

The Rapture in Church History

End-Time Views in Church History:

1st Century: early church taught pretribulational/premillennial view

3rd Century: allegorical view of Scripture crept in

4th Century: amillennial view dominant in the Catholic Church

4th Century-1517: no other dominant views allowed/encouraged

1600s-1700s: Puritans and others interpret Scripture literally

1800s: Darby and others revive and expound the pretribulational/premillennial view

1900s: Chafer, Ironside, Walvoord advance the pretribulational/premillennial view

Here are **10 figures or sources from before John Nelson Darby (1800–1882)** who have been cited as possibly teaching a rapture-like or pretribulational idea.

1. The Shepherd of Hermas (c. A.D. 90–140)

Content: Describes a vision where believers escape a great tribulation through faith and purity.

2. Irenaeus (c. 130–202) in his work *Against Heresies* (Book 5) he speaks of the Church being “suddenly caught up,” referencing 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

3. Ephraim the Syrian (c. 306–373) or *Pseudo-Ephraim*

Text: *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World*

Quote: “All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation... and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world.”.

4. Brother Dolcino (d. 1307) -Some historians state that Dolcino taught that the faithful would be preserved by being taken to a place of safety before the Antichrist.

5. John Wycliffe (c. 1320s–1384)-Some argue Wycliffe believed in a removal of the Church before divine judgment.

6. Joseph Mede (1586–1638)-In his work *Clavis Apocalyptica*-developed a structured premillennial system with a resurrection of saints prior to judgment.

7. Increase Mather (1639–1723)-Argued for a pre-tribulation translation of the Church in some writings. Possibly the clearest American colonial advocate of a rapture before judgment.

8. Peter Jurieu (1637–1713) in his book *The Accomplishment of the Scripture Prophecies* (1687)

Taught that Christ would come in the air to gather the saints before judgment. Often cited as a pre-Darby rapture teacher.

9. Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)- Notes on 1 Thessalonians 4 suggest an imminent rapture idea. “The dead in Christ shall rise first... then we shall be caught up.” His language suggests belief in a rapture-type event before visible return.

10. John Gill (1697–1771) Baptist theologian-On 1 Thessalonians 4:17, he described saints being “caught up in the clouds... to meet the Lord.” Shows pre-Darby expectation of a catching away.