

Title: What Is The Rapture?

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Scripture: 2 Peter 3:1-13, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11; 1 Corinthians 15:50-52

What we learn from past prophecies fulfilled:

1. God is batting .1000
2. It has always been literally fulfilled

Why has the Lord given us prophecy?

1. We have been given the future to battle the doubts, vv.3-8
2. We have been given the future to warn us, vv. 9-10
3. We have been given the future to affect us today, vv. 11-13

How prophecy should affect us today:

- 1) Holiness – our position before God and our separateness from the world,
- 2) Godliness – our personality of being like Christ
- 3) Eagerness for His return – our passion is to see the Lord return to this earth

What is the Rapture?

Rapture is a Latin word for the Greek word “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The rapture refers to that time when living believers are caught up together in the air with resurrected believers and we are changed from mortal beings to immortal. See 1 Corinthians 15:50-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Why is there a Rapture?

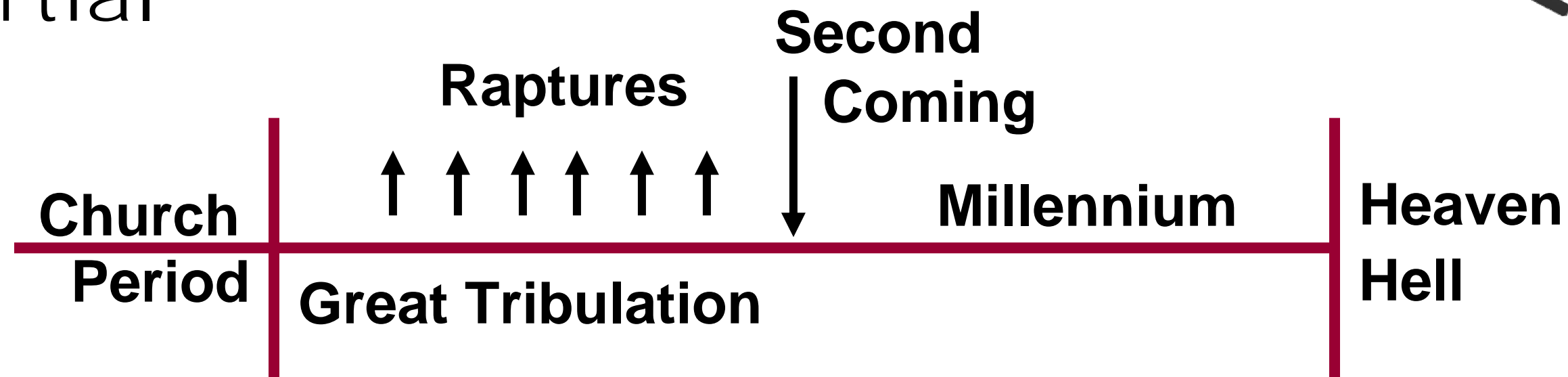
We just read that one reason is to change our bodies from earthly to heavenly, but the primary purpose of the rapture is to remove us from the outpouring of God’s wrath. Look with me at 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10. 4:13 to 5:11 is all one thought.

When is the Rapture?

Now when I say “when,” I am not referring to a date, but when in relation to the Tribulation? There are four views: partial, mid-tribulational, post-tribulational, and pre-tribulational.

What is the Rapture?

