

Prophetic Peeks into Pretribulationism

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Stop all the Rapture wars! There is no need to fight over the timing of the Rapture. Just believe what the Scriptures teach regarding this blessed hope of the saints (Titus 2:13). The pretribulation view of the Rapture teaches that Christ will rapture His Church to His Father's house prior to the seven-year Tribulation Period (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4-5). When you view Bible prophecy *literally* (with proper hermeneutics or interpretation), *grammatically* (with proper grammar), *dispensationally* (with proper division of people and programs), *futuristically* (not historical or present-day fulfillment) *soteriologically* (with reference to salvation and deliverance) and *logically* (with proper sense) it leads to a pretribulation Rapture which means Jesus will return in the event of the Rapture before the seven-year Tribulation Period begins and the Second Coming of Christ to earth to establish His kingdom (the Millennium).

If you are an anti-pretrib-rapturist or mid and post-tribber, I invite you to study these Biblical findings without bias and stop believing in the old fallacious claim that Margaret MacDonald created the idea of a Pretrib Rapture based on an alleged vision she had, or that the teaching of the pretrib Rapture is new, made popular by Darby and Scofield, and therefore cannot be trusted. There is plenty of evidence that pretribulationism was believed and taught before the days of Darby and Scofield. More importantly, it's very clear that Jesus, Paul, and the early church believed in the imminent return of Christ and a pretribulation Rapture, and it was not the result of some kind of devilish scheme or cover up of the early Christians. Pretribulation stands or falls on the merits of Biblical truth – not repeated myths.

The Mystery of the Rapture and Church

The event of the Rapture was a "mystery" (a newly revealed sacred secret) that was previously concealed, or not revealed in the Old Testament, but only taught in the New Testament Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Since the Rapture is said to be a newly revealed mystery it is a separate event from the Second Coming which was previously predicted in the Old Testament (Dan. 12:1-3; Zech. 12:10; 14:4). Using this Biblical analogy of a mystery (secret), the Rapture might be viewed as a *secret return of Christ* not revealed in Old Testament revelation, an event that

would take place before the Tribulation Period and Second Coming of Christ to earth.

In this mystery return Christ removes His beloved Church or Bride (Eph. 5:25-22; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7; 22:17) from the earth and takes her back to Heaven to live with Him (John 14:1-3) before the Second Coming occurs. The mystery is that a new people of God (the Church) would be resurrected and raptured (“caught up” – Thess. 4:17) to Heaven in transformed bodies before the Second Coming of Christ to earth takes place. The Church Age saints would not wait until the Second Coming or “the last day” (John 5:29; 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24) to receive their transformed bodies but instantaneously receive them at the event of the Rapture.

It should be understood there are not two Second Comings of Christ or even two different phases of the Second Coming (the Rapture and Return of Christ to earth). There is only one Second Coming (Acts 1:9-13) which is the time when Christ returns to earth (Matt. 24:29-42; 25:31-46; Zech. 14:9, 14; Rev. 19:16; Isa. 32:1) and this occurs after the seven-year Tribulation Period (“after the tribulation of those days” - Matt. 24:29). In the Rapture Jesus does not return to earth (1 Thess. 4:17) but takes His Bride (the New Testament Church) back to Heaven to live with Him for the seven years (1 Thess. 4:13-18). *The Rapture is a distinct event from the Second Coming.* The Rapture occurs before the seven-year Tribulation begins and precedes Christ’s Second Coming to earth which, according to the flow of prophetic events in the book of Revelation, occurs after the Tribulation has expired on earth (Rev. 19:11-21). So, there is an interval or gap of time between the Rapture and the Second Coming and this gap of seven years (Daniel’s 70th week – Dan. 9:27) enables us to understand that they are two different events with different occurrences and outcomes.

Once again, the secret is that the Church will be raptured, resurrected, and taken back to Heaven before the Second Coming of Christ to earth takes place. There is Biblical evidence that the Church, which is another mystery teaching revealed in the New Testament (Eph. 3:1-10; 5:32), is a body of believers that consists of Jewish and Gentile Christians united to Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2-3). To summarize, the mystery about the Church and the Rapture teaches that this new and distinct group of saints will be raptured and taken to Heaven prior to the seven-year Tribulation Period and before Christ returns to earth in the Second Coming.

Many Christians today have the mindset that a pretribulation Rapture is “one of many options” that a person might choose regarding Bible prophecy. They claim other options include a mid-tribulation Rapture, a prewrath Rapture, or a post-tribulation Rapture. Others exclude the Rapture altogether and teach an Old Testament revelation and perspective concerning Christ’s Second Coming (Job 19:25-26; John 5:29; 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24) – dismissing the New Testament mystery revelation of the Rapture. They declare that there is only the Second Coming of Christ to earth, which occurs at the end of time, when all people (both saved and unsaved) who have lived throughout the history of the earth are raised from the dead, and those still living (saved and unsaved) will be given everlasting life or judgment. However, the mystery teachings about the Church and event of the Rapture in the New Testament reveal that a distinct group of people (the Church) will be raised, raptured, and removed to Heaven, prior to a seven-year Tribulation Period, which precedes the Second Coming of Christ to earth.

A group of people (Church Age saints) will not have to wait until the Second Coming to receive their transformed bodies. They will receive their glorified bodies at the event of the Rapture – not at the revelation of Christ in His Second Coming (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:23, 51-52). This is the mystery or secret and blessed hope that we must hold dear to our hearts! The Church will be raised and raptured to Heaven, escape the seven-year judgment of the Tribulation Period, and then return with Christ in His Second Coming seven years later (Rev. 19:7-15). The progressive revelation of the New Testament unveils the new secrets, specific details, and timing about God’s prophetic program such as the Rapture, seven-year Tribulation Period, Second Coming, Millennium, Great White Throne Judgment, and Eternal State (Rev. 19:7-15; 20:1-15; 21-22).

The Rapture versus Second Coming

The truth about the Rapture was first revealed by Christ to His disciples in John 14:1-3. It is most clearly presented in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 where Paul teaches that living Christians (Church Age saints who are in Christ) will be reunited with those believers who have died before them. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17 the English phrase “**caught up**” is translated from the Greek word “harpazo” which means “to seize upon with force” or “to snatch up.” Essentially, the saints will be raptured from the earth. The Latin translators of the Bible used the word rapere, the root of the English term rapture. Those who claim the word “rapture” does not appear in the

Bible cannot substantiate this claim based upon the understanding of 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Although exact terms such as “Rapture” “Trinity” “Hypostatic Union” “Theophany” “Incarnation” and “Millennium” do not appear in the Bible, they are clearly taught in Scripture using similar Biblical terms and concepts and through the harmonizing of Scripture.

Only a pretribulation Rapture that is separated by seven years from the Second Coming (Christ’s descent to earth) untangles the marked distinctions or contrasting details between these two events. The differences between the two events are harmonized naturally by the pre-trib position, while other views (mid-trib, post-trib) are not able to comfortably account for such differences.

