

Ed. Note: This study was graciously submitted by **Kenneth W. Eckerty**, a music minister, Sunday School teacher, businessman, and strong brother in the Lord for many years. As in the case of many of the best teachings that we are seeing in these days, Ken is not a person that you would expect to generate a work such as this, as his background is not in traditional theology. For most purposes, Ken could be considered a "layman." Yet, the Lord has led him to produce what I can only call the "definitive" study on the PreWrath rapture. Yes, this document is long and detailed. Yes, it is DEFINITELY worth the time.

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A. Why am I doing this study?

- The Lord has led me to study the scriptures concerning the timing of the rapture of the church.
- And I have to confess, after 17 years of holding to the pre-tribulational rapture, I was wrong.

B. Why is this important?

1. Some of you may hold to the Pan-Tribulation viewpoint (the view that states it will all pan out in the end).
2. So why is this important? I believe there are two main reasons.
 1. Those who love God's word want to know what it says (Rev 1:3)
 2. And if the Church is going to see Great Tribulation, then she must be prepared. American Christians are counting on the "Great Escape".

C. Study but be not divisive.

3. This will be an indepth Bible study of end time events. In no way am I saying I have all the answers, and I may not convince you whole-heartedly that I am right. But if you will come away from this saying, "I think Ken *may* be right", then I have done my job.
4. This is not going to be a exegetical study of the book of Revelation. There are a lot of metaphors and symbols that are used in Rev that, to be honest with you, I don't understand all of it. We are not going to deal with the chronology of the judgments of God. We are simply going to deal with the chronology of the Tribulation period, only so far as to how it relates to the timing of the return of Christ for us, his church.
5. This is not going to be a fun study. I am not going to tickle your ears. That is not my intention. My intention is to show you what I strongly believe the Bible teaches concerning Christ's return, and exhort you to be prepared and live holy.
6. Word of comfort: I am not a part of a cult.
7. Acts 17:11, prove me as the Bereans.
8. Final word in terms of my introduction: **This is not to be a divisive issue.**

II. The Views

Let's look at the 3 rapture views that are considered the mainstream views today. I am assuming everyone knows what the rapture is? Here is a chart which outlines these views:

A. Pre-Tribulational Rapturism

This is by far, the most common viewpoint in America today. It's roots can be traced back to the Plymouth Brethren in 1830, although it did not really become prevalent in America until the early 1900's. Pre-trib teaches this:

1. The final 7 year period of the world is called the tribulation.
2. The last 3.5 years are called the Great Tribulation.
3. The entire 7 year period is considered the wrath of God or the Day of the Lord.
4. Since the church is not destined for God's wrath, then the church is raptured prior to the 7 year period.
5. The rapture is considered to be an "any moment" event.

B. Mid-Tribulation Rapturism

This view is even more recent than pre-trib, becoming popular in 1941. This view believes:

1. The final 7 year period of the world is called the tribulation.
2. The last 3.5 years are called the Great Tribulation.
3. The last 3.5 years are considered the wrath of God or the Day of the Lord.
4. Since the church is not destined for God's wrath, then the church is raptured at the mid-way point.

C. Post-Tribulation Rapturism

Post-trib was by far the most popular opinion during the time of the reformation, but cannot be traced to a specific starting point. There are a lot of variations on this view but in its classic sense post-tribbers believe:

The church must endure the entire 7 year period, to be raptured at the end of the tribulation.
God will protect his children through His wrath.

I've tried to explain these views as simply as I could. While there are variations of each of these views, as a whole this is basically what each believes. Each of these uses scripture to support and build its case, but each has its particular problems.

III. The Problem

A. The Three Views

For the sake of time, I am going to lump Pre-trib and Mid-trib together since both believe the church will not see the wrath of anti-christ. So as we study this issue, when I say pre-trib, I include the mid-trib point of view. I basically saw problems with pre-trib and post-trib.

For Pre-trib it was simple: Pre-tribbers believe that the wrath of God (*The Day of the Lord*) begins at the beginning of the 7 year period. But I saw convincing evidence that the wrath of God begins inside the tribulation, not before it.

My problem with Post-trib was that as a whole, post-tribbers believe the church will go through the wrath of God. But I saw clear evidence that the church was not destined to go through the wrath of God.

I saw these two problems and I began to question my pre-trib convictions. So I began a 5 month study to determine the truth. What I found was, to me, so clear it was almost frightening. I never had firm convictions on Pre-trib, but I always thought that it had the most evidence. I began to see that it had no solid biblical evidence whatsoever, and what scripture was used to support the view was very weak and inferred things that the Bible did not say.

John Walvoord (Dallas President), a pre-tribber, stated that Pre-Tribulation Rapturism cannot be proven explicitly from the scriptures. And I found him to be absolutely correct.

B. Can I agree?

Is there anything I can agree with my brothers concerning end-time events. Yes, and here they are:

Jesus is coming again, and soon!

There will be a literal, future 7 year period called Daniel's 70th week.

During this period there will be great trouble and persecution for both the elect and Israel initiated by Satan through the anti-christ.

God's judgment will be poured out upon mankind for sin.

There will be a literal, future 1000 year reign of Christ.

The main thing I disagree with is **when** the Lord Jesus will return for His Bride (the rapture). Again, I point out that the timing of the rapture is a non-divisive issue and we must have tolerance in respect for differing viewpoints. We can have strong personal convictions on biblical issues (I certainly do), but we can still have fellowship with one another on non-critical issues.

So with the problems that I saw, the next question was, can we know the exact timing of the rapture in relation to end time events? And I believe the answer is **YES!!**

IV. The Solution: Pre-Wrath Rapturism

I believe what the Bible clearly teaches is what has been called the Pre-Wrath rapture of the church. It is based on a literal, common sense interpretation of the Bible. This view believes:

The Day of the Lord is called the wrath of God.

The Day of the Lord starts sometime in the second half of the 7 year period.

Since the Church is not destined for God's wrath, the Rapture of the Church occurs immediately prior to the Day of the Lord.

The Pre-Wrath position is not a new position of the Church. The only thing that is new is the name. The view that the church would see antichrist and be removed prior to God's judgment, was without question, the view of the early church fathers (I will give you quotes at the end of this study to prove that).

As we go through this study, we will build, what I believe, is an indestructible case for Pre-Wrath rapturism. We are going to start with basic definitions which are essential for us to understand, and then we will look at specific texts which speak of the chronology of end-time events. And finally, we will finish up with specific arguments that Pre-tribbers use to build their case. It will be a very methodical and somewhat tedious approach, but when we are done, if you can't say I'm right, at least I hope you'll say that this view is credible and should be taken as a distinct possibility.

As we move into the biblical evidence, I will bombard you with many terms (some of which may be new to you). We will look at many passages of scripture in a short period of time. Even though we will cover a lot of material--right from the start, I want to give you the key question that will unlock the door as to which rapture view is correct. If you are sincere about learning the truth, and you can answer this question, then the rest will fall in line perfectly. That question is very simple: **When does the Day of the Lord begin?** Mark that down. When does the Day of the Lord begin? Answer that question, and the pieces of this puzzle fit together perfectly. Now let's move into our study.

V. Definitions

A. Methodology of Biblical Interpretation

To start with, we must understand the proper way to interpret the scriptures. Misinterpretation can be very dangerous. I believe that the way God has intended us to interpret the Bible is using the literal interpretation method. Very simply put, the Bible is to be taken literal when the text makes sense literally. Lemme give you a catchy phrase to remember: when the plain sense makes sense, you have the right sense. God did not give us his word to be confused. We are the ones who make it that way. Let me give you 3 ways that we interpret scripture:

1. **The Meaning of the Original Language** Sometimes this is critical. The New Testament was written in Greek, and therefore to understand a passage, we must understand what the original intent was. But I will let you know right now, I am not going to twist the Greek to my advantage. There are only a few instances where we will need to go to the original language for fuller meaning.
2. **Context of the Passage** We dare not take a scripture out of context to use it to our advantage. You will see that in several cases, that's exactly what Pre-tribbers do.
3. **Comparison with other Passages in the Bible** Sometimes the original language and the context of the passage are not enough. We must go to other passages in the Bible that speak on the same subject, and then interpret them in the light of the whole Bible.

These are very simple rules of interpretation that, if applied correctly, will prevent us from teaching something that the Bible does not say. There are things in the Bible which should not be taken literally (EX: Beast with 10 heads), and with those instances we should use other methods of interpretation. But in the passages we are going to look at, I believe these passages require the literal, common sense method of interpretation. **REMEMBER: When the plain sense makes sense, you have the *right* sense.**

B. Dispensationalism

This term is not found in the Bible. Nevertheless, it describes a systematic theology that is biblically sound. I am a dispensationalist and so are pre-tribbers. But one of the reasons pre-tribulation rapturism is strongly supported today by men such as Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, John MacArthur, C.I. Scofield, and Dwight Pentecost is because of their strong belief in dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism is simply this: *God has a distinct program for both the Church and Israel.* God turned his attention away from the Jews after the death of Christ, and turned his attention to the Church. At some specific point in the future, God will again turn to Israel and fulfill all the promises he made to her.

Now, I whole-heartedly agree with this. I believe that God literally made promises to Israel that he will literally fulfill. We read over and over in the Old Testament hundreds of promises God made to Abraham, David, and all the prophets regarding the Kingdom.

The opposite view of dispensationalism is called *dominion* or *covenant* theology. This view basically states that since Israel rejected her messiah, all the promises that were intended for Israel are now fulfilled in the Church. The Church is now spiritual Israel.

Now, my purpose is not to defend dispensationalism (although that would be quite easy to do). But understanding it will help us to understand why the pre-trib rapture is so adamantly held on to--despite no concrete biblical evidence.

For example, one of the defenses for pre-trib rapturism goes something like this:

"The Church did not exist in the Old Testament because God was dealing with Israel. So since the church was not around in the O.T., the church cannot be in the tribulation period (which is called the time of Jacob's trouble) because it is the time when God will turn his attention back to the nation of Israel."

This is a belief without any biblical support. It sounds good from a common sense standpoint, but again there are absolutely no scriptures that say that. It is a perfect example of basing a belief on what I will call inference (Websters defines inference as guessing).

For now, that's all we will say about dispensationalism. We will discuss it later in our study.

C. Daniel's 70th week

This is an area that is critical to everything else in relation to end-time events. It is what I will call the *backbone* of prophecy. This scripture is important in many ways not only because it tells us what's going to happen in the future, but it re-enforces the importance of the literal method of interpretation. Let me show you how.

Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."

- Who are thy people? Israel
- What is the Holy City? Jerusalem

So as we read this, there are six things in view:

- Finish the transgression
- Make an end for sins
- Make reconciliation for iniquity
- Bring in everlasting righteousness
- Seal up the vision and prophecy
- And to anoint the most Holy

In Judaism, seven is a very important number. And in this instance, the 70 weeks referred to is 70 weeks of years. Now if you use the multiple of 7, how many years do you have? **(490)** So what God is saying here is that there are 490 years of history for God to accomplish 6 things for Israel.

So when does this 70 week period begin? Let's read verse 25.

Daniel 9:25: "Know therefore and understand, [that] from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."

- 7 weeks = 49 years
- 3 score & 2 weeks = 62 weeks
- So how many weeks is that? 69 weeks!

Now when does it begin? It begins from the going forth of the commandment to rebuild the temple (Nehemiah 2:5-8). We know from history that that was in 445 B.C. From that point, you would count 69 weeks or 483 years. By the way, Sir Robert Anderson took the date, March 14, 445 B.C., took into account the Jewish calendar, and added the exact amount of days in the prophecy, and came to the date April 6, 32 AD. And according to Sir Robert Anderson, who has done most of the historical work on this, that is the very day Jesus rode in Jerusalem and announced himself as King. So what's the significance of this?

