

Early church proof and support of premillennialism is clear and easy to access.
But, proof and support for a pretrib rapture is potentially non-existent until 1830

Concerning “imminence” and “signs” **John Chrysostom** (347-407):

- “But it may be worthwhile to ask, If Antichrist comes, and Elijah comes (Mal. 4:5), how is it ‘when they say peace and safety’ (1 Thess. 5:3), that then a sudden destruction comes upon them? For these things do not permit the day to come upon them unawares, being signs of its coming. But he (Paul) does not mean this to be the time of Antichrist, and the whole day, because that will be a sign of the coming of Christ, but Himself will not have a sign, but will come suddenly and unexpectedly. For travail, indeed, you say, does not come upon the pregnant woman unexpectedly: for she knows that after nine months the birth will take place. And yet it is very uncertain. For some bring forth at the seventh month, and others at the ninth. And at any rate the day and the hour is uncertain. With respect to this therefore, Paul speaks thus (in 1 Thessalonians 5:3). And the image is exact. For there are not many sure signs of travail; many indeed have brought forth in the high roads, or when out of their houses and abroad, not for seeing it. And he has not only glanced here at the uncertainty, but also at the bitterness of the pain. For as she while sporting, laughing, not looking for anything at all, being suddenly seized with unspeakable pains, is pierced through with the pangs of labor – so will it be with those souls, when the Day comes upon them.”

The **Didache**, a Syrian church manual from 85-120 AD that likely originated from Antioch, Syria is fully titled “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”. The **Didache** fully teaches that the Christian church is going through the Tribulation

- “Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come. But come together often, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you are not made perfect in the last time. For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet. And third, the resurrection of the dead -- yet not of all, but as it is said: "The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him." Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.”
- Didache 16

The Shepherd of Hermas:

- Blessed are you, as many as endure the Great Tribulation (Gr. **thlipsin**) which is coming, and as many as shall not deny their life.”- Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 2:2:7

Irenaeus

- The Antichrist accepts the kingdom from ten kings (Rev. 17:12)
- Then, the Antichrist will “put the Church to flight” – Irenaeus, Heresies, 5:26:1

- Concerning the number of the beast, 666, Irenaeus says:
 - “But he (John) indicates the number (666) of the (Antichrist’s) name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware of who he is.” – Irenaeus, Heresies, 5:30:4

Tertullian, from Carthage in north Africa, wrote “On the Resurrection of the Dead” in 208-212.

Tertullian clearly teaches that the rapture and glorification of the church occurs at the Second Coming and after the reign of Antichrist when Tertullian quotes 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

- “Now the privilege of this favor (not to suffer physical death) awaits those who shall, at the coming of the Lord, be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints, as he (Paul) writes to the Thessalonians:
 - ‘For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.’

Pretribs use of **Pseudo-Ephrem** found by Grant Jeffrey.

- Grant Jeffrey spent ten years searching ancient and medieval Christian writings to find any proof that the pre-trib rapture was taught before 1830.
- What Jeffrey found in 1994 was a sermon called “On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World” that was credited to Ephrem of Syria (306-373) a bishop and teacher in theological schools at that time. The document itself is NOT written by Ephrem, but comes from sometime between 450-700 AD. Four Latin copies survived and one is credited to Isidore of Seville (560-636 AD).
- Grant Jeffrey says in his book “When the Trumpet Sounds” on page 105 in an essay called “A Pretrib Rapture Statement in the Early Medieval Church”:
 - “...that the pretribulational rapture is taught so clearly in the New Testament that it is virtually impossible that no one ever taught this doctrine in the 18 centuries before 1830.”
 - Jeffrey’s found it in Pseudo-Ephrem:
 - ***“Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that He may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms the world?...Because all saints and the Elect of the Lord are gathered before the tribulation which is to about 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.”***
 - CORRECT INTERPRETATION:
 - “are gathered” and “are taken” are in the present tense which makes them an action in progress which means:
 - “For all the saints and elect of God are being gathered prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are being taken to the Lord lest they ever see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.”
 - The real Ephrem used the image of a Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a symbol of nations being evangelized and gathered to the Lord.