First, at the Rapture Christ will come *for* His saints in the air prior to the Tribulation, whereas at the second coming, which follows the seven years (Matt. 24:29), He will return *with* His saints to the earth and reign for 1000 years (Revelation 19; 20:1-6).

Second, every eye will see Jesus at the Second Coming (Revelation 1:7), but the Rapture is never described as being visible to the whole world. The Rapture is an event for only Church Age saints who share the unique position of being “in Christ” (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Third, at the Rapture, Christians meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) and are taken back to the Father’s House (John 14:1-3), whereas at the Second Coming the feet of Jesus touch the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4) and reigns over the earth (Zech. 14:9).

Fourth, at the Rapture, Christians are taken to Heaven and unbelievers are left behind to be judged on earth (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Rev. 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:1-11), whereas at the Second Coming unbelievers are taken away in judgment (Luke 17:34-36) and mortal (living) believers remain on earth to enter Christ’s Millennial Kingdom (the 1,000 years) and bear children (Matthew 25:31-46; Isa. 65:20-25). This would be impossible if all saints were translated and transformed (given glorified bodies) for the Eternal State at the Second Coming of Christ to earth, as is taught by posttribulationists, who believe the Rapture occurs simultaneously with the Second Coming after the Tribulation.

Fifth, at the event of the Rapture there is no mention of earthly judgments, whereas at the Second Coming Jesus will return to execute judgment over the people living

on earth by separating the sheep (the saved) from the goats (the unsaved), as taught in Matthew 25:31-46 and other prophetic Bible passages (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50), which envision saved people entering the Millennial in their mortal bodies. But how would both the saved and unsaved, still in their natural bodies, be separated in judgment, if all living believers are translated and given glorified bodies at the Second Coming as posttribulationism asserts?

Sixth, the Rapture will take place in the twinkling or blink of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52), whereas the Second Coming will be a prolonged event that is more drawn out as Christ destroys those who oppose His return, judges the unsaved, and establishes the earth for the Millennium (Zech. 14:1-4; Matthew 24-25; Rev. 19:11-21-20:1-3).

The Rapture occurring before the seven years (Rev. 3:10) and the Second Coming following the seven years (Matt. 24:29) allows for the contrasting elements between these two events. With so many conflicting facts, there must be a time interval, a prophetic gap of seven years that separates the Rapture from the Second Coming. Therefore, the student of the prophetic Scriptures can conclude that the Rapture and Second Coming are two distinct events which occur at different times.

We must change our thinking about Bible prophecy in two ways.

First, the Bible does not distinguish between major and minor doctrines. Some suggest that a pretribulation Rapture of the Church is only a secondary and less-important doctrine. Therefore, what one believes about the timing of the Rapture and other Bible prophecy is not *essential* from a doctrinal perspective. However, the New Testament never divides doctrinal teaching into "essential" and "non-essential" or "major" versus "minor" doctrines. Men do this today, but the apostles did not (Phil. 4:9; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Pet. 3:2).

Eschatology is just as important as Pneumatology and Soteriology. All apostolic doctrine and example are to be obeyed (Acts 2:42; Jude 3). It is true that some doctrines or teachings are more important than others in relation to our eternal destiny (salvation by grace, bodily resurrection of Christ, person and work of Christ, etc.), but nowhere in Scripture do we read that certain portions of God's Word, when rightly divided and properly understood are of no significance, lesser importance, and therefore should be deemed as secondary teachings. Being delivered from the expression of God's wrath on earth, as pretribulationism asserts, can never be viewed as unimportant, less essential, or secondary in nature.

Second, the Bible does not view future events as options. Once again, when the Bible is interpreted literally, dispensationally, futuristically, and grammatically a Christian will understand and embrace the truth of God's prophetic purpose for Christ's Church (a newly defined people of God) in a pretribulation Rapture (a newly revealed return of Christ) that occurs before a literal seven-year period of God's wrath and judgment begins on earth, which is defined in Scripture as "one week" consisting of seven years, according to the prophecies of Daniel, Jesus, and John (Dan. 9:27; 12:7, 11; Matt. 24:8, 21; Rev. 11:3; 12:6, 14).

Studying Bible prophecy from a literal viewpoint and understanding that even symbols have a literal meaning attached to them, often defined by the context and other related Scriptures, will result in a proper understanding of the prophetic word and End Times.

Sir Isaac Newton once remarked (1643-1727):

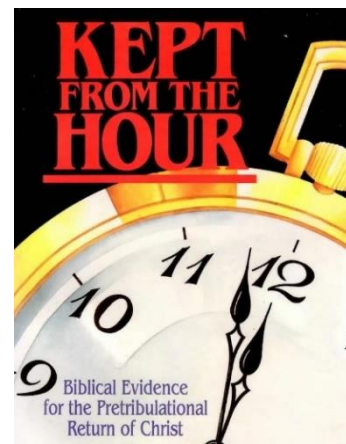
"About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecies, and insist upon their literal interpretation, in the midst of much clamor and opposition"

Now let's study our Bibles and believe in a pretribulation Rapture. The pretribulation truth of the Rapture teaches that Christ will return to rapture (catch or snatch away) His Church to His Father's house prior to the seven-year Tribulation Period (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4-5). There are many chronological clues and clear Scriptures which reveal this to the student of Scripture. Where is the pretribulation Rapture taught in the Bible? Let's find out.

Kept From the Hour

Revelation 3:10 teaches a pretribulation Rapture of the Church: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (*a specific type of trial and adversity of the seven-year Tribulation Period*), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (*the unsaved who are left behind after the Rapture*).

In this passage of Scripture, the word "hour" is used as a reference to an extended period of time – the seven-year



Tribulation Period. The context will determine the meaning of the word “hour.” This verse clearly teaches that we as God’s people (New Testament Church) will be raptured from this earth prior to the Tribulation Period. This promise was given to the Church of Philadelphia and by extension is a promise given to all Church Age saints. Christ’s intention is to keep the Church out of the Tribulation.

The definite article (“the”) in Revelation 3:10 points to a specific and distinctive time period, not just any hour of trial or the general trials we face in our lives today. The “hour of temptation” (testing or trial) is a direct reference to the coming seven-year Tribulation Period and judgments which are about to be unfolded in chapters 6-18 of this End Time book.

Renald Showers makes this observation in his book Maranatha: Our Lord Come! “The language in Jesus’ reference to this future period of worldwide testing implied that it was well-known to the church saints. It was well-known because both Old and New Testament Scriptures, written years before Revelation, foretold this unique, future period of testing or Tribulation, which would take place prior to the coming of the Messiah to rule the world in the Messianic Age or Millennium (Isa. 2:10-21; Dan. 12:1; Zeph. 1:14-18; Mt. 24:4-31).”