- Well, number one, God is right on the dime. The Bible accurately predicted when the messiah would come, to the very day.
- And number two, this verse proves the literal method of interpretation. Some have tried to spiritualize this passage, but I believe it is meant to be taken very literally.

So, we still have one week left, don't we? Let's read verse 26-27:

Daniel 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof [shall be] with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

Daniel 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

- Now, when did the people of the prince destroy the city and the temple (verse 26)? (70 AD)
- Now, when was messiah cut off? (32 AD, approx.)
- OK, now if the 69th week ended approx. 32 AD, when should the 70th week have occurred (if it was sequential without any gap)? (37 AD)

Now, again, when was the temple destroyed?

According to this text in Daniel, the destruction of the city and the temple must occur *before* the 70th week. So, what does that mean? It means that the 70th week cannot be sequential but separate from the 1st 69 weeks.

So, the 70th week is a period of 7 years sometime in the future when God will deal with the nation of Israel and accomplish those six things mentioned in verse 24. Most conservative, pre-millennial believers agree.

And thus we have what the Bible calls Daniel's 70th week. It is also what Bible scholars have called the tribulation period. We have not yet entered this period. It is still future.

I am in complete agreement with pre-tribbers on certain aspects of this 7 year period. As I said earlier, I agree that it is a literal 7 year period based on Daniel 9. I also believe it is still future.

But there is one small disagreement that I have with the Pre-Tribbers on this 7 year period. They often refer to this period as the Tribulation period. The Bible never calls it that. (*Scofield Bible, page 1359*) Whenever the Bible uses the term in a

clear prophetic way, tribulation always refers to the middle of the 7 year period, called the Great Tribulation (we'll look closer at this in a bit).

So you may ask what's the difference if you call it the 70th week of Daniel or the Tribulation? Isn't this just semantics?

If this period of time is inappropriately given the title the Tribulation Period, then it is just one step away from calling the entire period the wrath of God, which is exactly what pre-tribbers have done. And the next progression is to say, well, because the church is not destined for wrath, then the rapture must occur before the 7 year period. Let's be very careful not to use terms that are unbiblical. The Bible calls it the 70th week of Daniel, and that's how I will use it. We will discuss more of this later.

Now, let's discuss what will occur in this last 7 year period according to the book of Daniel.

Daniel 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

A couple of very important things are said to occur according to this verse.

1. Who is the pronoun **he** referring to? (anti-christ--scholars universally agree). OK, so what will the anti-christ do? (confirm a covenant for one week--some sort of 7 year treaty)
2. What will he do in the middle of the week? (cause the sacrifice to cease)

Apparently, the anti-christ will confirm some sort of pact with Israel and allow them to perform sacrifices in the temple. But in the middle of that pact, he will cause the sacrifice to cease, and commit blasphemy by demanding worship. This is what Jesus calls the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15). And this event, without a doubt occurs in the middle of Daniel's 70th week.

We'll talk a lot more about Daniel's 70th week event throughout our study.

D. Matthew 24:3: Sign, Coming, End of Age

Matthew 24:3 "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

I want to highlight 4 words here in this verse: **Sign, Coming, End, Age.**

In my opinion, Matt 24 is the single most important passage concerning end-time events. It is called the Olivet discourse. Anyone know why it's called that? (Mount of Olives--lots of Olive trees)

The disciples are asking Jesus two questions: 1) When shall these things be, and 2) What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?

Let's look at the first word, *sign*.

1) "Sign":

Simply stated, God posted signs at critical forks in the road of history to say to men and women of faith, this is the way--walk in it. Then along with the sign, to authenticate the message, there would be the miraculous. The idea was to say, this is the genuine article. Here's the direction, here's the message, here's the sign, now I'm authenticating it with a miracle or wonder. For example:

Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

All the way back in the book of Isaiah, King Ahaz was ruling over the southern kingdom of Judah. He was of the royal line of David, but was a wicked man. He had received word that the 10 northern tribes had formed a coalition with Syria, and

that they were coming down South to dethrone him. He was very concerned and Isaiah comes to the king and says: You do not have to worry about that. This coalition will not prosper.

And then Isaiah says to Ahaz, God has said, ask of me a sign in the heavens above or the earth beneath. The idea was to ask something tough. Ask something supernatural. Ask something miraculous. Do you know what Ahaz's response was? Let's look at Is 7:11-12:.

Isaiah 7:11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. Isaiah 7:12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

He refused to ask for a sign. So God says: Oh hear now, house of David, I'll give you a sign. And the idea is "I'll give you a sign, a wonder or a miracle". "I'll give you a sign so you'll know when the righteous King is in your midst". And here is that sign:

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

This is a messianic prophecy concerning the first coming of Christ. In other words, you will know when the everlasting King is in your midst when you see this miraculous sign.

So let me ask you a question: What was the miraculous sign in verse 14? (the virgin birth!) And it was fulfilled hundreds of years later in that little manger in Bethlehem.

Remember, there was another sign given to the religious leaders. Remember what it was?

Mat 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

So there was a sign to verify the first coming of Christ.

So we now come to Matt 24, and the disciples inquire of Jesus asking him, what shall be the sign of thy coming? So you must understand, that whatever this sign is, it's miraculous and supernatural. And the Jews understood this way of thinking. Remember what Paul said: "**The Jews require a sign**" (1 Cor 1:22). And so the Jews were always asking for signs, and the disciples were no different.

One final note before we move on: notice in Matthew 24:3, the disciples ask, what is the sign of your coming? It is in the singular tense, not plural. Remember that.

Now, let's talk about this word "coming"

2) "Coming": What will be the sign of your coming?

The word coming that is used in verse 3 is the Greek word "*parousia*".

Now Vines says of this word: "The word *parousia* means arrival and consequent presence with". And by the way, Dr. John MacArthur, a pre-tribber agrees whole-heartedly with this interpretation. It is very clear in the Greek.

It is a *process*, not merely a momentary appearance. I cannot underscore that too strongly.

The word coming is not a synonym for here. Coming means a process. (Ex: I call my mom and tell her I am coming. I make a plane reservation, I pack my bags, I have my mail stopped, I drive to the airport, etc. There are many things I do in relation to my one coming.)

The word parousia indicates an arrival and presence. It could have a number of events associated with it. (Ex: What did the first coming of Christ involve?)

Parousia carries with it the idea of a process, not an instantaneous thing of coming and going.

So what will be connected with the 2nd coming of Christ? The first thing will be the rapture of the church. Then he will judge the nations of the world, the anti-christ, and the false prophet. He will defeat Satan. He will defeat the armies of the world at Armageddon. Then he will return physically to the earth and set up his kingdom. All these are events of his second coming, just like his first coming. It will be a series of events, a process.

Phl 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

The word presence used here is the word parousia. And here it speaks of Paul not just arriving, but being present with these believers.

This is of course is especially interesting in the light of the disciples question to Jesus, what will be the sign of your coming, or presence?

Now, a few more things about this word parousia or coming.

- Parousia always **always** is in the singular. Very important. It never speaks of comings, but one singular coming.
- It also always comes with a definite article or a personal pronoun. That is: the coming, thy coming, or his coming.
- Always in the singular, and always with a personal pronoun.
- Not once does the Bible speak of two comings. Not even by a hint or implication. It never does.
- It can be demonstrated that the parousia of Christ occurs after the middle of the 70th week.

Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)

This is referring to the abomination of desolation during the 70th week of Daniel. When did we say this occurred (in the middle!)?

Mat 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

This verse specifically refers to the coming or parousia of the Lord. In context, for arguments sake now, this occurs sometime after the middle of the 70th week. And that coming is a process that takes a period of time, but is said to occur after the middle of the 70th week (We'll tell you how long later).

For pre-tribulation rapturism to be correct, you must have an earlier parousia or coming for the rapture of the church. It means you must have two distinct comings, not one over a period of time. Remember now, in context, Jesus answers the disciples question, by telling them that his coming would be after the abomination in the temple. And the Bible always speaks of one coming and in the singular. It never, never, never refers to two comings. Nowhere in the Bible does it ever speak of a secret coming of the Lord. It says it will be like lightening, it says we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, but nowhere does it say it will be in secret.

Now let's look at this word **world or age** found also in Matt 24:3.

3) "Age"

In Matt 24:3, the KJV uses the word "world" instead of the word "age". The word "world" is a bad translation. Actually it is better translated "age". It is *not* speaking of the cosmos, which is the world, but it is speaking of the *aion*, which is the age. In other words, "what will be the sign of your coming, and the consummation of the age (not the end of the world, as if the world terminates).

All throughout the O.T., the prophets spoke of two ages: one that is all bad because of sin, and the glorious age which was to follow.

So the disciples asked the question with the understanding that there was to be another age in connection with his coming. In other words, when messiah came, he would then usher in the golden age where they would have everlasting peace.

4) "End"

Mat 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

Mat 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

Mat 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked [one];

Mat 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

Mat 13:40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Mat 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

Mat 13:42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Mat 13:43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Mat 13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Mat 13:48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

Mat 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

Mat 13:50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

In a very clear way, our Lord here teaches that the harvest will occur at the end of the age. Look at verse 39. According to this verse, the harvest is the end of the age. Now what is the harvest? Look at verse 49. It is clear from this passage that the end of the age is spoken of as the time when the great harvest will take place, a time when the wicked will be separated from the righteous. That will be the end of the age. And what about this golden age? Read verse 43. After this present age that is marred by sin, there will be a golden age when the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mat 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.

Very simply Jesus is saying that he will be with you to the end of the age. Who is he speaking to? His Jewish disciples.

Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Mat 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

What end is Jesus referring to here? (the end of the age--they just asked Jesus that in verse 3). The disciples asked Jesus for a sign as to when the end of the age would come. And Jesus proceeds to give them signs, and says but the end of the age is not yet come. The great harvest has not taken place yet!

Now, most pre-tribulation rapturists, Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, C.I. Scofield, Charles Ryrie to name a few, believe that the 70th week of Daniel begins in verse 4. Again, Jesus told his disciples in Matt 28 that he would be with them to the

end of the age, and in Matt 13, Jesus taught that the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous will be at the end of the age.

And then in Matthew 24, starting in verse 4, Jesus begins to describe events which historic pre-tribulation rapturism say are within the 70th week of Daniel. And the Lord says in verse 6 that the end of the age is not yet.

In other words, *the church is going to be around till the end of the age*. It's very, very clear. And by the way, this is a very difficult passage for pre-tribbers. For if Jesus was truly talking to his disciples as representatives of the church, then by their own admission, the church must go through the tribulation. So they have to come up with an explanation that removes the church prior to verse 4. *Do you know how they do it?* They say that Matthew 24 refers to *unsaved* Israel, not the church.

Now, if you are convinced that Jesus was talking about unsaved Israel in Matt 24, and not the church, then you have to come up with *another* coming, a *secret* coming before the 70th week of Daniel, to justify your pre-trib position. There is no other way.

But if Jesus was talking to his disciples as representatives of the church, then you have to conclude that the church will go through the tribulation (pre-tribbers admit this).

The interpretation of this text is absolutely critical to understanding the timing of the rapture. Right now, I will not give the arguments for, what I believe, is clearly a passage for the church. We will get to that later. The main thing I want you to understand now is that this passage is the most critical passage in understanding when Christ will come for his church.

E. Tribulation period/Great Tribulation:

Now let's talk more about Daniel's 70th week. As I stated earlier, no where in the Bible does it ever refer to this 7 year period as the tribulation period.

The Greek word for tribulation is *THLIPSIS*. It means pressure. It was used during the time of Christ to describe a method of torture. A man was placed on a hard surface, his hands and feet were bound, and then a huge rock was placed on his chest. It would eventually cause death by suffocation (very similar to crucifixion). This rock created great pressure or *THLIPSIS*.

Now, in a non-prophetic text, Jesus says in John 16:33, that we would have tribulation or *thlipsis* in this world.

But it is also used in a prophetic sense.

Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Now here Jesus says then there shall be great tribulation or *thlipsis*. Now understand that Matt 24 is a chronological text describing Daniel's 70th week. So let's see what happens prior to this period of Great Tribulation.

Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

We've already talked about this event, haven't we? When does the abomination in verse 15 occur? So, in context, verse 21 has to be referring to a point after the middle of the 70th week. By the way, Pre-tribbers agree.

So in this passage, Jesus does refer to Great *Thlipsis*, but he is referring to *a specific event* that occurs in the middle of the 70th week. And it is in direct relation to the abomination of desolation.

So, let's catch up on what we know:

1. The 70th week of Daniel is a future 7 year period which will culminate the end of the age.
2. The 70th week is never called the Tribulation Period.
3. When Jesus refers to tribulation in a prophetic sense, he refers to it as Great Tribulation.
4. The Great Tribulation begins at the mid-way point of this 7 year period.

Now, the next question is how long is the Great Tribulation? It is *not* 3.5 years long. Nowhere in the Bible will you ever find that the Great Tribulation is 3.5 years long. How long is it? We don't know for sure, but we do know it is less than 3.5 years.

Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

According to verse 22, those days will be cut short for the sake of the elect. The word there is the same word we get our word amputate. So, in context, what days will be amputated or cut short? It has to be the days immediately following the abomination of desolation, the period that Jesus calls the Great Tribulation.

In other words, the Great Tribulation starts in the middle, *but does not run to the end of the 70th week*. It is *amputated*. So, if that's the case, then what will happen from the end of the Great Tribulation to the end of the 70th week of Daniel? It is what the Bible calls the Day of the Lord!

F. Day of the Lord (God's Wrath)

Now, before we see how the Day of the Lord fits into the 70th week of Daniel, we have to understand exactly what it is.

- This event called the Day of the Lord, without question, is spoken of more times in the Bible than any other prophetic event. When was the last time you heard a sermon on the Day of the Lord??
- Simply stated: The Day of the Lord is a future time when the Lord will unleash terrible judgment upon the world and the nation Israel.

This phrase *the Day of the Lord, His Day, the Time of His Wrath, the Day of Christ* all refer to that terrible time of judgment God will unleash upon the earth. He will, once and for all, purge the world of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

Isaiah speaks of it. Ezekiel speaks of it. Joel speaks of it. Jeremiah, Amos, Zephaniah, Malachi, and Obadiah speak of it. Paul speaks of it. Peter speaks of it. And the book of Revelation speaks of it in great detail.

And may I also add, that when we speak of the Day of the Lord it is in contrast to man's day. We are living in man's day. Man is rebelling against God. God's day, the Day of the Lord, is coming.

When we talk about the Day of the Lord, we are not talking about a 24 hour period. For example, we use the term today, "your day is coming" (we're not speaking so much of a 24 hour day, but of retribution--you'll get yours someday). The Day of the Lord refers to a coming day when man's sin will be full, and when it reaches that fullness, God in essence says "no more, enough". And then he *directly* intervenes and judges the earth.

Now, there are two primary things that are going to happen in relation to the Day of the Lord:

1. **He's going to deliver the righteous.** Before God begins to judge the earth, he will remove the righteous out, because in 1 Thess 5:9, Paul says that "**God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain deliverance in Jesus Christ**". God's wrath is poured out during the Day of the Lord, and we are not appointed unto wrath. (We'll say more about that later)
2. **His judgment will be poured out on the earth.** If you have ever read the events that will occur when the trumpets are blown and the bowls are poured out, you know how terrible that day will be. It will be awful. God is love, but his holiness, and justice require his intervention.

Let me show you a good comparison:

Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually.

Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Gen 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

The Day of the Lord will be just like that. In fact, let's see what Jesus says about this time.

Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Luk 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

Luk 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed [them] all.

Luk 17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

And Isaiah:

Isa 13:6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD [is] at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

Isa 13:7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:

Isa 13:8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces [shall be as] flames.

Isa 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Isa 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Isa 13:11 And I will punish the world for [their] evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Isa 13:12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

Isa 13:13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

Isa 13:14 And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land.

Isa 13:15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined [unto them] shall fall by the sword.

Isa 13:16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.

Isa 13:17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and [as for] gold, they shall not delight in it.

Isa 13:18 [Their] bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

Isa 13:19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Isa 13:20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

Isa 13:21 But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

Isa 13:22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in [their] pleasant palaces: and her time [is] near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

And Joel:

Joe 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for [it is] nigh at hand;

Joe 2:2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, [even] to the years of many generations.

Joe 2:3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land [is] as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

Joe 2:10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

Joe 2:11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp [is] very great: for [he is] strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD [is] great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

And Zephaniah:

Zep 1:14 The great day of the LORD [is] near, [it is] near, and hasteth greatly, [even] the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

Zep 1:15 That day [is] a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of

darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

Zep 1:16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

Zep 1:17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

Zep 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

And Amos:

Amo 5:18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end [is] it for you? the day of the LORD [is] darkness, and not light.

Amo 5:19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

Amo 5:20 [Shall] not the day of the LORD [be] darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

(You know who was desiring the Day of the Lord--the Jews. Do you know why? Because they thought it would be the day when God would judge the gentiles, and they would have it good. And they have to be corrected, and the prophets keep correcting them)

The Day of the Lord will be when God judges the entire world for sin, *Jew and Gentile!* There are numerous other passages that speak of this day, but I think you get the point. The Day of the Lord is awful. It is a time of judgment. A time of darkness. A time of fire. A time of humbling for man. It is God's Day. It is the wrath of God.

Now, when will the Day of the Lord begin? Before I tell you when the Bible says it begins, we need to know where most pre-tribbers believe it starts. Let me quote C.I. Scofield, in his notes attached to his popular Bible: (Read page 1372, if you have a Schofield Bible.)

Two things are of important note here:

He believes that there is blessing associated with the Day of the Lord. No where in the Bible does it state or infer that there is blessing associated with the Day of the Lord. As we just read, it is a time of total darkness and terror.

I want to throw in a quote by Richard Mayhue. Richard Mayhue is the dean of Master's seminary (MacArthur's school). He did his doctoral dissertation on the Day of the Lord. It is the most thorough study on the Day of the Lord that I know of, 400 pages of research, listing every reference to the Day of the Lord in the Bible. Richard Mayhue, who is a pre-trib rapturist writes:

"The prominent theme of the Day of the Lord is God's judgment against sin. It is present in every Day of the Lord passage. The blessings of Christ's millennial reign are subsequent to and as a result of the Day of the Lord, but they are not part of it...."

In other words, he is saying the Day of the Lord does not include the millennium. For the purpose of our study, that point is not critical, but it does show a reading into the scriptures something it does not say.

The second thing that is important to note concerning Scofield's views on the Day of the Lord is that he believes it begins after the rapture of the church, and begins with the commencement of the 70th week. He is actually half right. The Day of the Lord does begin after the rapture, but it does not start at the beginning of the 70th week. This is critical, so with Scofield and most other pre-tribbers I take strong exception. If the Day of the Lord begins at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, then I would still believe in the Pre-trib rapture. But it does not. Let me show you.

Joe 2:30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

Joe 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Joe 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD [is] near in the valley of decision.

Joe 3:15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

What does Joel say must occur before the Day of the Lord begins? (we'll call this cosmic disturbance)

Isa 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Isa 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Isa 13:11 And I will punish the world for [their] evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Notice the cosmic disturbance

Eze 32:7 And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

Eze 32:8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.

Eze 32:9 I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known.

Notice the cosmic disturbance

In every passage where it speaks of the cosmic disturbance, it is always in the context of the Day of the Lord. Now, Look at Revelation chapter 6. Most Bible scholars believe the book of Revelation outlines the chronology of Daniel's 70th week (later I'll show you that Matt 24 directly parallels Rev 6).

Rev 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Rev 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

Rev 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Rev 6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

Rev 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

Rev 6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Revelation chapter 6 is a chronological account of Daniel's 70th week. The first seal was opened and certain events occur. The 2nd seal opens and certain events occur. The 3rd seal, 4th seal, 5th seal. And with the opening of the sixth seal there is cosmic disturbance, exactly what the prophets spoke of. *And in verse 17 it says that the great Day of his wrath is come!* So it is very clear that the Day of the Lord spoken of in the Old Testament occurs after the opening of the 6th seal. What happens next?

Rev 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Silence. Why is there silence? Because God is about to directly intervene and judge sinful man. What follows are the 7 trumpet and 7 bowl judgments. This exactly parallels all the passages we read that speaks of the terror and darkness of the Day of the Lord.

Now, let's finish putting together the chronology of Daniel's 70th week. Let's look at Matthew 24. What do we know so far?

1. Daniel's 70th week is a future 7 year period
2. Antichrist defiles the temple at the mid-way point.
3. The Great Tribulation begins immediately after the abomination of desecration.
4. The Great Tribulation is cut short or amputated.
5. and next, the Day of the Lord begins.

Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Immediately after the tribulation of what days?

Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Now look back at verse 29 again. What did we call that? (cosmic disturbance) When does that occur? (at the opening of the sixth seal) So the Day of the Lord must begin in the latter half of the 70th week *after* the amputation of the Great Tribulation, and *after* the opening of the 6th seal.

Then the chronology of Daniel's 70th week goes like this:

1. The beginning of the 70th week starts with the confirmation of the covenant between Israel and the antichrist (Dan 9:27)
2. The antichrist breaks the agreement with Israel and defiles the temple at the midway point (Dan 9:27)
3. The Great Tribulation now begins, but is amputated right before the opening of the sixth seal (Matt 24:21-22,29)
4. The sixth seal opens which announces that the Day of the Lord is about to begin (Joel 2:30,31; Rev 6:17)

Now, the question of the Day. When does the rapture occur? Quoting from C.I. Scofield, he says

"The order of end-time events appear to be first, the rapture of the church just preceding the beginning of the Day of the Lord, the fulfillment of Daniel's 70th week, and the return of the Lord in glory to establish the millennial reign."

Now, as we've already shown, Scofield was wrong on when the Day of the Lord begins. It clearly begins in the latter half of the 70th week after the opening of the 6th seal. But he was absolutely right in linking it to the rapture.

Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Luk 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

Luk 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed [them] all.

Luk 17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

When does it say God's judgment started? (the same day Noah entered the ark, and the same day Lot left Sodom) The Bible clearly teaches that the removal of the righteous and God's judgment (the Day of the Lord) begin on the same day.

1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1Th 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

Remember, when the Bible was written, there were no chapter or verse numbers. The continuity of chapter 4 and chapter 5 clearly link the rapture and the Day of the Lord.

2Pe 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth [person], a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2Pe 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned [them] with an overthrow, making [them] an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Peter here simply repeats what he has been taught by Christ--the truth that when Christ returns, he will come to simultaneously rescue his saints and destroy the wicked.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Verse 29 says that at the commencement of the cosmic disturbance (6th seal), then (v30), Christ will return in the clouds to gather his elect.

And by the way, it is no incident that the disciples linked his coming and his judgment together (What is the sign of your coming and the end of the age?). The passage we just looked at in Luke 17 concerning Noah and Lot was taught by Jesus before the Olivet Discourse. And what was he teaching? That the removal of the righteous and the judgment of the world would begin on the same day. The disciples understood that. So the question they asked on the Mount of Olives was not how, but when would it be.

The Bible clearly teaches that the rapture of the church and the Day of Lord occur together. You cannot, exegetically, say the Day of the Lord begins beyond the middle of the 70th week, but we'd like to have the rapture occur 4-5 years earlier. The Bible allows for no such gap.

I want to quote from Dr. John Sproule, former head of the Greek Department at Grace Seminary which is a very staunch Pre-Trib school). He himself wrote a book in support of Pre-Trib Rapturism called In Defense of Pre-Tribulationalism. He writes,

"Every Old Testament passage containing this phrase (Day of the Lord) can be linked to the final portion of Daniel's 70th week, when God's wrath is poured out upon the Gentile nations. If this is true, then Pre-Tribs must face the critical problem of 1 Thess 5:1-11, and 2 Thess 2:1-5, which seem to link the rapture with the Day of the Lord".