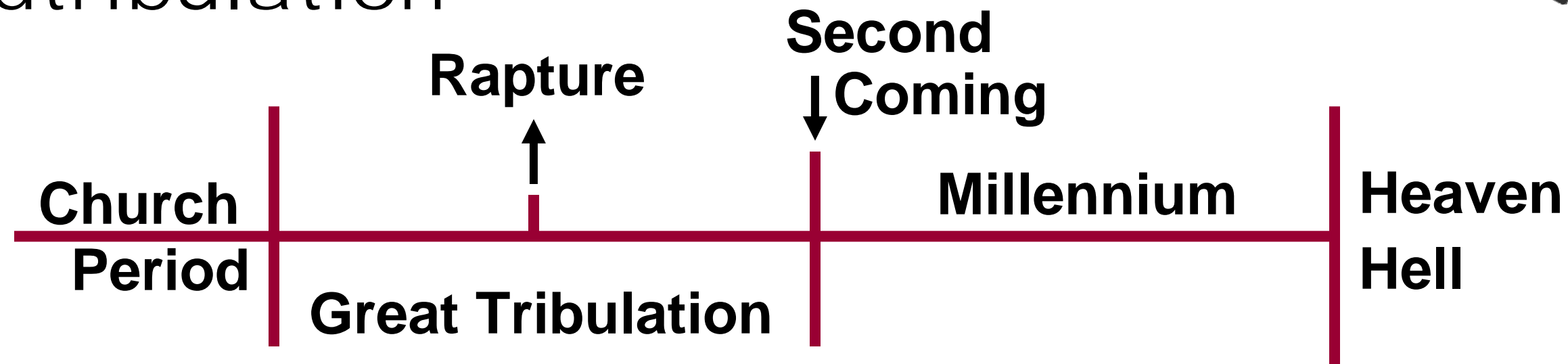
Partial



Only those believers who are “watching” and “waiting” for the Lord will be found worthy to escape the terrors of the Tribulation. They teach that there will be multiple raptures for overcomers during the Tribulation. The problem with that is that it only disciplines believers alive at the time of the Tribulation, when believers throughout history could be said to be deserving of this discipline. The main problem is 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 clearly says that all will be changed, not some.

What is the Rapture?

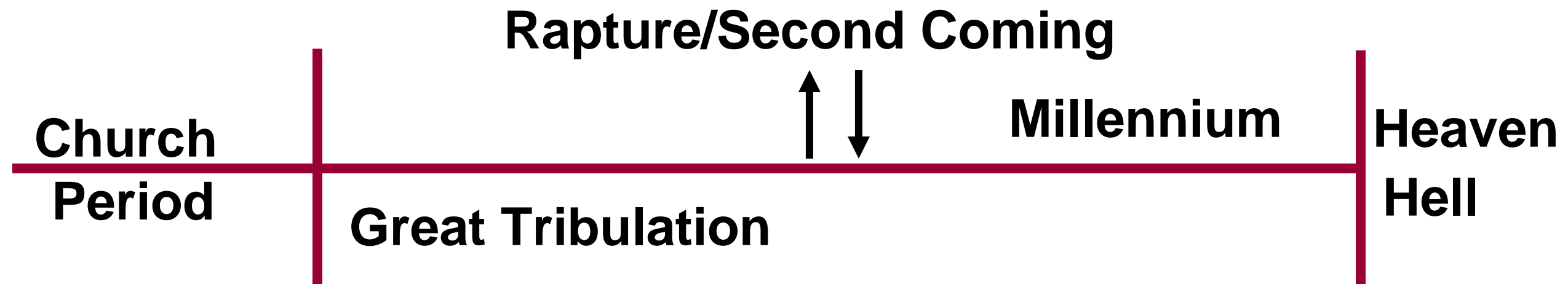
Midtribulation



This view sees believers being raptured after 3 ½ years or midway into the Tribulation. A number of passages in Daniel and Revelation have some significant events at the half way point. So the assumption is that the rapture would be one of these significant events. The events though that mark the halfway mark are more centered around the antichrist and not a raptured church. Another problem with this view is it doesn't match 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

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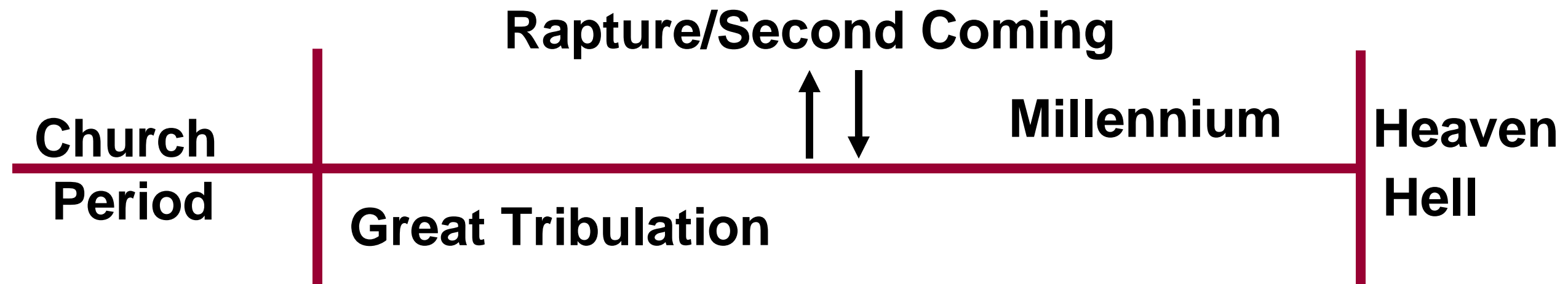
Posttribulation