So the promise is given to the Church that we will be kept from the specific hour of trial (judgment) that will fall upon the earth. **Interestingly the Church is never mentioned in Revelation 6-18. In fact, the only place you find the Church (the Bride of Christ) during this time is in Heaven (Rev. 19:6-8) which is another clear indication that the Church is exempt from the entire seven-year expression of God’s wrath.** The Bible describes the Tribulation Period in Revelation 6-18. In these chapters there is a curious silence about the Church. In Revelation 1-3 the Church is specifically mentioned nineteen times. However, it is not mentioned until Revelation 19:7, 21:9, and 22:16, after the judgments of the Tribulation have passed. Between these two points, the Church is strangely absent from the events occurring on earth. This is strong evidence that the Church will not be present on earth during the Tribulation. In fact, the 24 elders (representative of the raptured, rewarded, and reigning Church – not 24 Presbyterians!) are always seen in Heaven and not on earth during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4).

Ron Rhodes concurs with this when observing:

“No Old Testament passage on the tribulation mentions the church (for example, see Deuteronomy 4:29-30; Jeremiah 30:4-11; Daniel 8:24-27; 12:1-2). Likewise, no New Testament passage on the tribulation mentions the church (for example, Matthew 13:30,39-42,48-50; 24:15-31; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 5:4-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11). In the book of Revelation, the word *church(es)* is used 19 times in the first three chapters. However, the section dealing with the tribulation (chapters 4–18) never mentions the church. The church is then mentioned again in the context of the second coming of Christ in chapter 19. The church’s complete absence would seem to indicate that it is not on earth during the tribulation.”

All of this means there can be no doubt about the purpose and simplicity of the Revelation 3:10 statement - “**kept from the hour.**” The believers at Philadelphia were patient in all their trials and persecutions as Christ instructed them to be. Therefore, Jesus makes a promise to them that would bring great hope and encouragement to their hearts in view of all their patience. Jesus promised that each one of them would be raptured from the earth before the planet moves into the horror and judgment of the future years of adversity. **It is Rapture – not wrath!**

The Bible says we will be “**kept**” (guarded) “**from**” (not through) the Tribulation Period. Christ could not be teaching immunity through the Tribulation Period since large numbers of Tribulation saints (those who are saved during the Tribulation Period) will be martyred (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:14; 20:4). The wholesale martyrdom of the saints during the Tribulation Period demands that the interpretation of Revelation 3:10 means “keeping out of” (not keeping within) the hour of testing.

The careful selection of this preposition indicates that these Church Age saints will not enter this period of testing and trouble. The Greek preposition “**from**” (ek) relates to the hour of trial (the seven years) and must be understood as being kept FROM entering the entire trial period. The preposition does not mean deliverance through the time of trouble. The preposition literally means to “**be out of, kept from, or away from.**” The preposition is understood this way in hundreds of occurrences (Matt. 2:15; 7:5; 15:19; 27:53; Rev. 3:16; etc.). If John wanted to convey that we are passing *through* the Tribulation Period another preposition (dia) would be required. The general meaning and understanding of the preposition “from” (ek) conveys exemption from something (John 17:15; James 1:27).

So the Greek preposition *ek*, translated “from” in this verse, carries the idea of separation from something. This means that believers will be completely separated from the hour of trial by being raptured before the period even begins. In short, Revelation 3:10 does not refer to preservation *inside* the realm of “the hour of trial.” It refers to preservation *outside* the realm of “the hour of trial.”

Paul Benware comments:

“The promise is to keep the church from the time period of testing, which necessitates actual removal from the time period itself and not preservation through it.”

If the Church is still living on earth during this specific time period (the seven years) she will not be **kept from it!** It’s clear that within this specific context of Revelation 3:10 Paul is using “kept from” (*ek*) with the meaning of being preserved outside the future period of judgment that will come upon planet earth. In the context of Revelation 3:10 Jesus could not possibly be referring to preservation and victory while remaining on earth, being kept safe while passing through the evil that is already present, as some suggest by Christ’s use of the same preposition (“*ek*”) in John 17:15.

Christ’s priestly prayer for His disciples in John 17:15 was referring to their preservation (safety) from Satan’s power and authority. There are marked differences and similarities between the Revelation 3:10 and John 17:15 occurrences of the preposition “*ek*.” First, in John 17:5 Jesus was referring to the preservation from evil that is already present on earth, but in Revelation 3:10 Jesus is referring to the preservation from a period of future time of judgment that will fall on the world. Second, in John 17:15 the disciples were already living during the time of evil, but in Revelation 3:10 the plagues of the Tribulation Period are still future, and the Church is promised escape from this time period. Third, and most importantly, the preposition (“*ek*”) in John 17:15 is similar in meaning to Revelation 3:10. It basically is conveying exemption from something as in James 1:27. This meaning supports pretribulationism.

Once again, how could “being kept through” (preservation through the Tribulation) be the meaning of Revelation 3:10 in view of the fact that there will be untold millions who will be saved during these dark days that will suffer death by martyrdom and not be preserved through the Tribulation Period (Rev. 20:4; Rev. 6:9; 7:9-14; 13:7). It’s clear that Jesus has given the Church the promise that we will be *exempt* or *absent* from this specific, future, worldwide period of trouble.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum in his book *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, correctly observes: “Throughout the Tribulation, saints are being killed on a massive scale (Rev. 6:9-11; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7,15; 14:13; 17:6; 18:24). If these saints are Church saints, they are not being kept safe and Revelation 3:10 is meaningless. Only if Church saints and Tribulation saints are kept distinct does the promise of Revelation 3:10 make any sense.”

Something else that is worth noting is the reference to “**them that dwell on the earth**” (Rev. 3:10). This has a particular reference to those unsaved people who miss the Rapture and are left on the earth to become the objects of God’s wrath during this awful time of testing (Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,12,14; 17:2, 8). So, this verse emphasizes that God’s people (the Church) will be kept “from” this specific period of testing which will come upon another distinct group of people who are left behind and become the objects of God’s wrath. God’s wrath will come upon “them” but not upon “us.” Why? It’s because we will be raptured prior to this seven-year trial and affliction that will come sweeping upon planet earth.

Delivered From the Wrath to Come

1 Thessalonians 1:10 also points to a pretribulation Rapture: “And to wait for his Son from heaven (*the Rapture*), whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered (“delivers”) us from **the wrath** to come” (*the specific wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period*).

This context of this passage is speaking about the Rapture and reveals that Jesus will deliver these saints from “**the wrath to come**” (the Tribulation Period) when He returns in the event of the Rapture. The wrath is not pointing to the judgment that unbelievers will experience in eternal damnation but a specific type of wrath that is closely linked with Christ’s return in the Rapture (the Tribulation Period) which is also reconfirmed later in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. The outpouring of God’s wrath occurs at various times in history. One of these expressions of God’s wrath in judgment is the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14) that will come upon the whole earth in the future (Rev. 3:10).