Again, I want to quote from Richard Mayhue,

"...all of the Day of the Lord passages appear to find their fulfillment sometime in the second half of the 70th week".

And Dr. John MacAuthur, who used to believe the Day of the Lord began at the beginning of the 70th week, now says, "no way, it has to begin somewhere in the 2nd half of the 70th week.

I applaud these men for their courage to go against traditional pre-tribulation rapturism as to the placement of the Day of the Lord, yet some of these guys desperately want to somehow say even though the Day of the Lord starts somewhere beyond the middle of the 70th week, we still think the rapture occurs 4 or 5 years earlier. It's an impossible position based on the Lord's teaching in Matt 24, and based on Paul's teaching in 1 & 2 Thess that clearly link the rapture with the Day of the Lord.

G. Great Tribulation/Satan's Wrath

We've talked alot about God's wrath, now I want to very briefly make a distinction between the Day of the Lord and Satan's wrath. There will be a time in Daniel's 70th week when both man and Satan will have one last fling on the earth. The first 3.5 years and the Great Tribulation will be **that time**. The first 3.5 years are when the first 3 (or 4) seals are opened (we'll show this later). It will be a time when man's rebellion against God will come to an all-time high. Around the midway point, something very interesting will occur.

Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the

whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, [ye] heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

Rev 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man [child].

Rev 12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Rev 12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

Rev 12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Most Bible scholars believe this takes place at the midway point of the 70th week, and marks the period that Jesus refers to as the Great Tribulation. Satan is so angry at this point that he unleashes his wrath against Israel and the saints of God.

Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Mat 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Mat 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Mat 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Mat 24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

Mat 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Jesus is referring specifically to the middle of the 70th week when antichrist defiles the temple and exalts himself above God. Jesus says when that happens, LOOK OUT! RUN! For then there will be Great Tribulation, such as the world has never seen. And again, it perfectly correlates with the scene John saw in heaven of Satan being cast to the earth. At that point, Satan knows that his time is short, and he will take out his wrath against the woman and her child.

Now you may be asking, *why is this important?* It really is critical because if you can prove that the entire 70th week of Daniel is the wrath of God, then you can prove a pre-tribulation rapture. But as we've already seen, the wrath of God is called the Day of the Lord, and that does not begin until after the opening of the 6th seal. And as we'll see when we look at Revelation, the first 5 seals are clearly not God's wrath, but the wrath of Satan. When God's judgment falls, antichrist's rule will be over. We will say more about this later.

Now, before we get to the meat of our study, there is one more term that we need to discuss.

H. Imminence

This word imminence is very important for us to understand. According to Dr. John Walvoord, imminence is the very heart of pre-tribulation rapture. Without imminence, pre-trib rapture has no foundation. So when pre-tribbers say they believe in imminence, what do they mean? If by imminence they mean that Jesus Christ is coming soon, and we should be eagerly waiting, looking, and preparing for his return, then I say *AMEN!!!* But unfortunately, that is not what pre-tribbers mean when they say imminence. According to Walvoord and pre-tribbers, 3 things constitute imminence:

1. Jesus could come back at any moment
2. There will be no sign given of his return
3. There are no prophesied events which must precede his return.

Now, I want to be very frank here. Nowhere in the Bible, and I mean *nowhere*, does the Bible ever teach, infer, or allude to the fact that Jesus could come back at any moment. You just cannot find it. Yes, it tells us we should watch, wait, look for, expect, be awake, be alert and prepared for his coming. But it never tells us it could be any moment, without a sign, or no prophesied event before it.

Let me give you the classic text which pre-tribbers use to base their imminence theory on.

1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

Well, Ken, doesn't that sound like an any moment return of Christ? Wait a minute. Let's continue on.

1Th 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

1Th 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

1Th 5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

1Th 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober.

Christ's return will be any moment for those who are not watching, but not to the believer. We are to be watching. For that day will not take us by surprise. That is what Paul is teaching!!

Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Luk 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

Luk 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed [them] all.

Luk 17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

The world will be partying and carrying on, and just like the days of Noah, Christ's return will be imminent because they were in darkness and were not watching. But Paul says that we should watch and be sober so that day will not catch us like a thief.

Now, let's just look at a few scriptures that the pre-tribber uses to prove imminence:

Tts 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Luk 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

1Th 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Phl 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand.

So what am I saying? The Bible simply does not teach imminency. What it does teach is expectancy!! Every one of us should live as if Jesus could return in our lifetime, that we could be the very generation that would see the signs of his return.

Now, let's look at some specific examples that I believe will discredit imminence. First of all, pre-tribbers believe that Jesus could return at any moment.

Jhn 21:18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry [thee] whither thou wouldest not.

Here Jesus was telling Peter how he would die. He was telling him that he would live to be old and be martyred. Question: Did Peter believe that Jesus could come back any moment??

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

It is very clear that Elijah must come before the Day of the Lord begins. In fact, even today, when Jews celebrate passover, there is an empty cup set for the prophet Elijah, and an empty chair set at every Jewish boy's circumcision.

Most pre-tribbers believe that the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the 70th week. If Elijah must come before the Day of the Lord, and the rapture occurs simultaneously with the Day of the Lord, then imminence is destroyed because there would then be a prophesied event which needed to occur before Christ could return.

Dwight Pentecost, understanding this problem, tries to resolve it by suggesting that the Day of the Lord is a series of *mini-days*, and somehow Elijah gets sandwiched in between a couple of them--thus allowing it to be said that Elijah appears before the Day of the Lord but inside the 70th week of Daniel. Not only does this have no biblical merit, but it is contrary to the biblical teaching that the Day of the Lord is a comprehensive, singular period.

Luk 21:5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

Luk 21:6 [As for] these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Luk 21:7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign [will there be] when these things shall come to pass?

Luk 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Luk 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

Luk 21:22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Luk 21:23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

This passage is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as mentioned in Daniel 9:26. Jesus was saying that before his return, Jerusalem would be destroyed and be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD.

Deu 30:5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

This is describing a return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel after the dispersion. When did the dispersion begin? When did Israel become a nation again? All pre-trib rapturists believe that before the end could come, Israel had to become a nation. They believe that was absolutely essential before the end could come. Question: *If that is so, and I strongly agree, how could Jesus have returned at any moment between 70 AD and 1948?* You couldn't believe in imminence before 1948! Is that not a prophesied event that had to occur before the return of Christ?

Hal Lindsey compares the fig tree in Matt 24 to Israel. He stated that when Israel became a nation in 1948, that event set the prophetic scene into high gear. He stated that the generation that saw Israel become a nation again, would be the generation that would see the return of Christ. So by his very words, he destroyed imminency. Because if one prophesied event has to occur before Daniel's 70th week, then imminency has no foundation. So, does the New Testament teach imminency?? It can't. There are prophesied events that have to occur before his return.

That's the fallacy with this view. Prior to 70 AD, imminency was possible. Between 70 AD and 1948, imminence is not possible. After 1948, imminence is now possible. Does the Bible teach imminence or not? You can't have it both ways.

- In the 3rd century, could they have seen Israel become a nation again, and expect Jesus to return in their lifetime? Yes.
- In the 11th century, could they have seen Israel become a nation again, and expect Jesus to return in their lifetime? Yes.
- In the 17th century, could they have seen Israel become a nation again, and expect Jesus to return in their lifetime? Yes.
- Can we expect Jesus to return in our lifetime? **YES!**

The return of Israel as a nation is not the only thing that must occur prior to the Day of the Lord. The coming of Elijah must occur before the day of the Lord (Mal 5). Cosmic disturbance must occur before the Day of the Lord. The Sealing of the 144,000 must occur before the Day of the Lord.

Sensing the enormity of the problem, some pre-tribbers have suggested that there is a period of time between the rapture and the start of the Day of the Lord to allow time for these predicted events to occur. They are grasping at straws and there is absolutely no biblical basis to put any amount of time between the rapture and the Day of the Lord.

Beloved, the Bible teaches expectancy, not imminency. Jesus said, when you see **all these things**, know that my return is at hand. We are to live with the expectation that Jesus could return in our lifetime, and we should live in light of that expectation (holiness).

Now, it's going to seem like I'm contradicting myself, but the Bible does teach a point in time when his return will be at any moment, without any sign, and with no prophesied events to be fulfilled. Anyone know when that is?

It is when the last sign will be given.

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

READ Matt 24:30. Then and only then will his return be imminent. At that point, as Luke 21:28 says, **"look up and lift your heads for your deliverance is drawing near"**.

VI. Exegetical Defense

What we are going to do next is look at the 3 most important portions of scripture that deal with the timing of the rapture: Matt 24, Rev 6-8, 1 & 2 Thess. What we will see is that the Bible is remarkably consistent concerning this issue. I believe the scriptures are very clear, not only on the fact of the return of Christ, but the timing of it.

A. Matthew 24

Let's begin by seeing what the Lord Jesus had to say about his coming. Turn to Matthew, chapter 24.

As you read these verses, imagine that it is Jesus speaking to you, who are his disciples.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day, For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, 'Lo, here is Christ,' or 'there'; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, 'Behold, he is in the desert'; go not forth: 'behold, he is in the secret chambers'; believe it not.

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Most pre-millennial Bible scholars believe that this chapter is a text that deals with the chronology within Daniel's 70th week. In other words, everything from verse 4-34 will happen within that 7 year period (when we look at Revelation we will solidify that).

The disciples have asked Jesus the sign of his coming and of the end of the age. In other words, they've asked him for two signs, right?? So starting in verse 5, he begins to list signs.

1. False Christ's
2. Wars and rumors of wars
3. famines and earthquakes

And in verse 8, Jesus says these are the beginning of birth pangs. Now, if these are the beginning of birth pangs, what will the hard labor be like? The labor will get harder and harder the closer we get to his coming. Christians will be persecuted, and many will be martyred for their faith.

Next, we have a very sad statement. Because of the severe testing that will come upon the saints, many professing Christians will fall away from the faith. Others love for Christ will grow cold. *Aside: It's easy to profess Christ when things are going good, but the true test of one's loyalty is to stand tall when things get tough.*

Those who remain faithful to Christ will be delivered from God's judgment. Remember, when Jesus says the end, what does he mean? (the end of the age; the harvest--when the righteous are separated from the unrighteous). This is not a verse that's speaking of salvation by works, as some teach. In context, this is Christ promising to save or deliver those who are faithful to him in the midst of persecution.

Jesus says that the end of the age will not come until the gospel is preached to the whole world. Now, I'm not sure the church can ever accomplish this lofty goal, but God can and will.

**Rev 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
Rev 14:7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.**

Now in Matthew 24:4-14, Jesus is describing general events that will happen within the 70th week, and as we will see later, they perfectly line up with the first 5 seals in Rev 6. What Jesus is saying is this: There will be certain events occur

that will mark the beginning of the end. They will increase in magnitude to include the persecution of the saints. And he makes it clear that those who are faithful until the harvest, will be delivered. **Then and only then will God's wrath come.**

Starting in verse 15, Jesus switches from general to specific events within the 70th week.

Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here [is] Christ, or there; believe [it] not.

Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Mat 24:25 Behold, I have told you before.

Mat 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, [he is] in the secret chambers; believe [it] not.

Here Jesus begins to expound on the worst time of persecution that has or will ever occur. It is going to be a severe test for the Church. It begins with the abomination of desolation that Daniel speaks of. And as we've already seen, it's at this point that Satan is cast to the earth and begins to take out his wrath against Israel and the saints.

It will be a time of great testing for the saints whereby we will have a choice, choose Christ and die, or choose antichrist and temporarily live. It is a time when the Lord will allow Satan to sift the Church and only those who are genuine believers will endure.