- It would seem that Ephrem is referring to believers being gathered and taken to the Lord through evangelism and conversion not in the rapture before the Tribulation begins.
- More details concerning Pseudo-Ephrem:
 - There is nothing in the text about:
 - Christ's coming as in the 1 Thess. 4:16-17 rapture
 - Resurrection of the dead as in 1 Cor. 15:51-52
 - Glorification of living Christians as in 1 Cor. 15:51-52
 - Believer's taken into heaven according to pre-trib doctrine based on John 14:2-4 and Rev. 4:1-2.
 - Later in the same text Pseudo-Ephrem describes Christians being on earth during the Tribulation period of 3 ½ years:
 - "When therefore the end of the world comes, there arise...persecutions, slaughters and massacres everywhere."
 - "In those days people shall not be buried, neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people ignore them while they are fleeing."
 - "But those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the faces of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the udders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs."
 - "And when the just ones (Enoch and Elijah) have appeared...(they will) call back the faithful witnesses to God, in order to free them from this (the serpent's)seduction."
 - "At the Lord's Second Coming... "the whole chorus of the saints...the angelic trumpet...which shall sound and declare: Arise O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion...but the righteousones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever."
 - It seems clear that Pseudo-Ephrem considers:
 - The church to be face to face with the "serpent" (antichrist)
 - The resurrection of the saints to occur at the Second Coming of Christ, and not seven years before
- The BEST the PRETRIB can collect to prove pre-tribulation rapture and imminent return before the Tribulation begins seven years before the Second Coming:
 - Clement of Rome (referred to in Philippians 4:3) writes 70-90 AD:
 - "Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, "Speedily will He come, and will not tarry; and 'The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One for whom we look."
 - "Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those that wait for Him in order that we may share in His promised gifts."
 - Ignatius of Antioch, Syria (martyred in 110), knew Apostle John:
 - "Be watchful, possessing a sleepless spirit...Be ever coming more zealous than what you are. Weigh carefully the times. Look for Him who is above all time, eternal and invisible, yet who became visible for our sakes."
 - Pseudo-Barnabas (70-130):

- “The Day is at hand on which all things shall perish with the evil one. The Lord is near and His reward...It therefore behooves us, who inquire much concerning events at hand, to search diligently into those things which are able to save us.”
- Shepherd of Hermas (120 AD):
 - “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 you 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 you spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly. Cast your cares upon the Lord, and He will direct them. Trust the Lord, you who doubt, for He is all-powerful, and can turn His anger away from you, and send scourges on the doubters. Woe to those who hear these words, and despise them: better were it for them not to have been born.”
- The Didache:
 - “Watch for your life’s sake...Be ye ready, for ye know not the hour in which our Lord comes.” -16:1
- Irenaeus (125-202):
 - “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.’ For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.”
- Cyril of Jerusalem (315-387):
 - Let us wait and look for the Lord’s coming upon the clouds from heaven. Then shall Angelic trumpets sound; the dead in Christ shall rise first.”
- Commodianus (around 250-450 AD):
 - “We shall rise again to Him, who have been devoted to Him. And they shall be incorruptible, even already living without death. And neither will there be any grief nor any groaning in that city. They shall come also who overcame cruel martyrdom under Antichrist, and they themselves live for the whole time, and receive blessings because they have suffered evil things; and they themselves marrying, beget for a thousand years...the earth renewed without end pours forth abundantly.”

Laodicea – the four generation cycle

- 1) 1880-1920 – Revivals (Systematic)
 - 1834-1892 – Charles Spurgeon
 - 1792-1875 – Charles Finney

- 2) 1921-1960 – Personal Jesus
 - Different Jesus’: Galatians, Islam, Mormon, Jehovah Witness, Mystic church, Seeker/market Driven church

- 3) 1960-2000 - Charismatic

- 4) 2001-2040 – Market Driven
 - 1954-present – Rick Warren
 - 1951-present – Bill Hybels
 - 1963-present – Joel Osteen