Paul uses the present participle (an ongoing action) for this verb (“delivers” – to rescue, save, preserve) which emphasizes the ongoing office and work of Christ as our Deliverer from God’s wrath and condemnation. *We have the perpetual promise of deliverance from all of God’s wrath.* This means the deliverance we have from the Tribulation Period of God’s wrath is based on the deliverance Christ provided for us on the cross.

In another pretribulation passage Paul confirms that our pretribulation Rapture and escape from God’s wrath is based on the death of Christ for us. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10: “For God hath not appointed us to wrath (*the wrath of the Tribulation Period*), but to obtain salvation (*deliverance from this time period*) by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.” In the mind of God, when Christ died on the cross and rose again, we were delivered from the full expression of His wrath, both Hell and the Tribulation Period, and He maintains this deliverance for His people. In other words, it’s a done deal! We can count on this deliverance based upon Christ’s death on our behalf.

There is no condemnation of God’s children in Christ (Rom. 8:1; John 3:18). Believers are to live anticipating a coronation day in the event of the Rapture (2 Tim 4:8) rather than having condemnation (God’s wrath) of the Tribulation Period looming over their heads. This promised deliverance from the future Tribulation should never cease to be an ever-present reality and glorious prospect in our hearts. This is because Christ’s death saves us from this specific expression of His wrath and because the blessed hope (joyous anticipation) of the Rapture will remove us before this seven-year expression of God’s wrath falls upon the earth.

Once again, the word “**wrath**” in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 is referring to the specific future time of God’s wrath displayed on earth which is the seven-year Tribulation Period. This is because the definite article (“the”) precedes this word (“**the wrath to come**”). The definite article is designed to emphasize something specific, to make a distinction and draw attention to something that is being conveyed. “**The wrath to come**” is a reference to a specific expression of God’s wrath that will come upon earth during the Tribulation Period.

This text promises that Christ will return and deliver the saints “from” (Gk. preposition – “ek” meaning “out from” or “away from”) the coming time of wrath (1 Thess. 1:10). As we have already discovered, this Greek preposition is used in Revelation 3:10 where the same promise is also given to the saints about their Rapture and rescue from planet earth before the Tribulation Period begins. Paul could not make it any clearer for us. We are not passing through the seven years. Since other Bible passages teach that believers will not experience any of God’s future wrath (John 3:36; 5:24; Rom. 5:1; 8:1, 34) these promises and prepositions (Rev. 3:10; 1 Thess. 1:10) mean that the Church will not experience any part of God’s wrath because we will be “kept from” or “kept away” from the seven years which is clearly a time when God will be pouring out His wrath on earth (Rev. 6:17).

Not Appointed to Wrath

Paul also alludes to this same wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9:

“For God hath not appointed us **to wrath** (*contextually the specific wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period*), but to obtain salvation (*deliverance*) by our Lord Jesus Christ” (*in the event of Christ’s return in the Rapture*).

As we will see, the context of this passage is placed within the discussion of the Tribulation Period (Day of Lord). Therefore, Paul is referring to the Rapture of God’s New Testament believers prior to the Tribulation Period. Because the Tribulation specifically involves God’s wrath and because Christians

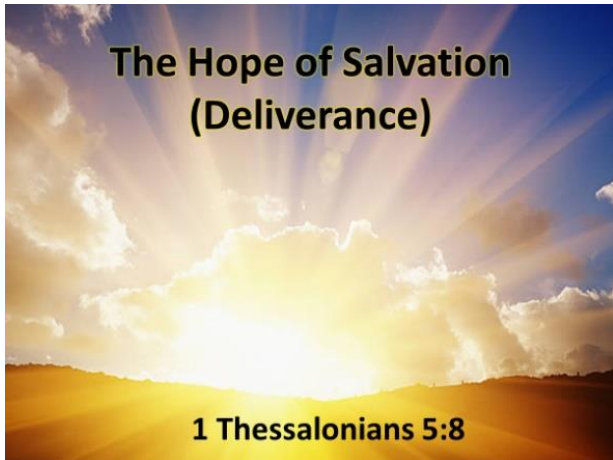
**PRE-TRIB RAPTURE
PROOF - GOD HAS
NOT APPOINTED US
TO WRATH**

are not appointed to His wrath, the Church must be raptured or taken before the Tribulation Period begins. This is another direct reference to the Church being delivered “by our Lord Jesus Christ” from the specific future wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period with His return in the Rapture.

The “salvation” does not have reference to the salvation of our soul but our future deliverance from the Tribulation Period through a pretribulation Rapture and rescue from the expression of God’s wrath that is about to be dispensed upon the earth. The Biblical passage in which this promise is found (“not appointed to wrath”) indicates that the Church will not experience any part of God’s wrath which will be meted out during the seven-year Tribulation Period. Yes, the Church is

“Rapture Proof” in that the Church will not experience the wrath of God during the seven-year Tribulation Period.

The Hope of Salvation



The entire section of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 presents a consistent teaching regarding the pretribulation Rapture of the Church. I want to give you an overview of all the verses in this section. **Paul speaks with the context and background of the Rapture in his thinking and our deliverance from the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period).** Paul is drawing from Old Testament apocalyptic literature. The Day of the

Lord is repeatedly mentioned in many Old Testament prophecies and reveals there will be an unprecedented universal judgment of earth and humanity (Isaiah 2:13:6-14; 24:19-23; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3-4; Joel. 1:15; 2:1-2; 3:12-14; Zeph. 1:14-18). As you read these verses notice the marked difference in pronouns, which point to the unsaved who are left to pass through the Tribulation Period, and the saved who are raptured and escape the seven years. Yes, we will be part of the great escape! We will be snatched away before the judgment falls.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 begins the exposition:

“But of the times and the seasons *(the duration and characteristics of the events related to the Old Testament eschatological period known as the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period - Isa. 13:6-11; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 2:28-32; Amos 5:18,20; Zeph. 1:14-18; 3:14-15)*, brethren, ye have no need that **I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord** (the Tribulation Period) **so cometh as a thief in the night** (unexpectedly). **For when they** *(the unsaved left behind, who are not part of the Rapture)* **shall say, Peace and safety** *(following the Rapture event – Rev. 6:2); then sudden destruction cometh upon them* *(the unsaved as in Rev. 3:10)*, **as travail upon a woman with child** *(with the outpouring of God’s wrath on earth in the Tribulation Period – Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8); and they* *(the unsaved left behind who do not participate in the event of the Rapture)* **shall not escape** *(the End Time judgments of the Tribulation Period – Rev. 6-19)*.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 continues the exposition:

“But ye (the saved who are raptured), brethren (the saints), are not in darkness (characterized by moral and spiritual darkness which coincides with the blindness of Satan and habitual sinful living – Rom. 13:12), **that that day** (the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period) **should overtake you as a thief** (suddenly and unexpectedly as it will for the unbelievers who are left behind after the Rapture – indicating that God’s saints will be raptured and not be overtaken by the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period). **Ye (God’s children) are all the children of light, and the children of the day** (characterized as possessing spiritual illumination, holiness, uprightness – Eph. 5:8): **we (God’s redeemed saints) are not of the night, nor of darkness** (unlike the unsaved, we have been delivered from the domain of Satan’s darkness and kingdom – Eph. 4:18 with Col. 1:13).