Mat 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Genuine believers will endure, but it will be at the expense of their very lives. It will be so bad in fact, that no believing flesh would be saved if that time were not cut short. (verse 22).

Now, we have not covered every verse in detail. My purpose is to give you a general overview of the chronological flow of this passage. Remember, most scholars believe that all these events occur within Daniel's 70th week. Now, let's read the most controversial verses in this chapter.

Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The question we need to ask ourselves concerning this passage is critical: *Is this the rapture of the church or a picture of Armageddon?* To find out the answer we need to determine whether Jesus was talking to his disciples in Matt 24 as *future Church fathers* or speaking to them as *unsaved Israel*. In other words, was Jesus saying that the Church would endure these things or unsaved Israel?

B. Is Matthew Applicable to the Church?:

Those who are of the Pre-Trib persuasion understand that if the Church is raptured before Daniel's 70th week, then they must explain away two things:

1. Jesus was not talking to his disciples as future church fathers, but as unsaved Israel.
2. Verses 30,31 do not refer to the rapture, but to Armageddon.

Now what I want to do is present both sides of the argument for you. I, believe the issue is very clear if you use a normal and literal method of interpretation. This is one of the most critical aspects of our study. As I have mentioned, Matt 24 is the most critical passage in all the Bible relating to end time events, so the bottom line?: **we must determine if this**

passage is meant for us to know and apply to our lives, or if it is not. Let's look at a few problems associated with this issue.

Issue 1: The Parousia Problem:

The question the disciples asked Jesus was "what will be the sign of your coming (or parousia)?" Jesus answers them very specifically in Matt 24. He gives them events leading up to his coming, the sign of his coming, and his actual coming. So when his disciples asked Christ about his singular coming (remember we said Parousia was singular), Christ told them exactly how and when he would return.

If, as Pre-tribbers believe, Christ was referring to the battle of Armageddon (which occurs at the end of the 70th week), then what is referred to in verses 30,31 is the 3rd coming of Christ. The secret rapture of the Church is the 2nd coming.

Nowhere in the Bible does it ever teach or infer that there is some secret coming of the Lord. The classic text pre-tribbers use to support this is:

1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Where is the mention of a secret coming in this text? The word for coming is the same exact word used in Matthew 24, parousia (singular). There is no hint of a secret or additional coming for the Church. It is simply not taught.

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him [was] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Rev 19:12 His eyes [were] as a flame of fire, and on his head [were] many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

Rev 19:13 And he [was] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Rev 19:14 And the armies [which were] in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Rev 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Rev 19:16 And he hath on [his] vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

This is the text that all pre-tribbers believe occurs at the end of the 70th week when Jesus physically returns to the earth. It is immediately after the battle of Armageddon. Now,

- Is there any reference to the word parousia in this passage? No.
- Is there any mention of Christ coming in the clouds? No
- Is there any mention of the gathering of the elect? No
- Is there any mention of the blowing of a trumpet? No (Go back to 1 Thess 4:15-18)
- Is there any mention of the word parousia? Yes
- Is there any mention of Christ coming in the clouds? Yes
- Is there any mention of the gathering of the elect? Yes
- Is there any mention of the blowing of a trumpet? Yes

I would strongly submit to you, that when answering his disciples as to his coming, he was referring to the process of his return; beginning with the removal of the elect (Matthew 24:30,31), and culminating with his physical return to the earth (Rev 19:11-17). Remember, his disciples knew Christ was going to die (though they didn't fully understand). They wanted to know when they would see Him again? Wouldn't you?? So it is in this context, that Jesus answers their question.

Again, there is no hint in the Bible of a secret coming, and certainly the Bible does not teach three comings!!

Issue 2: The Jewish Gospel

One of the main reasons pre-tribbers don't view Matt 24 as applicable to the Church, is the fact that they say that the gospel of Matthew was written to the Jews, therefore it is a Jewish gospel. Thus, they equate the applicability of Matt 24 to unsaved Israel, not the church. This has some serious problems. While it is true that the gospel of Matthew has a particular Jewish flavor, their argument does not stand up for several reasons:

1. The word Church only appears once in any of the gospels. (Matt 16:18)
2. Matt 28:19,20 is universally accepted by evangelicals as the Great Commission of the Church, not Israel.
3. Matt 26:17-30 is the institution of the Lord's Supper which was an ordinance instituted for the Church, not Israel.
4. The Olivet discourse was not only given in Matthew (Jewish Gospel), but also in Mark and Luke (which can be argued to be for the Gentiles).

Read Matt 24:38-41. Pre-Tribbers will take verses 40 and 41 to say that the one in the field and the one in the mill who are taken, they are **taken in judgment**. The one remaining is the one who will be alive to go into the millennium. Thus they say that that can't be the rapture of the Church, so again, they conveniently try to remove the Church from Matthew 24. That rationale sounds valid, and I used to believe that until I did a word study of the key words in the text.

The word take in verse 39 is the Greek word airo (ahee-roe). It means literally to take away, carry, or remove.

The word for taken in verses 40,41 is the Greek word paralegomai (par-al-eg-om-ahee). It means to receive near; to associate with oneself in a familiar or intimate act.

In other words, verse 38 speaks of a removal while verse 40,41 speak of an intimate receiving to someone. This is the rapture. And if there is any doubt in your mind, look at

Jhn 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also.

This is a verse all pre-tribbers say refers to the rapture. The word for receive is the exact word used in Matt 24:40,41. It was correctly translated in John's gospel. So while on the surface, it appears that pre-tribbers may have had a valid argument, a closer look reveals again that their argument does not hold up.

So if verses 40 and 41 are speaking of an intimate receiving (rapture), then this is a serious problem for the pre-tribbers. Why? Because the setting of this whole chapter is in the context of events that occur within the 70th week of Daniel. So they must somehow make these verses say something they do not, to try to make Matt 24 applicable to unsaved Israel, not the church. It just does not hold up.

Read Matt 24:30,31. There are a lot of people who try to say this is Armageddon by suggesting that this is gathering the Jews into the Millennium. But the Greek word for "gather" is very precise. It is the word episunago (ep-ee-soon-ag-o). The little preposition, epi, before the root word sunago, gives direction. Specifically, it gives upward direction to the gathering-- which is exactly what will happen when Christ will come. He will gather the elect upward.

We must be very careful not to allegorize passages or attribute them to another group simply to fit a theological view. For example, look at Matt 23. Who was Jesus talking to? The Pharisees? NO, I disagree. He was talking to *the Church* about their hypocrisy. Do you see what I mean? While Matt 23 probably can apply to the Church, Jesus was specifically talking to the religious leaders of his time.

There is absolutely no evidence that would suggest that Jesus does not have the Church in mind in Matt 24. The "Jewish Gospel" argument is not valid in light of the numerous other passages directed toward the Church in the same gospel.

Issue 3: The use of the personal pronoun "you"

Christ uses the personal pronoun "you" ten times in Matt 24:4-31. Again, a literal, normal interpretation of this text can only result in one thing. When Christ meant "you", he meant the Church, not unsaved Israel. In contrast, in verses 38,39 Jesus used the third person to refer to those who are not believers.

Issue 4: Violation of own rules of interpretation

The amazing thing about the interpretation of Matt 24 is that pre-tribbers are not following their own rules of interpretation. They use a literal, normal, customary approach to interpret scriptures to defend dispensationalism. But in order to justify a pre-trib rapture, the church somehow needs to be removed out of Matt 24. So on the basis of "the Jewish Gospel" argument, Matt 24 is allegorized to be for unsaved Israel, and not the Church. It is the same type of interpretation that amillennialists and postmillennialists use to support their views.

One last point. Can we set dates as to the return of Christ? NO? Why not? Because no man knows the day or hour of his return. That answer is taken from Matthew 24:36. While it is true that no man knows the day or hour, this presents a problem for Pre-tribbers. According to them, that verse applies to the battle of Armageddon, not the rapture of the Church-which they claim happened at least 7 years earlier. In other words, they are taking a passage which they say applies to an event at the end of the 70th week, and apply it the rapture which occurs before the 70th week. You can't have it both ways. It is clear that, when taken literally, Jesus was speaking to his disciples as representatives of the Church. You must decide for yourself.

C. Revelation 6-8

While I believe Daniel 9 is the backbone of prophecy and Matthew 24 is the framework of end-time events, the book of Revelation gives us the specific details to help us fill in the gaps concerning Daniel's 70th week. And while I do not want to do a detailed study of the book of Revelation, I want to fill in the gaps that Matthew 24 does not delve into. I think you'll see as we get into Rev 6-8, that it perfectly parallels Matt 24 in specific chronological order.

Rev 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

Rev 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Rev 6:3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

Rev 6:4 And there went out another horse [that was] red: and [power] was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

Rev 6:5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

Rev 6:6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and [see] thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Rev 6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

Rev 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Rev 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they [were], should be fulfilled.

Rev 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Rev 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

Rev 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Rev 6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

Rev 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

Rev 6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Now what I want to show you is the parallel between this passage and the passage in Matt 24.

Seal 1: Look at verse 2. Who do you think the white horse and rider are? Antichrist--this is almost universally accepted.

Mat 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Although there is a similarity between the white horse and rider (antichrist) and the false Christ's presented in Matthew, the comparison would be shaky if that's all we had--but remember our rules of interpretation. Often it is the context that determines meaning. Let's go on.

Seal 2: Back to Rev 6:3,4. What does the red horse and rider represent? War.

Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Jesus says there will be wars and rumors of wars.

Seal 3: Rev 6:5,6. What does the black horse and rider represent? Famine.

Mat 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

Jesus says there will be famines. Are you starting to see a parallel here? Remember, this is all in context to the disciples question: When will be the end of the age?

Seal 4: Rev 6:7-8. Now there are differing opinions on who this fourth horse and rider represent. Some believe it is pestilence or disease while others believe this signifies the beginning of Christian persecution. I personally believe it represents Satan's wrath against the elect. Here are my reasons: first of all, authority is given to kill 25% of the earth. Statistically, those who make up Christianity in the world to include Roman Catholics, is said to be around 25%. Second, the names Death and Hades were following him. I believe that will be the choice of those who claim the name of Christ. Choose Christ and die. Choose antichrist and seal your fate in Hades. And third, the phrase "power or authority was given" in verse 8 parallels Rev 13:7.

Rev 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

In the New Revised Standard Version, it translates the word "death" in verse 8 as "pestilence". In my opinion, this is not that important. Let's look at Matt 24:7 again and I'll show you why. If you believe the fourth rider is pestilence, Jesus mentions it here, which certainly could fit. Where there is mass death associated with famine, pestilence certainly follows.

Mat 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

If you believe the fourth rider represents persecution, it is also a part of the 70th week. It doesn't really matter which interpretation you take of the Fourth Seal. It does not affect the chronology of events set forth in Matt 24.

Let's continue with our comparison.

Seal 5: Rev 6:9. Here is a picture of the martyred saints under the altar of God. In Matthew 24:9, I believe both the fourth and the fifth seal are in view here. Let me read it this way: "they will deliver you up to be afflicted (4th seal), and shall kill you (5th seal)".

The fourth seal gives Satan the authority to test the whole world, in particular the professing church which represents 25 percent of the world's population, while the fifth seal pictures those who actually who murdered under the hand of antichrist. It is the actual death toll of true believers.

I want to note two very important things in this passage:

1. Read Rev 6:10. Those martyred saints know that their martyrdom was not at the hands of God. They want to know when their blood will be avenged.
2. The answer given to them is very important. (Read Rev 6:11). In other words, judgment will not be taken until the number of martyrs is complete. Remember that Jesus teaches that the Great Tribulation will be cut short in Matt 24:21,22, and then immediately cosmic disturbance will occur which will signify the beginning of God's wrath.

Seal 6: Rev 6:12

Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Can everyone see the chronological progression of the 70th week of Daniel?

