapture!

Keep in mind that in the first three chapters in the book of Revelation the church is mentioned some **19 times**.

Then we don’t see the church mentioned again upon the earth until we come to Revelation chapter 19 as we come with the Lord back to the earth to set up His kingdom.

And in chapters 4 through 18 of Revelation, if the church is mentioned, it is in Heaven, never on the earth, which tells me that the church **MUST** be removed before the Tribulation Period begins.

Make no mistake about it, the rapture of the church is clearly spoken of in the Scriptures as Paul is trying to comfort these believers about the day of the Lord, something that they will not be a part of because the Lord will come for them before the Day of the Lord or the Tribulation Period begins. So, in knowing He is coming back, in knowing we will be with Him, what should we do? Paul told us, “**Therefore comfort one another with these words.**” I Thessalonians 4:18.



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# What the Bible says about . . . The Rapture

When we hear the word “Rapture” people have all kinds of ideas about this teaching. Some see that the Scriptures teach it, and others don’t.

If you look at the Scriptures, you will see that Paul speaks of this event in I Corinthians 15:51-58 and in I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Today we see a big push by many who are saying that there is no such thing as the Rapture, that it is a recent teaching and it was never spoken of in the early church.

And yet, when you look at the Scriptures, as we will see, it is very clear that the Lord is coming for His Bride, the Church prior to the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

And as you negate this teaching, you are removing the hope that the Lord has given to us. In fact, in I Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 18, Paul, as he finishes up on this teaching in this chapter, says, “**Therefore comfort one another with these words.**”

If the Church is to go through the Tribulation Period, why would Paul say these words in I Thessalonians 5:9-11, “**For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.**”

I don’t know about you, but when I read what is going to take place during the Tribulation Period, that is not too comforting to me. But Paul tells us that God did not appoint us to wrath, His wrath will be poured out upon a Christ rejecting world. Thus, we will be removed before this starts and what comfort, what peace that should bring to our lives. It gives us great **HOPE!**

Here in I Thessalonians chapter 4, as Paul is speaking of the Rapture of the church, he tells us that he doesn’t want us to be ignorant about this event, and yet, the church is truly ignorant about it.

And Paul tells us that this was not his idea, but it came from the Lord and Paul establishes that fact up front, which is important for many even today as they deny the teaching of the Rapture of the church.

Also notice that Paul speaks of two groups of people who are involved in this event; those who are alive and those who have fallen asleep or have died in the Lord.

There might have been some concern with the Thessalonian believers that those who have gone to be with the Lord were going to miss out on something, but that is not the case. All Christians will participate in the Rapture.

Also, there is an order that Paul tells us about. The dead will rise first and we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to be with the Lord! Very simple and clear.

And we see that this is done with a shout of authority and as Jesus speaks forth, as the trumpet sounds, and like I have said, the dead in Christ will rise first, they will get their resurrected bodies, and we too will be caught up with them and get our resurrected bodies.

You see, Paul told us in I Corinthians chapter 15 that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and thus, we must be changed.

In John 14:1-4 Jesus said this regarding these new bodies, "**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.**"

You see, these bodies of flesh are like tents; they are temporary dwelling places for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

But the Lord has a permanent abode for our spirit and soul to dwell in made by Him. In fact, He calls it a mansion that will never fade away as compared with these tents that are fading away.

That is what they will receive and we who are alive when the Lord returns, will receive!

And I want you to notice how fast this event takes place. It is not over minutes or hours or days, but we are told that this event happens in the twinkling of an eye, according to what Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 15.

Now here is where people get confused. Paul tells us that we will be "**caught up**" which comes from the Greek word HARPAZO, and that word means to take by force, to seize.

And the argument is that the word rapture is not in the Scriptures. That is true, the word "***rapture***" is not in the Bible, it was taken from the Latin Vulgate, the Latin word RAPTURUS is used for "**caught up**" and from that word we get our English word **RAPTURE** from.

And some will argue that this is not what this word means, but it has been altered to fit what we want it to say.

Some believe it just means that we too who are alive will be with our dead family and friends one day!

But that same Greek word is used for Phillip being caught up in Acts 8:39 and of Paul in II Corinthians 12:2. They were taken away, just as the church will be caught up or taken away when the Lord comes for His Bride!

Also, to make it say something else makes no sense because in I Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul is speaking of the Day of the Lord and how we are not appointed for that day and thus, we must be removed before that takes place. Let me explain it like this.

Before World War II started, Japan and Germany called their ambassadors home, they left America and went to their own home countries, why? Because war was about to break out and their countries wanted them to be home before war was declared!

So too with our Lord, before He declares war on this earth, before He pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world, He will call His ambassadors home, you and me!

Remember, this is not our home, for our citizenship is in Heaven and that is where we are called to go, to be with our Lord.

Thus, Paul tells us in Titus 2:13, "**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**"

Now some will argue that this idea of the rapture of the church is a new idea, brought about mainly by John Darby. They will tell you that this was not taught for some 1800 years!

Now I am not sure why they say that it was not taught for 1800 years because Paul taught it in I Corinthians chapter 15, Jesus spoke of it in John chapter 14 and clearly Paul taught that the Church would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air in I Thessalonians chapter 4 and this could take place at any time. Paul thought it would happen in his day and he was looking for it!

For those who have this notion that it was not taught for 1800 years, that there is no evidence prior to 1830 when John Nelson Darby introduced this doctrine, is fake news! Sorry, but it is. Let me show you what I mean.

We have an ancient manuscript from 373 A. D., it is from Ephraem the Syrian or a writing derived from his teaching and is called, Pseudo-Ephraem. Thus, this manuscript is dated from 373 A. D. to 627 A. D., but long before the 1800's of Darby's day!

This is what it said,

All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.

- Ephraem the Syrian

(AD 373 or Pseudo-Ephraem and early seventh-century text based on Ephraem the Syrian)

Grant Jeffery writes,

While the text is attributed to Ephraem the Syrian (AD 373), his teaching was so popular in the early Byzantine church in Syria that numerous authors later wrote commentaries on his works and incorrectly attributed their later manuscripts to Ephraem the Syrian. These attributed works are designed as **pseudo** (false) if scholars are not totally convinced the books were actually written by the attributed authors. Some scholars have suggested that this text should be called Pseudo-Ephraem, while others conclude that Ephraem is the original author.

- The Popular Handbook on the Rapture, Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, Ed Hindson, p. 107

Let's look at what this early church writing teaches because it lines up with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaching.

Where will we be **TAKEN!** It says that we will be gathered together to the **LORD!** And through this there is a clear **DISTINCTION** between those who are living in sin in the Tribulation Period and those who have had their sins forgiven in Christ and are with the Lord!

So, to say that Darby invented this teaching in the 1800's is foolishness, it is not true, it is fake news to support the claim that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture was not taught in the church, it was!

We also have this ancient writing known as The Shepherd of Hermas (140 A. D.) and it seems to be speaking of a possible pretribulation concept of escaping the tribulation. It reads,

"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."