Paul continues to draw the dichotomy or distinction between the unsaved and saved in the remaining verses. Notice again the change in pronouns from believers to unbelievers.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8

“Therefore (since we are not to be characterized by darkness) **let us (God’s saints) not sleep, as do others** (the careless indifference of the unconverted or unsaved who are living on earth today, prior to the Rapture); **but let us watch and be sober** (In contrast to the unsaved, we as God’s people are to remain spiritual alert to Satan’s temptations and the spiritual pitfalls of life as we watch and wait for the Rapture). **For they (the unsaved) that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night** (the unsaved who love the darkness over the light and are not looking for the Rapture to occur – John 3:19). **But let us (God’s redeemed saints), who are of the day** (who are to be characterized by the light of purity - Eph. 4:18; 5:11; 1 John 1:7), **be sober** (maintain spiritual alertness during these last days as we anticipate and prepare for the event of the Rapture – 1 Pet. 4:7; 5:8; 1 John 3:3), **putting on the breastplate of faith and love** (faith in God and love for the Lord is the armor of Christian character, which protects us from the moral darkness in a sinful world, so we are ready to meet the Lord at the Rapture – 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:14-17; 2 Tim. 4:8); **and for an helmet** (referencing the protection of our mind), **the hope of salvation** (contextually, 1 Thess. 5:1-3, the specific blessed hope and deliverance from the coming Tribulation Period, not fearing that we will enter the Day of the Lord as explained in verses 9-10).

These saints had already experienced salvation from the penalty of sin, but they will also experience salvation (deliverance) from the wrath of God during the Tribulation Period based on Christ's death and the blessed hope of the Rapture in removing them from planet earth prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. The salvation in this Rapture context is eschatological in nature (it pertains to a future deliverance from the Tribulation Period).

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 ends the exposition on pretribulationism:

“For (stating the reason for our hope of salvation or deliverance – vs. 8) God hath not appointed us (God’s Saints) to wrath (contextually, the specific wrath of the Day of the Lord – the Tribulation Period – 1 Thess. 5:1-3), **but to obtain salvation (deliverance from the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period through the event of the Rapture = *Pretribulationism* as in Rev. 3:10) **by our Lord Jesus Christ** (at the event of the Rapture), **Who died for us** (on the basis of Christ’s death, not our own efforts, good works, perseverance, or overcoming - all of God’s saint’s will be raptured – 1 Cor. 15:51), **that, whether we** (God’s saints) **wake** (are spiritually alert as in verse 6) **or sleep** (are spiritually lethargic in our Christian life as in verse 6), **we should live together with him** (in our new heavenly home that Christ has prepared for us – John 14:1-3). **Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do**” (the pretribulation Rapture provides comfort and strength to the saints, knowing they will be rescued from the Day of the Lord, the seven-year Tribulation Period, and dwell with Christ in their heavenly home – 1 Thess. 4:18).**

Dr. John Walvoord summarizes these verses:

“In this passage he [Paul] is expressly saying that our appointment is to be caught up to be with Christ; the appointment of the world (unsaved) is for the Day of the Lord, the day of wrath.”

The point is this. The Church is looking for the return of Christ **before** the “times and seasons” (1 Thess. 5:1) or the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period) begins. We are to be looking for the Savior’s return (Phil. 3:20) and not the events of the Tribulation period to begin. God’s saints would not be here during the Tribulation Period. However, the unsaved will enter the Tribulation Period as indicated by the pronouns “they” and “them” – (vv. 3-4). But the saved will NOT enter the Tribulation period as indicated by the words and pronouns “brethren,” “yourselves,” “ye” and “us” – (vv. 2, 4, 6).

The Removal of the Restrainer and Church

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 and 7 is another important Bible passage that supports the pretribulation Rapture of God's Church. Some were teaching that the Church had already entered the Tribulation Period, but Paul debunks this myth. He says they cannot be living during the seven years because the Antichrist was not revealed, the apostasy of Antichrist worship was not occurring, and because the Holy Spirit was still restraining sin on earth through indwelling the Church. He uses this argument to teach pretribulationism. Let's follow his line of reasoning.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him (*the Rapture*), That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ (*Day of the Lord – the Tribulation Period*) is at hand (*present – they are living during the Tribulation Period*). Let no man deceive you by any means (*by saying you are living during the Tribulation Period*): for **that day shall not come (*the seven-year Tribulation Period or time of God's judgment cannot be present on earth*), **except there come a (the) falling away first** (*the apostasy of Antichrist during the Tribulation Period who presents himself as God – 2 Thess. 2:3-4*), and that man of sin be revealed (*the revelation of Antichrist*), the son of perdition.”**

2 Thessalonians 2:7 goes on to say:

“For the mystery of iniquity (*lawlessness*) doth already work (*during the last days—2 Tim. 3:1*): only he who now letteth will let (*the Holy Spirit holding back spiritual anarchy and keeping sin and apostasy from overtaking the world*), until he (*the Holy Spirit*) be taken out of the way” (*the influence of the Holy's Spirit's restraining ministry of sin and apostasy on earth will be removed when God's people, in whom the Spirit dwells, are removed or taken up in the Rapture*).

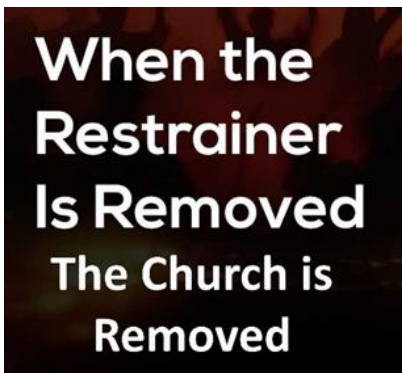
Paul's point is that the Tribulation Period (the seven years) cannot begin until the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is removed. This can only happen with the removal of the Church in the Rapture through which the Holy Spirit restrains sin and keeps sinful



and spiritual anarchy (total apostasy) from occurring on a universal basis and overtaking the entire earth.

What precedes the seven years and is a key factor that starts the Tribulation Period? It's the removal of the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit through the Rapture of the Church. This is because the Holy Spirit in some measure is keeping sin in check through the presence of the Church as God's people counter sin and lawlessness. Therefore, this means the Church must first be removed (raptured) for the earth to lose the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, which is necessary for the Tribulation to begin and cause a breakout of total wickedness and apostasy during the seven years.