- Seal 1 is opened up, certain events occur.
- Seal 2 is opened up, certain events occur.
- Seal 3 is opened up, certain events occur.
- Seal 4, 5, 6...certain events occur.

And these line up perfectly with the teaching of Jesus in Matt 24. No wonder the pre-tribbers want to get the Church out of Matt 24.

So what's next??

Back to Rev 6:12-17. The very next thing is the announcement that God's wrath is about to begin. This perfectly coincides with the scriptures we've already looked at concerning cosmic disturbance which announce the Day of the Lord. I'd like to show you one more interesting passage which coincides with verses 15-17.

Isa 2:19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Isa 2:20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made [each one] for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

Isa 2:21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Again, this is in context with the events directly associated with the Day of the Lord. It is an exact description of Rev 6:12-17!

Back to Rev 6. Now notice that at the opening of the 6th seal, God's judgment does not begin. The disciples asked the question, "what will be the sign of the end of the age (harvest)?" The opening of the 6th seal does not begin God's judgment, but is a warning to the world that it is **about** to commence. There are two things that must first occur before the Day of the Lord.

Read Rev 7:1-8: One thing that must occur is the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses. Who are these individuals and why are they sealed and protected? Without going into a lot of detail, these are obviously Jews selected to be the first fruits of God and to the lamb. It is very clear that they are to be sealed before the Day of the Lord.

But let me say this about the 144,000. Nowhere in the Bible does it say these are evangelists proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. I don't believe these individuals are saved at the start, because if they were, they would go up in the rapture. They get saved sometime later in the 70th week of Daniel.

Again you may ask, why are they sealed? The reason I believe they are sealed because a great event is about to take place.

Read Rev 7:9-12. There is one more event that must take place before the Day of the Lord. John sees a great multitude that no man could number, representing all nations, tongues, and peoples. They are arrayed in white robes. Who is this great multitude? Let's read on.

Read verses 13-17.

Who is this great multitude? It is the raptured Church! The chronological order follows perfectly with Matt 24:29-31

After the opening of the sixth seal which announces to the world that God's great judgment is about to begin, two things happen. One, the 144,000 are sealed, and two the rapture of the Church takes place. Why are these two events linked? Because I believe God is not going to rapture the Church without leaving a remnant to be his witnesses on the earth. This is the most clear example of "a handing off of the baton" that scripture speaks of.

Now, let me say, that Pre-tribbers will do everything they can to make the great multitude in Revelation 7 martyrs. But there is absolutely no evidence that even suggests such a thing. Again, let's read scripture as it was meant to be read--normal, literal, and customary. There is a definite chronological flow both to Matthew and Revelation. It coincides perfectly.

So if that's so, and the rapture takes place immediately after the opening of the 6th seal, what is the very next event that has to happen? (**The Day of the Lord**--remember, the removal of the elect and the judgment being on the very same day).

Rev 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Why is there silence? Because God's judgment is going to be poured out in the form of the trumpet judgments. And then from this point forth, judgment after judgment is poured out--7 trumpets, and then 7 bowls. And this is the exemption that Paul talked about in 1 Thess 5 when he said that "...God has not appointed us for wrath, but to obtain deliverance (salvation) by our Lord Jesus Christ." The Church is not going to be around to see the awful Day of the Lord that will kill over half the population of the world--the day that Peter says where "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Now, at this point I want to deal with an argument that many pre-tribbers use to try to remove the Church before the 70th week of Daniel. We touched on it earlier, but let's talk about it in more detail. Most pre-tribbers say that the Day of the Lord begins at the beginning of the 70th week (although more pre-tribbers are refuting that point as we have already pointed out). They say that the entire 7 year period is the wrath of God, and since the Church is not appointed to wrath, then the Church is exempt from Daniel's 70th week.

Now, there are many problems with that.

- **Number 1)** We have proven exegetically that the Day of the Lord (wrath of God) begins after the opening of the 6th seal.
- **Number 2)** In the first 5 seals, there is absolutely no mention of the wrath of God whatsoever. It's simply the time that Jesus calls "the beginning of sorrows". In fact, according to Pre-tribbers, it will be a time when antichrist brings temporary peace to the world. If that's so, how can you call that the wrath of God?
- **Number 3)** In contrast, after the opening of the sixth seal, the word "wrath" in relation to God is mentioned 9 times, but never mentioned in the first 5 seals.
- **Number 4)** If the first 5 seals are God's wrath, then God is solely responsible for bringing the antichrist to power. To attribute the emergence of the antichrist to God is ridiculous. The emergence of the antichrist will mark a movement toward the greatest rebellion against God in human history. God **will** allow it, but it is not God's wrath.
- **Number 5)** If the first 5 seals are God's wrath, then God is solely responsible for martyring his own children. May it never be! God will allow it, as he allowed Satan to test Job, and allowed Satan to sift Peter as wheat. But God will never directly martyr his own. Remember what the martyrs cried under the altar? (When, O Lord, will you avenge our blood?)
- **Number 6)** Declaring Seals 1-5 God's wrath violates what Jesus said concerning the day of his judgment. He said that when the righteous were removed, **sudden destruction** will come. Sure, there will be death in the first 3.5 years, but it will not be swift and sudden. According to Jesus, it will be just like the days of Noah, when they were eating and drinking and marrying. But when the trumpets and the bowls come, it will come directly from the hand of God, as 1 Thess 5:1 says, "the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. For when they say peace and safety, sudden destruction shall come upon them."
- **Number 7)** Antichrist will be given authority and power to cause the whole earth to worship him. If the first 5 seals were God's final wrath, would he allow antichrist to have free reign? No, when God's wrath comes, he will take power away from antichrist, and as Isaiah 13 says "he will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."

No, the first 5 seals are not God's wrath. The opening of the seals themselves in Rev 5 does not mean that God's wrath begins. It simply means that God will be in total control of what is about to occur on the earth. When the 7th seal is finally opened (silence), that will allow the scroll to open fully, thus releasing the seven trumpets of judgment, and then the seven bowls of judgment.

Again, the pre-tribber have absolutely no scriptural basis whatsoever to claim that the Day of the Lord begins at the opening of the 1st seal. But the Bible does say that the Day of the Lord does indeed begin after the opening of the 6th seal which is well inside the 70th week of Daniel.

Now let's look at another passage of scripture which we will see parallels what Christ taught.

D. 1 Thess 4-5

Now, we've already touched upon this passage, but we will see that Paul makes the same case to Gentile believers as Christ made to Jewish believers.

If, as we have already argued, the Olivet discourse refers to the rapture of the Church, then the rapture that Paul refers to should also occur in connection with the beginning of the Day of the Lord. As a matter of fact, Paul, in verse 15 says that this revelation came by "the Word of the Lord." He was taught by Christ himself! Let's begin with Chapter 4:13,14.

1Th 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

First of all, the question these believers had was "what happens to their brothers who have died?" Paul reassures them that they will be taken to be with the Lord. And then he begins to give them what many consider to be the classic rapture passage.

1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul's instruction on the Lord's parousia is very clear. He then continues on into chapter 5, and it is very easy to follow his line of thought. Now although the question is not specifically asked, the logical question would be, **when?** When would this happen, Paul? So before they could ask it, Paul gives them the answer.

1Th 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

1Th 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

1Th 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

When will the rapture occur? It will occur in conjunction with the Day of the Lord! Paul is saying look: as to the times and the seasons, you don't need me to write to you. For you know that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night for unbelievers. But you are not in darkness that that Day should overtake you as a thief.

In other words, Paul is saying, the Day of the Lord will not surprise you, because you will be *alert and watching for it*.

1Th 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober.

It was the same exact thing Jesus was saying to his disciples.

Mat 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [is] nigh: Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, [even] at the doors.

Jesus is saying when you see these signs, know that my return is near. Paul is saying, be alert and sober, so that the Day of the Lord will not overtake you as a thief. It is obvious when reading the text in a plain sense, that Paul was linking the rapture and the Day of the Lord together. This perfectly parallels what Christ taught in Matt 24.

Some pre-tribbers will say that Paul is not linking the two, but rather describing two separate end-time events. They say that chapter 5 has no bearing to the rapture he just described in chapter 4. Again, this violates simple rules of interpretation. *If the plain sense makes sense, you have the right sense.*

Remember, chapter and verse divisions did not come about until about the 14th century. There is a definite flow of continuity between these two chapters. Let me give you an example: Turn to Heb 11 and read the end of the chapter and through the beginning of chapter 12. It is obvious there is a continuity of thought here. The writer of Hebrews says that we are to mimic the faith of those before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus. Isn't it just as obvious that Paul is continuing his thought from chapter 4 to 5 in 1 Thessalonians?

Also, the first word in Chapter 5, verse 1 is the word "but". In the Greek that's the word *Peri de* (Perry-Day). It's a transitional phrase in the Greek which means a continuation of the same subject, but moving into a different area of the same subject.

1Th 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

Now, look at verse 13 of chapter 4. Paul says, "But I would not have you to be ignorant." The word ignorant doesn't mean how we would use it today. When we say someone is ignorant today, we usually mean that they are stupid or idiotic. In this particular use though, Paul is saying "but I would not have you thinking wrongly about this, and you are". It was a way of correcting someone who had wrong thinking--and they were thinking wrongly, and Paul had to correct them. Now, with that in mind,

1 Th 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

Look at verse 2: "For you yourselves know **PERFECTLY...**". What's this in reference to?? The Day of the Lord. And what do they know about the Day of the Lord? It comes like a thief in the night. And how well do they know it? Perfectly!

So Paul says, that you have no need for me to write to you because you know *perfectly!* Let me tell you what Paul is doing. Look again at 4:13. What problem is Paul addressing in chapter 4? The dead in Christ will rise. What is it he says about their thinking concerning this issue? They are ignorant. In chapter 4, they were thinking wrongly in reference to the dead in Christ. But how are they thinking about the Day of the Lord? Perfectly.

Paul is contrasting their thinking in Chapter 4 and their thinking in Chapter 5. One, they're ignorant. The other, they're thinking perfectly. This was a common writing style of Paul. He is intimately associating what is being said in Chapter 4 with Chapter 5. To try to divorce chapter 4 from chapter 5 violates the literal methodology of interpretation.

1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

1Th 5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

What was Paul saying in Chapter 4? He was talking about the dead in Christ and those who are alive and remain going up in the rapture!! Here in verse 10, he's talking about the dead and alive in Christ who will be with the Lord. And he ties it all to the Day of the Lord!

This text is clearly teaching that the rapture immediately precedes the Day of the Lord. Again, let me quote a pre-trib Greek scholar, Dr. John Sproule:

"Every Old Testament passage containing this phrase (Day of the Lord) can be linked to the final portion of Daniel's 70th week, when God's wrath is poured out upon the Gentile nations. If this is true, then Pre-Tribs must face the critical problem of 1 Thess 5:1-11, and 2 Thess 2:1-5, which seem to link the rapture with the Day of the Lord".

You cannot put the Day of the Lord out here but say that the rapture occurs 4-5 years earlier. It just doesn't hold up.

One more thing that I think you'll find interesting. I've been trying to show you that the scriptures teach that the Church will go through the 70th week of Daniel and suffer persecution by antichrist. This passage in 1 Thess 4 clearly is linked to the Day of the Lord which we've confirmed is in the second half of the 70th week.

1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

That word *remain* is very interesting. To my knowledge this word is only used twice in the whole Bible, in these verses. The Greek word is *perileipo* (per-ee-li-po). It literally means survivor, or one who survives. We can then read the verse this way: "And we which are alive and survive or are the surviving ones...". What is Paul saying? If the rapture occurs immediately after the cutting short of the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:29), right before the Day of the Lord, then Paul is saying that those who have died in Christ, along with those who survive the Great Persecution, will be caught up in the clouds to be with the Lord forever.

So not only is the link between chapter 4 and 5 clear, but Paul is choosing his words very carefully to describe the exact timing of this event.