This view sees the church going all the way through the tribulation and that the rapture and second coming are a single event. I personally do not think that the arguments for a posttrib are that strong. One of the strongest in my opinion is found when Jesus teaches on this in Matthew 24. No one would get from this text that believers are going to be raptured from the Tribulation. Now there are indeed going to be believers in the Tribulation.

What is the Rapture?

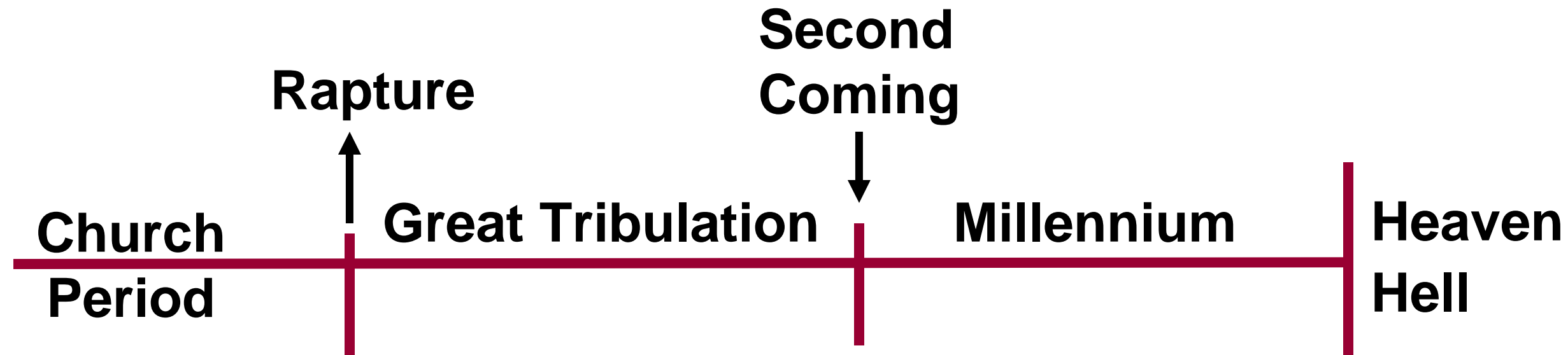
Posttribulation



The presence of Christians is not a sign of the church or that the rapture has not happened. It just points to the fact that some will become believers during the Tribulation. I would speak to Matthew 24 by saying that Jesus is speaking to Jews who want to know about the millennial kingdom and so He answers Jews. Right now the focus is the Church, but it will return to the Jews in this day.

What is the Rapture?

Pretribulation



The pretribulation as you have gathered is the view that present believers, the church, will be raptured before the Great Tribulation begins. The purpose of the Great Tribulation is the punishment of the Christ-rejecting nation of Israel, not of the Christian Church.

Nature of the Christian Church forbids its going through the Great Tribulation.

1. Focus of tribulation is on those who have rejected Christ.
2. Church is promised deliverance from wrath (1 Thess.5:9, Rev.3:10).
3. Scriptures urge an attitude of constant expectation of Christ's coming. If Church goes through the tribulation, then believers would be looking for signs of the Tribulation, rather than Christ's return.
4. Why would the church look forward to a time of wrath (1 Thess.4:13-17)?
5. Scripture teaches the imminent return of Christ. Christ coming for His church has no signs that have to be fulfilled, but the Second Coming will have very definite signs, especially the last three and half years of the Tribulation.
6. The Church is seen in Revelation 4 as already in heaven by the twenty-four elders (they wear crowns, white garments, sing a song of redemption, they were from every people, they were already in heaven when heaven received the great multitude out of the tribulation.
7. Why would a small minority of Christians be required to go through the Tribulation while the majority escaped through death?

Two responses to it all:

1. We are to encourage each other with the hope of this event (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11).
2. We are to be ready. It will happen. Will you be ready? Will you have been a faithful witness to those who are not ready?