So, the departure of the Church (in whom the Spirit dwells) results in the departure of the restraining work of the Holy Spirit. This allows the Tribulation Period to get started and causes the earth to enter a time of full-blown wickedness, sin, spiritual anarchy, Antichrist, and apostasy. Of course, it must be understood that the restraining work of the Holy Spirit through the Church is not designed to "Christianize" the world (post-millennialism or Dominion Theology) but to keep evil within certain providentially defined boundaries until the Rapture and Tribulation Period begins.



**When the
Restrainer
Is Removed
The Church is
Removed**

Think this through. The Tribulation Period cannot begin until the Church is raptured. The Holy Spirit indwells the Church (John 14:17; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) and it's through God's saints that the Holy Spirit works to restrain sin or to keep it in check, stopping sinful anarchy (worldwide apostasy) from overtaking the earth. However, when the Church is removed in the Rapture (in whom the Spirit dwells) the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is also

removed. The removal of the Restrainer's or Holy Spirit's influence from the earth is a clear indication that the Church is removed via Rapture, and this is what ignites the evil atrocities of the seven-year Tribulation Period, the apostasy of Antichrist, and brings about the implosion of God's wrath. So, essentially, the Church is keeping the Antichrist from appearing on the world stage! The Holy Spirit working through the Church is in some measure suppressing the total breakout of

wickedness, sin, and the apostasy of Antichrist from occurring during the Tribulation Period.

Let's look at the two verses together to get the flow of thought and main teaching.

2 Thessalonians 2:7

“For the mystery of iniquity (*lawlessness*) doth already work (*during the last days*): only he who now letteth will let (*the Holy Spirit holding back and keeping total spiritual anarchy and sin from overtaking the earth*), until he (*the Holy Spirit*) be taken out of the way.”

Notice the Bible does not say the Holy Spirit will be taken *out of the world but out of the way*. In other words, the Spirit's ministry of restraining sin and apostasy while He indwells the Church will be removed over the earth when God's people are removed or taken up in the Rapture. However, the Holy Spirit will still operate on earth in convicting and saving sinners (John 16:8) who will be identified as Tribulation saints (Rev. 7:14).

2 Thessalonians 2:8

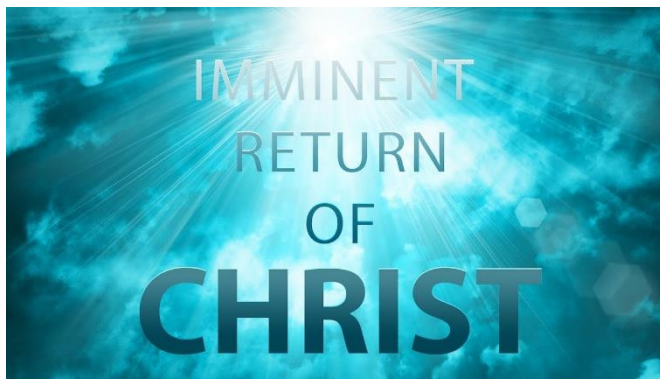
“And then (*after the restraining work of the Spirit and Church are removed - pretribulationism*) shall that Wicked (*Lawless One – the Antichrist*) be revealed (*during the Tribulation Period*), whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:” (*Christ's Second Coming to earth*).

Here is the prophetic point. The Tribulation Period cannot begin until the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is removed from earth (2 Thess. 2:7-8). This is a clear indication that the Church through which the Holy Spirit restrains wickedness must be raptured and removed BEFORE the seven-year Tribulation can begin. The removal of the Spirit's restraining work of evil in the world (with the absence of the Church on earth) is a key factor that triggers the start of the Tribulation Period. So, the Rapture must occur BEFORE the Tribulation begins. To state it succinctly, it's impossible for the Church to pass into the Tribulation. This is because the Rapture of the Church results in the loss of the restraining work of the Holy Spirit on earth which becomes the primary factor that begins the worldwide wickedness and apostasy of the Tribulation. With the Church gone through which the Spirit works there will be no more curbing of sin, wickedness, and apostasy. It will all come to a head under the Antichrist.

All these pretribulation Bible passages teach that God delivers His people from wrath – He does not send them through His wrath. Let's study our Bibles! **When the prophetic Scriptures are interpreted logically, literally, futuristically, non-allegorically, grammatically, and soteriologically they teach pretribulationism.** It reveals that the Church will not experience any of God's wrath during the seven-year Tribulation Period (the 70th week) as prophesied by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:27) and Jesus (Matt. 24:1-29).

The Imminent Return of Christ

The imminent nature of Christ's return in the Rapture also supports pretribulationism. The Bible concludes that Jesus could return at any moment. His coming is always portrayed as being imminent. **No other Rapture position (midtrib, prewrath, posttrib) can actually believe and embrace the Biblical truth of the imminent (any moment) return of Christ for His Church.**



Here is the good news! We are not waiting for the Tribulation to begin with its horrific judgments and Antichrist to come on the world scene before the Rapture can take place. We are to be looking, expecting Jesus to come back, and eagerly waiting for the return of the Savior in the Rapture (Heb. 9:28).

Christ could come at any moment. This is the way the early Church viewed the return of Christ. We should have the same blessed hope today. Jesus could come today. Glad day! Perhaps today! We don't have to wait for the Tribulation Period to begin, God's judgments to fall, or the 666 mark and Antichrist to be revealed. Listen to the united testimony of the early Church on Christ's imminent return in the Rapture.

Titus 2:13

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (*anticipating and expecting Christ's any moment return in the Rapture*).

The early Church believed in a pretribulation Rapture because they looked for the Savior's return as an *imminent* or *impending* event that could occur at any moment. They were not waiting around for the events of the Tribulation Period to begin before the Rapture could occur.

1 Corinthians 16:22

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema **Maranatha** ("our Lord comes").

The early church coined this unique greeting of "Maranatha!" ("our Lord comes") which reflected their belief in the imminent return of Christ in the Rapture. The early church believed Christ could return during their lifetime and at any moment. They were not waiting around to enter the Tribulation Period and experience the End Time events of God's wrath predicted in the book of Revelation. The same should be true of Christians today. We should expect Christ to come back at any moment, looking and believing that He could return today and save us from the judgment of the Tribulation Period.

Philippians 3:20

"For our conversation (*citizenship*) is in heaven; from whence also **we look for the Saviour** (*to arrive at any moment*), the Lord Jesus Christ."

Philippians 4:5

"**The Lord is at hand**" (*His return is near, close at hand and therefore imminent*).

James 5:8

"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for **the coming of the Lord draweth nigh**" (*near – meaning it is impending and imminent*).

Revelation 22:12

"And, behold, **I come quickly** (*suddenly, without delay and therefore imminently*); and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Revelation 22:20

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely **I come quickly** (*suddenly, without delay*). Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus**" (*a prayer of expectancy and anticipation in the any moment return of Christ*).

The church of Thessalonica was continually looking for the return of Christ! They were commissioned **“to wait for his Son from Heaven”** (1 Thess. 1:10). The early church was **“waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Cor. 1:7) which means they were anticipating His return to happen at any time and moment.