Let's look at another passage which also parallels Christ's teaching.

E. 2 Thess 1:4-8:

A short time after Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, a crisis arose in their Church. False teachers had come into their midst and taught them that the Day of the Lord had already begun. At that time, they were experiencing severe persecution, and were beginning to doubt Paul's words.

2Th 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

2Th 1:5 [Which is] a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

2Th 1:6 Seeing [it is] a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

2Th 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

2Th 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Let's see if we can pick up the parallel to the Olivet Discourse.

- First In verse 6, we have the persecution (affliction)
- Second In verse 7, we have the cutting short of the persecution. The New International Version is much closer to the original Greek. Verse 7 is translated, "...and give relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well."
- Third The cutting short is followed by the fiery judgment of God. "This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels."

Clearly, Paul tells them precisely what he told them in his first letter. God will give them relief from their affliction, when Jesus is revealed from heaven. In other words, the faithful will be rescued from persecution before the wrath of God is poured out upon the wicked during the Day of the Lord. It's the same thing Jesus taught, and also what the book of Revelation substantiates. Finally, let's take a look at one more critical passage.

F. 2 Thess 2:1-4

Again, remember false teachers had come into the Church of Thessalonica and were teaching them that the Day of the Lord had already begun, and that Christ's coming was to occur at any moment. So, those in the church had stopped working, and were basically sitting on a hill waiting for Christ to return (2 Thess 3:10). Let's look at Paul's instruction.

2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him,

2Th 2:2 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 is at hand.

In verse one the word for coming is? (*parousia*). And in verse 2, Paul refers to the Day of Christ (synonymous with the Day of the Lord--Luke 17:26). So again, Paul is linking the rapture with the Day of the Lord. He will first rescue the righteous and then judge the unrighteous.

2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

So according to what I just read, before his coming, and before the Day of Christ, what must occur first? (the falling away) Now before we go on, we need to look at this phrase the falling away. The Greek word used here is the word *apostasia*. And the Greek construction gives it a definite article. Paul is saying, that first THE apostasy must come. This word is only used twice in the Bible, so how it is used is extremely important. I do not believe this is the general falling away that Paul refers to in 1 Tim 4:1. I'll show you why.

Act 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise [their] children, neither to walk after the customs.

Paul of course was preaching the gospel of grace to the Jews. Jews, who were not willing to forsake the law, accused Paul of teaching apostasy against Moses. Look again at the verse. The word "forsake" is the word for apostasy. This is only 1 of 2 times this word is used in the Bible. And it is used in context to Paul being rebuked for teaching Jews to apostatize or renounce the law. Paul is using it in the exact same way in 2 Thessalonians.

2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

2Th 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

What is the apostasy Paul is speaking about? He is speaking of the Jews who, during the 70th week, will abandon their fathers, in favor of the antichrist. And when the antichrist desecrates the temple, he will be revealed to the Jews for who he really is. Taken in context, Paul is saying Christ's coming will not come until you see the abomination of Desolation. *If you believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, this is the only way this passage can be taken.*

The general falling away spoken of in 1 Tim 4:1, does not have a definite article, it is a general departure. The word used is not the same word as used in 2 Thess 2. I believe we are seeing the fulfillment of 1 Tim 4:1 now, but it will get worse and will mark one of the signs Jesus gives us in the 70th week (Matt 24:10-12).

So Paul says, the coming of the Lord and the Day of the Lord can't come until the apostasy and the man of sin is revealed. In other words, Paul is saying look for the Abomination of Desolation. Jesus tells us in Matt 24:15 to look for the Abomination of Desolation. When we compare scripture with scripture, we get a clear, and non-contradictory picture of when the rapture of the Church begins.

We have finished our exegetical defense of the Pre-Wrath rapture looking at several key passages that speak very clearly of the coming of our Lord in relation to the Day of the Lord. Before we move on to look at specific arguments pre-tribbers use, I want to say one more thing.

Folks, the Bible was written for us to understand. The first coming of Christ was predicted very clearly, and so, I submit to you, was the 2nd coming. Read these passages yourself, not with a fine magnifying glass, but simply read them as if Jesus and Paul were speaking directly to you. Read it like you would a letter.

Although I have gone to some extent in detail as to the meaning of certain words in the Greek, my defense of this subject can stand without the Greek argument. When you read the scriptures the way they were meant to be read, that is *normal, literal, and customary*, then, in my opinion you can only come to one conclusion. Do not say that "imminence" means any moment if the Bible never says that. Do not call the 70th week of Daniel the "Tribulation Period" if the Bible never calls it that. Do not call the seals of Revelation the Wrath of God unless the Bible says so. Do not try to attribute some other meaning to Matt 24 unless the Bible specifically does that.

In other words, be very careful not to try to fit the scriptures *into* a theological view. But instead let's form our theological views on what the Bible says. In our conclusion we will look at why pre-tribbers are so staunch in their views, and why they won't change. Don't be like that. Be a Berean. Check these things out. Read and study the scriptures yourself. Men can be wrong. But the Bible never contradicts itself, never.

And as to the response that "Oh, we will never be able to know the truth of the timing of the 2nd coming", I say----BUNK! The disciples asked Christ when they would see him again, and he told them exactly! There was no hidden agenda, no veiling. The Lord wants us to be ready and watching for the signs of His return. Let's not let the tradition of men or our own prejudices affect our readiness or watchfulness. OK, I'll stop preaching now. Let's move on.

VII. Arguments for Pre-Tribulation Raptureism

Let's take em one by one. As you will see, the reasons for pre-tribulation raptureism is based on weak inference, and not sound biblical interpretation.

1) The absence of the word "Church" in the book of Revelation

Pre-Tribbers say that because the word Church is not used after Revelation, Chapter 3, the Church therefore cannot be in the 70th week. It is mentioned 19 times in Chap 1-3, but never again in the book.

In response to this argument, while it is true that the word Church is not used after Chapter 3, the word saint is used numerous times throughout Revelation. This same word is used all throughout the New Testament to speak of those in the Church.

In addition, this argument does not invalidate the Pre-Wrath rapture view. On the contrary, it validates it. According to Pre-Wrath, there is a heavenly scene in Chapter 5, and then somewhere between chapter 6 and 7 the Church is raptured. After that point, the rest of Revelation deals with the judgment of God, so the Church would not be in view anyway.

2) The Rapture occurs in Rev 4:1

Rev 4:1 After this I looked and, behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice that I heard was, as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up here, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

Pre-Tribbers say that since John hears a trumpet and is called up to heaven, then this represents the rapture.

Without being too harsh, this interpretation is worse than inference and totally without biblical justification. To equate Rev 4:1 to the rapture would be like adopting Origen's allegory method of interpretation--which pre-tribbers would normally reject. I've only brought this argument up because it is frequently used to support pre-trib. It is very, very weak.

3) "God has not appointed us to wrath"

The pre-tribber strongly believes the Church will not go through the wrath of God. The Pre-Wrath view agrees with this. The point of contention is not whether we go through God's wrath, but when does that wrath begin? Most pre-tribbers believe that God's wrath begins at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, so the rapture must occur before the 7 year period. I think I have clearly shown from the Bible that the Wrath of God (The Day of the Lord) begins after the midway point with the opening of the 7th seal. Again, the rapture and the Day of the Lord begin on the same day. So, if the Day of the Lord begins inside the 70th week, then the rapture also must occur inside the 70th week.

4) The Gap theory.

There are some pre-tribbers who want to say that the Day of the Lord begins after the sixth seal, but still the rapture occurs 5 or 6 years earlier. I call this the Gap theory. They use the passage in Gen 7:4 to try and prove this.

Gen 7:4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

They explain the gap theory this way: God told Noah to gather the animals, get in the ark, and then in seven days he would send the flood. They then say that since Noah entered the ark 7 days before flood began, this represents the rapture of the Church well before the Day of the Lord begins. There are 3 major problems with that:

1. Where does it say that in verse 4? Could it mean also that God was telling Noah he had seven more days of preparation before the flood waters would come? The context just is not clear. So if the a word or verse is not clear, the next step is to look at the entire passage.
2. The passage seems to be very clear as we read further.

Gen 7:12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

Gen 7:13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

It appears here to be saying that Noah entered the same day as the rains came? Is there still a doubt? Let's compare scripture with scriptrue.

3. The gap theory contradicts the words of Jesus. Jesus plainly said that on the same day that Noah entered the ark, judgment came and took them all away. How much clearer can you get? This is a perfect example of twisting scripture to fit a theological view? Remember our rules of interpretation? First look at the verse, then look at the context, then compare scripture with scripture. **So when we do that, the Gap theory becomes just another view that is unsupported and without exegetical support!**

5) "The Blessed Hope"

Pre-tribbers rightly say that the return of Christ is the blessed hope (Titus 2:12-13). They question, however, on how the return of Christ can be a blessed hope if the Church must first experience the wrath of the Tribulation period?

Again, there is no scriptural basis for such an argument. It is based purely on emotionalism and human reasoning. But I will use the opposite extreme. I say that the blessed hope is more blessed if we are going through difficult times than when things are going well. Persecution has always been good for the Church. And it is in difficult times, not fat times, that we experience real closeness and intimacy with the Lord. But the reality is, although the Church will go through persecution, we will not see the awesome wrath of God--we will be with Christ, **and that is a blessed hope!**

6) Imminence and Holiness

Pre-Tribulation rapturists contend that anything but a pre-trib rapture gives the Church a license to sin. They say that the imminent return of Christ is the single most important motivator that the Church has for holiness, and without it, the Church will simply not live the way she ought until she sees the signs of the end, and then she will repent. Although I admire the desire to preach holiness, the return of Christ **is not** the single most important motivator for holiness. The most important reason we should live holy simply is because we love Him. Christ said very clearly in John 14:21 that if we say we love Him, then we will keep his commandments.

While it is true, that the Bible clearly exhorts us to live holy in the light of his return, again--the Bible does not teach imminence as taught by the pre-tribbers. The Bible teaches expectancy--that is, we are to live expectantly in the light of his soon coming return. We are to be awake, sober, and watching for his return.

7) "No man knows the Day or the Hour"

Pre-Tribbers say that if you believe the Church will endure the tribulation, then you will know exactly to the day when Christ will return, thus violating the passage in Matt 24, where "no man knows the day or the hour."

This would be true for the Post-Tribulation viewpoint. But the Bible does not teach Post-Tribulation rapturism. It clearly states that the Church will be removed prior to the Day of the Lord.

The Pre-Wrath view in no way violates the passage that no man knows the day or the hour. With the Pre-Wrath view, we don't know how long the Great Tribulation will be. It could be 6 months long to 3 years--until the amputation of it. In fact, this argument, which is used to destroy the Post-Trib view, actually makes the Pre-Wrath view stronger. Although Jesus did say that we could not know the day or the hour, he did say we would know the general time frame. As we saw in Matt 24:32-34, Jesus said when you see all these things know that his return is at the door. **8. Dispensationalism**

By far, the biggest argument for pre-trib rapturism is the strong belief in dispensationalism. If you remember, we defined dispensationalism as the belief in a separate Israel and a separate Church. The pre-tribber would contend that since the Church was not around during the first 69 weeks of Daniel's prophecy, it will not be in the 70th week of Daniel. In other words, pre-tribbers believe that the 70th week is the dispensation specifically for Israel. So, if the 70th week is a time when God deals with his chosen people, the Church cannot be a part of it.

In response, a fair question should be asked. On what basis can it be argued that since the Church was not in the Old Testament, it can't be in the 70th week? Certainly not on the basis of the Bible!

Again, the problem with this argument is that it has no biblical support. Sure it sound good, but that doesn't mean its true. The Church did not exist before Pentecost, so it couldn't be in the OT. The Church does exist now, however, so it can be in the 70th week. And that's exactly what the Bible teaches which I believe has been clearly shown.

