

Rapture Before Tribulation

Primary Text: Revelation 4:1–2

1. The Invitation to “Come Up”

Revelation 4:1

John says:

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven...”

Then he hears the voice saying:

“Come up hither.”

LaHaye understands John's being called into heaven as a picture of the Rapture of the Church.

Teaching point:

The transition from Revelation 3 to Revelation 4 is significant: the messages to the churches end, and John is suddenly taken into heaven.

2. The Church Is No Longer Mentioned on Earth

One of LaHaye's major arguments is the distinction between Revelation 1–3 and what follows.

Chapters 1–3 focus heavily on the churches.

Beginning in Revelation 4, the scene shifts to heaven.

The Tribulation judgments then begin unfolding.

LaHaye sees this as supporting a pretribulation Rapture.

Important teaching point:

This is an interpretation of the prophetic sequence, rather than Revelation 4:1 explicitly saying, “The church has been raptured.”

3. The Rapture Is Sudden

The phrase:

“Immediately I was in the spirit” — Revelation 4:2

describes John's sudden transition into the heavenly scene.

LaHaye connects this with the biblical teaching that believers will be caught up to meet Christ.

Supporting Scripture

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

“The dead in Christ shall rise first...”

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...”

This is one of the clearest passages concerning the Rapture.

4. The Rapture Is Before the Tribulation

This is the central argument of Chapter 10.

LaHaye places the Rapture before the seven-year Tribulation period.

His basic prophetic sequence is:

Church Age → Rapture → Tribulation → Second Coming → Millennium

Revelation 4 begins the heavenly scene, while the judgments associated with the Tribulation unfold afterward.

5. The Church Is Promised Deliverance From Coming Judgment

A key supporting Scripture is:

1 Thessalonians 1:10

Paul says believers are waiting for Jesus:

“who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

LaHaye connects this with the belief that Christians will not experience the divine judgment associated with the Tribulation.

Another important passage is:

Revelation 3:10

Jesus tells the church at Philadelphia:

“I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation...”

LaHaye views this as significant evidence for the church being removed before the Tribulation.

6. The Rapture Is Different From the Second Coming

This is an important distinction for your students.

The Rapture:

Christ comes for His church.

Believers are caught up.

It is associated with meeting Christ in the air.

It occurs before the Tribulation according to LaHaye's interpretation.

The Second Coming:

Christ comes with His saints.

Christ visibly returns to earth.

It occurs after the Tribulation.

It leads into His kingdom.

Compare:

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 — Rapture

Revelation 19:11–16 — Second Coming