The saints were not waiting for the Tribulation Period to begin, waiting to pass through God’s judgments, or waiting see the Antichrist during the Tribulation Period. No, they were waiting to see the true Christ before the Tribulation Period begins and therefore escape **“the wrath to come”** (1 Thess. 1:10). The saints knew that Christ’s coming was imminent! They were not waiting around for the fulfillment of other Bible prophecies, the beginning of the Tribulation Period, or to pass through any part of the seven years. Again, their motto was **“Perhaps Today.”** The early Christians were looking for the return of Christ in the Rapture before the revelation of Antichrist. They were **“looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life”** (Jude 21). The Rapture will be the consummating evidence of God’s mercy and it will bring eternal life, that is, the enjoyment of never-ending life in God’s own presence.

Only those who believe in in a pretribulation Rapture can honestly say, “Jesus may come today!” It’s clear that the early Church had the expectation that Christ could return at any moment. **Any other Rapture position (mid-trib, prewrath, or post-trib Rapture) denies that Jesus could return at any moment for the Church and therefore God’s people must wait until certain events occur in the Tribulation Period for Jesus to return.** Therefore, these views cannot be correct based on the imminent (any moment) return of Christ in the Rapture. Nothing needs to take place before the Rapture occurs such as the revelation and worship of Antichrist, the judgments of the Tribulation period, etc. **Since Jesus could return at any moment the event of the Rapture must be pretribulational in nature.**

“I am listening every moment
For the mighty trumpet sound.
What a time we'll have together
When the saints will leave the ground!
All our toiling will be over
All our sorrow and its pain.
It could happen in a moment
Jesus Christ could come again!”

The Blessed Hope

Reflect on this. The characteristic of the Rapture event revolves around a message of tremendous hope – a blessed hope (Titus 2:13). Our hope (joyous anticipation) would include Christ's coming for the Church to rescue His people from the wrath of the Tribulation Period.



Since the Rapture is a message of hope it cannot possibly occur in the middle or after the Tribulation. A midtribulation or posttribulation Rapture means God's saints would possess no hope. Instead, they would be destined to pass through impending judgment, wrath, gloom, doom, and even possible death during the Tribulation Period, likely missing the Rapture event. There is no blessed hope in a mid-trib or post-trib Rapture - only bleak hopelessness.

- What kind of blessed hope would the coming of Christ be if you knew that you were going to face the awful Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments of the Tribulation Period before Jesus returns?
- What kind of blessed hope would the coming of Christ be knowing that you were going to enter the Tribulation Period to face the Antichrist, 666 marking system, and all of God's wrath that is going to be poured out upon Antichrist's kingdom?

- What kind of blessed hope would the coming of Christ be knowing that you are going to have to die from hunger, malnutrition, war and from being decapitated (martyred) by the Antichrist's dictatorship?

This is not hope - it's a horror! It certainly is not the comfort of which Paul spoke about in relation to Christ's pretribulation return (1 Thess. 4:18; 1 Thess. 5:11). The characteristics of the Rapture revolve around comfort – not judgment, wrath, distress, and hopelessness. Rapture teaching was given to comfort those who mourn! The threat of going through the Tribulation is hardly a doctrine of comfort to the saints. I am not looking to pass through the terror of the Tribulation night and this specific expression of God's wrath during this future period of time over the earth (Rev. 3:10). I am looking for the Savior to return and rapture me out of this world (Phil. 3:20) before any judgment begins!

This is why the entire truth about Christ's coming in the Rapture is a blessed hope that fills our hearts with joyous anticipation! Again, the characteristic of our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) in the event of the Rapture is one of joy and the anticipation of experiencing a tremendous future together with our loved ones in Christ, receiving a transformed body, and being with Jesus! This could hardly be said if we possessed the gloomy and dark prospect of entering the Tribulation Period, being part of God's time of wrath, and suffering martyrdom at the hands of Antichrist.

The Pretrib Picture of the Rapture



Revelation 4:1 is a symbol or picture of the Rapture:

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither (*the analogy and picture of the Rapture*), and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (*the seven-year Tribulation Period*).

John heard a voice that sounded like a trumpet which is reminiscent of the trumpet Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16). He was then taken up to Heaven which portrays the teaching of the catching away of the Church to live with Christ in the place He has prepared for us (John 14:1-3 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18). John is also caught away or raptured BEFORE Christ began to show him the future Seal Judgments and

what would occur during the End Times (Tribulation Period). John's experience serves as an illustration of the Rapture of the Church which will occur before the Tribulation Period begins. Once again, the Church is not mentioned or seen in Revelation chapters 6-18 when God's judgments fall on the earth. In fact, the Church is only mentioned after the judgment has expired and Christ's Church (the Bride of Christ) is seen in Heaven rewarded and awaiting the Second Coming of Christ to earth (Rev. 19:6-8).

The Jewish Nature of the Tribulation

Something else needs to be mentioned that will help us further understand why the Bible teaches a pretribulation Rapture. The Church is not Israel and God is dealing with Israel during the Tribulation Period. The Scriptures teach that God has two distinct *programs* for two distinct *peoples* which are Israel and the Church (1 Cor. 10:32; Eph. 5:32; Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1). The Biblical position of pretribulationism (Christ rapturing the Church before the Tribulation Period) depends to a large degree on maintaining a clear distinction between the Church and Israel. This is because the purposes related to Israel (the Jews) will come to pass during the Tribulation Period. The seven-year Tribulation Period is designed to bring Israel to her final *repentance* (Zech. 12:10), *regathering* (Matt. 24:31), *regeneration* (Ezek. 37:25-27), *reconciliation* (Dan. 9:24), and *restoration* in the Millennial Kingdom (Jer. 23:5-6; 30:7-9; 32:37-42; 33:14-17, 20-21; Ezek. 20:33-38; 37:24-25; Dan. 7:13-14; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 8:11; Zech. 14:4, 9).



That God has different programs for the Church and His beloved Jewish people is clearly seen in the covenant programs given specifically to Israel which relate to the future (Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:32) and the unique purposes and privileges of the Church today (Acts 15:14; Eph. 3:16; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 3:18). *God works with different groups of people in different ways and at different times throughout history and in the future.* These two peoples and programs (Israel and the Church) should never be blended through an allegorizing hermeneutic for this will cause prophetic misinformation and confusion regarding the End Times.

Dr. Renald Showers notes that “all other views of the Rapture have the church going through at least part of the 70th week (*the seven years*), meaning that all other views mix God’s 70-weeks program for Israel and Jerusalem together with His program for the church. A gap (*the seven years*) is needed in order for these two aspects of God’s program to be harmonized in a nonconflicting manner.”

Reformed Theology replaces Israel with the Church and cancels out the literal and future covenant promises given to the Jewish people. The Church is said to become the new Israel of God and the meaning of Israel’s covenant promises are allegorized and hijacked - made into spiritual promises which are now applied to the Church. But how can Jewish people magically become Gentiles in the Church (Acts 10:45; 11:1, 11:13)? How do Israel’s physical blessings (a land, kingdom, and King) magically turn into spiritual blessings for the Church? Romans 11:1 says, “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of the tribe of Benjamin.*” God is not finished with His national people Israel. Any attempt to replace Israel and her literal covenant promises with the Church and spiritual promises is an offense to the logical and literal understanding of God’s truth. Scripture twisting always breeds confusion (2 Pet. 3:16).

The dispensational approach to Scripture correctly makes the Biblical distinction between Israel and the Church. In other words, when interpreting Scripture with a literal hermeneutic one can only conclude that the term Israel refers to Jews while the Church is another distinct group of people composed of both Jews and Gentiles who are united to Christ in a unique spiritual union (1 Cor. 12:13). Also, when a consistent literal hermeneutic is applied to the Scriptures one will conclude that that there is going to be a literal Tribulation Period of seven years where Israel (the Jews) will be persecuted by Antichrist (Rev. 12). It’s the time when the Jews are brought to repentance in relation to the Second Coming (Zech. 13:1), a time when Jesus literally stands on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1-3), and in the end the saved Jewish nation (Rom. 11:26-27) will be brought into her literal earthly blessings during the kingdom, which is the period of time that is Biblically defined as 1,000 years - the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-7).

Here is the point. **The difference between these two groups of people explains why the Church is absent from the Tribulation Period (the seven years).** It’s because the focus is once again placed upon God’s plan for Israel during the Tribulation. Daniel 9:24–27 reveals the goals related to Israel (Daniel’s people – the

Jews) which would come to pass over a span of 490 years (the 70 weeks of Daniel which are “seventy sevens” or $70 \times 7 = 490$ years). The ultimate purpose of Daniel’s 70th week (the unfulfilled and final week or the seven years of the Tribulation Period) is to bring Israel to her prophetic destiny which is promised in the New, Abrahamic, and Davidic Covenant blessings.

These promises pertain to Israel’s salvation and entrance into the earthly Messianic Kingdom (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32; Matt. 8:11). Israel’s persecution during the Tribulation Period at the hands of the Antichrist and all nations (Zech. 11:15-17; 14:1-2; Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17) is what God uses to bring about the Jews repentance and reception of the Messiah at His Second Coming (Hosea 5:15; 6:1-3; Matt. 23:39; Zech. 13:8-9; Romans 11:25-26). **This is why the period of judgment is called the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). It is not the time of the Church’s trouble!** The Church is never mentioned as participating in Israel’s time of trouble during the Tribulation Period. This is because the Church does not pass through any part of the Tribulation Period. During the Tribulation God will be working with His Jewish people (not the Church) to chasten them, save them, and eventually bring His beloved people into their promised kingdom blessings (2 Sam. 7:1-4; Isa. 51:11; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-17; Dan. 7:18, 22; Ps. 48:2; Luke 22:29-30; Acts 1:6; 15:14-18).

In the Olivet Discourse Jesus focused His attention on His Jewish disciples (Matt. 24:1, 4, 6, 9, 15, 20, 23, 26, 31, 34) and the future persecution of the Jewish people (Israel) whom the disciples represented. This persecution of the Jews will occur during the Tribulation Period which aligns with Daniel’s writings (Matt. 24:15-28). **It should be noted that Jesus did not put the Church in Matthew 24, which focuses on the Tribulation and Jewish persecution, and neither should we.** Jesus was speaking to His Jewish disciples who represented the future Jewish nation that would one day pass through the Tribulation and be persecuted at the hands of Antichrist.

There are many passages of Scripture that show the Tribulation has a definite Jewish character and purpose (Deut. 4:30; Dan. 12:1; Ezek. 20:37; Zech. 13:8–9; Matt. 24:15–20). Although many Gentiles will come to faith in Christ during this time (Rev. 7:13-17) *they become tribulation saints – not Church Age saints*. But during the Tribulation the Jewish people are the primary focus. God says, “I will correct thee in measure” (Jer. 30:11) during the seven years. Daniel 9:24 says the

Tribulation Period will “finish the transgression.” God is fulfilling His purposes with Israel and not the Church during the seven years. This is what Daniel, Jesus, and Paul taught (Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 24:15; Rom. 11:26-27). It’s also why the Church is not seen on earth during any part of the Tribulation.

God’s Protection from His Wrath

It’s interesting that throughout Scripture God is seen protecting His people before judgment falls (2 Peter 2:5-9).

- Enoch was transferred to heaven before the judgment of the flood.
- Noah and his family were in the ark before the judgment of the flood.
- Lot was taken out of Sodom before judgment was poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah.
- The firstborn among the Hebrews in Egypt were sheltered by the blood of the Paschal Lamb before judgment fell.
- The spies were safely out of Jericho and Rahab was secured before judgment fell on Jericho.

In a similar way, the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation Period begins and be kept safe from entering the period of God’s wrath.

In conclusion, the entire seven-year Tribulation Period is an expression of God’s wrath since Christ is opening all the seals and pouring out His wrath upon the earth (Rev. 5:1-10; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 16-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 18:3; 19:15). Despite what the midtribulation and prewrath positions postulate about man’s and Satan’s wrath, God’s wrath is the overall focus of the Tribulation Period and therefore the Church will not pass through any part of “the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10). We are kept from the hour (Rev. 3:10). **It’s not wrath but Rapture!** Don’t give up this treasured prophetic truth and blessed hope. Yes, you can call it a “fly-away” doctrine, but you cannot call it a “fly-by-night” doctrine for the Bible clearly teaches Rapture before wrath (the seven-year Tribulation Period).

Dr. Wilber Smith wrote:

“For the millions of believers living on earth in any one generation to be convinced that the next experience for them will be a seven-year period of suffering and anguish, rather than the Lord’s coming for them in glory, would certainly cast dark shadows over the church as a whole, shadows which I do not think belong to the Christian’s hope of the Lord’s return.”

I have created an acrostic and prophetic chart on Pretribulationism to help give you a Biblical overview of the truth of our blessed hope.

- P** = Place of the Church in the book of Revelation – not on earth during Tribulation (Rev. 1-3; 19-22)
- R** = Removal of the Restrainer and Church starts the Tribulation (1 Thess. 2:7-8)
- E** = Exemption from God’s wrath (Rev. 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:2-9)
- T** = Twenty-four elders - the raptured and rewarded Church in Heaven – removed from earth during the Tribulation (Rev. 4:4)
- R** = Rapture of the Church – a mystery return of Christ taught in New Testament (1 Cor. 15:51-52)
- I** = Imminence – Any moment return of Christ (1 Cor. 16:22; Phil.3:20)
- B** = Blessed hope (Titus 2:13; 1 Thess. 4:18).