But let's deal with their argument:

First, with the birth of the Church (Acts 2), God did not stop his working with Israel. Bible scholars have always looked at the book of Acts to be a book of transition from Israel to the Church--from the age of law to the age of grace. The first converts were Jews (Acts 2). Early believers continued to go to the temple for worship (Acts 3:1).

Secondly, it would be impossible to defend the position that a Jewish man, who was deemed righteous and acceptable before God under the OT economy the day before Christ died, was unrighteous and rejected the day after Christ's death. The period after the death and resurrection of Christ was the passing of the old economy to the new one--but both economies co-existed for a period of time.

The 70th week will be exactly the same. It will be a transitional period, in reverse this time, from the Church to Israel. As Israel entered the Church age, the Church will enter the 70th week.

The Church will enter the 70th week and co-exist with Israel. God will have purposes for both, cleansing for the church and judgment and salvation for the Jews. Then both will live and reign with Christ forever.

The problem with this argument is the extreme that pre-tribbers go to protect dispensationalism. I am a dispensationalist, but that does not mean that dispensationalism automatically exempts the church from the 70th week. Again, we must not base our theology on what we think the Bible says, but what the Bible actually *teaches*. And clearly the Bible teaches that the Church will enter the 70th week.

9) Rev 2-3, Periods of Church History

The Pre-Trib argument is that the seven churches in chapters 2-3 of Revelation represent seven distinct periods of Church history. Gary Cohen outlines his view on this:

1. Ephesus--The Apostolic Church (AD 30-100)
2. Smyrna-- The Persecuted Church (AD 100-313)
3. Pergamos--The State Church (AD 313-590)
4. Thyatira--The Papal Church (AD 590-1517)
5. Sardis--The Reformed Church (AD 1517-1730)
6. Philadelphia--The Missionary Church (AD 1730-1900)
7. Laodicea--The Apostate Church (AD 1900-)

Therefore, according to Cohen, when we reach Rev 4:1, church history is complete and the church is raptured before all the events in Revelation.

Well, again, this view has some serious flaws.

1. First of all, there is nothing in this text that indicates these are periods of church history, nothing!
2. Secondly, this view is totally subjective. Who determines when a period begins and ends? Church history is not that clear cut.
3. Third, the terms given to the seven churches do not fully conform to everything that is written in the letters.

Well, how then should these 7 churches be understood? Simply as this: Revelation is a prophetic book about end times. Everything in this book is prophetic, including the first 3 chapters. Frequently in the Bible, historical events are addressed and then linked to future events. For example: in Matt 10:1-15, Jesus sends out his disciples to minister throughout Israel. He told them what to take, what to say, and what to expect. Then without any noted interruption, he began speaking about the end of the age. He told them that in that future day, he would give them words to speak and what the results would be.

Another example: Daniel wrote about Antiochus Epiphanes who would persecute the Jews and defile their temple in 168 BC (Dan 11:21-35). He then uses this historic event to describe the antichrist and what he will do to the temple (Dan 11:36-45). We are to look at the seven churches in Revelation in the same exact way. These were actual historical churches which had certain strengths and weaknesses. These are the exact strengths and weaknesses the church will have as she enters the 70th week. Look at the prophetic words given to these churches:

1. First, look at the promises to the overcomers: 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21.
2. Second, look at the references to Christ's near coming: 2:5, 2:16, 2:25, 3:3, 3:11, 3:20.
3. Third, look at the references to patience (which is translated: endurance under affliction): 2:2, 2:19, 3:10
4. Fourth, look at the warning to the church of Sardis: 3:1,3

Pre-tribbers do not look at these churches as warnings to them while they are in the 70th week, but see them simply as periods of church history. They do this simply to sustain pre-tribulation raptureism.

But to do this ignores the clear and direct warnings given to the churches, and it avoids the urgent warnings to be ready, and exhortations to endure to the end.

Again, look at the scriptures literally, do not assign subjective rationales to them which have no biblical basis.

10) Rev 3:10

Second to the dispensational argument, Rev 3:10 is what pre-tribbers hang their hats on. Let's read it.

Rev 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Pre-tribbers will say that since Jesus says that I will keep thee from the hour of testing, then we are exempt from the 70th week of Daniel.

Again, if we look at Rev 2-3 in context to the prophetic nature of the book, it is clear that Christ is warning the churches to prepare and to be overcomers during the 70th week. But what about this tough verse?

Robert Gundry, a post-tribber, says that "Rev 3:10 is the most debated verse in the rapture discussion." And many see 3:10 as the key in understanding the rapture issue. Some go far to say that this verse is the watershed verse that divides the different positions.

We need to be very careful to base a biblical viewpoint on one scripture. There are men who take one or two passages in the Bible and say that a believer can lose their salvation. But clearly, as a whole, the Bible teaches that a believer's salvation is secure. So what do we do? We take those few debatable scriptures and reconcile them to what the Bible on the whole teaches concerning eternal security. **The same rule applies here.** On the surface, it appears that Rev 3:10 is saying that the church is not to go through the great testing, but what about the tens of other passages (which we have looked at), that indicate otherwise. So we must therefore reconcile this one difficult passage with what the Bible clearly says on the whole concerning the rapture of the church.

As we have seen earlier in many instances, what a text appears to be saying in English is not always what it says in the Greek. Although not all scholars agree, I will give you a possible interpretation of Rev 3:10.

The phrase in question is the phrase "keep thee from". Pre-tribbers would say that clearly says removal from. But is there another possibility? The Greek word used is the word "*tereo*". It can carry the idea of protecting someone while he is in the sphere of danger. But there is a tiny word used in conjunction with this word *tereo*. It is the Greek work *ek*. This word is in direct contrast to another preposition *apo*. *Apo* means kept outside of. *Ek* means within the sphere. It is this preposition *ek* that is used in conjunction with the word *tereo*--so we have the word *tereo ek*. Alexander Reese says this about Rev 3:10:

"the use of *ek* in Rev 3:10 distinctly implies that the Overcomer would be in the hour of tribulation; the promise refers either to removal from out of the midst of it, or preservation through it."

It is very interesting to note, that there is only one other time in the entire NT that *tereo ek* is used. And that is found in John 17:15.

Jhn 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

So while Greek scholars are definitely not in agreement, there is strong evidence to suggest that Rev 3:10 is not referring to a removal from the testing, but either a removal while in it or a protection while within it. Again, any unclear verse must be compared with other passages talking on the same subject that **are** clear. So although, on the surface, Rev 3:10 appears to be saying one thing, it actually could mean just the opposite when considering the Greek and comparing it with John 17:15 **11) Who is the restrainer spoken of in 2 Thess 2:7**

2Th 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way.

2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Who is the restrainer? Most pre-tribulation rapturists believe the restrainer is either the church or the Holy Spirit--with the majority leaning toward the Holy Spirit. Their explanation goes something like this: the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, and antichrist cannot be revealed until the Spirit is removed. Since the Spirit indwells all believers, then when the Holy Spirit is removed, so is the church. Well that certainly is an interesting view, there's only one problem with it. Again, this argument lacks any biblical support whatsoever. First of all, there is no verse in the Bible that calls the Holy Spirit a restrainer of sin, and certainly in this verse there is absolutely no indication of this. But there is one being in the Bible who is specifically called a restrainer.

Dan 10:12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

Dan 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Scholars agree that this verse is talking about Michael the archangel. In his relationship to Israel he is called Michael your prince.

Dan 10:21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and [there is] none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

The word *holdeth* there in the Hebrew can be translated restrainer. The name itself means *Who is like God?* And the prophet Daniel is told that Michael is the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people

Dan 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

Both Christian and Jewish scholars believe that Michael, the archangel has a special guardian relationship over the children of Israel.

Jud 1:9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

In the Midrash, a Jewish book of interpretations, it says this about Michael, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Michael, 'you are silent? You do not defend my children.'"

Now remember we said that at the midpoint of the 70th week, there was a war in heaven? Remember? And who did the war involve? Michael and Satan--Rev 12:7-17. And do you remember immediately what Satan did after he was thrown to the earth? He persecuted the woman, verse 13.

Go back to Daniel 12:1. The phrase "stand up" is agreed to be accurately translated "stand aside" or "to be inactive" (this according to Rashi--one of Israel's greatest scholars). Michael, in chapter 10:13,21, had earlier fought for Israel, but now is stepping aside or being inactive as a restrainer. When, according to 12:1, does this happen? At the midpoint. How do we know this? Look at what he says: "After Michael steps aside, there will be a time of trouble, such as never was..." Does this sound familiar? Look at what Jesus says after the Abomination occurs

Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

There is no doubt what is happening here. Michael, who is Israel's protector, will fight with Satan, and cast him down to the earth. He will step aside at the midpoint of the 70th week, and allow Satan to indwell the antichrist, cause him to desecrate the temple and then severely persecute Israel (and us by the way).

Now, lets go back to 2 Thess 2:7

2Th 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way.

The word hindereth means to hold down, and the phrase taken out of the way means to step aside. So according to Paul here, the restrainer, will continue to restrain, until he steps aside. Exactly what Daniel tells us will happen. And according to Paul, when does this happen? Well, look at the context of the chapter. It's when antichrist exalts himself in the temple, precisely in the middle of the 70th week.

No, there is no evidence that the Holy Spirit, the church, or human government is the restrainer. But as I have shown, there is strong evidence to suggest that the restrainer that Paul is speaking of, is none other than Michael, the archangel.

VIII. Conclusion

I want to take a few minutes and conclude this study with a few more points.

A. Position of the early church

As I stated earlier, the Pre-Tribulation rapture view started around 1830. It became popular under John Darby, who was a member of the Plymouth Brethren. Let me quote from S.P. Tregelles, speaking of the start of this movement:

I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there would be a secret rapture of the Church at a secret coming, until this was given forth as an "utterance" in Mr. Irving's church, from what was there received as being the voice of the Spirit. It came not from the Holy Scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God.

Tregelles, was a Greek scholar, also of the Plymouth Brethren, who adamantly opposed John Darby's new theology. Apparently, there was a local charismatic church where there was some sort of utterance concerning a secret rapture of the church. John Darby took it and popularized it, but not without stirring quite a controversy. In no way, did the early church teach pre-tribulation rapturism. In fact, quite the contrary. The testimony of the early church was that they would see antichrist and suffer persecution at his hands. This, as I have shown, is consistent with both Jesus and Paul. Let me give you a few quotes:

- Tertullian: *"That the beast Antichrist with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God....Since, then, the Scriptures both indicate the stages of the last times, and concentrate the harvest of the Christian hope in the very end of the world."*
- Justin Martyr: *"The man of apostasy...shall venture to do unlawful things on the earth against us, the Christians."*
- The Pastor of Hermas: *"Happy ye who endure the Great Tribulation that is coming."*
- Irenaeus: *"And the ten kings...shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the Church to flight."*
- Barnabas: *"Take heed, lest resting at our ease, as those who are called of God, we should fall asleep in our sins, and the wicked prince, acquiring power over us, should thrust us away from the Kingdom of the Lord."*
- Hippolytus: *"Now concerning the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall upon the Church from the adversary. That refers to the 1260 days during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church."*

The persecution of the Church by antichrist was clearly the position of the early church. Pre-tribbers will take their warnings to watch and be alert, and try and build a case for imminence. They try it with the Holy Scriptures as well, but do not succeed.

I am not saying that this proves the Pre-Wrath viewpoint. For if this was all I had, my argument would be very weak. But it re-enforces what the scriptures strongly support, and adds tremendous credibility to the Pre-Wrath position.

B. Why this view now? A fair question to ask is why is this view coming out now. Isn't this just some "new revelation?" No, absolutely not.

First, as I have already showed you, the early church believed the basic premise of the Pre-Wrath view. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great English evangelist, although not using the term Pre-Wrath, preached a message on April 23, 1885 outlining the exact sequence that I have tried to show--that first would come great persecution, then the signs in the sky, and finally the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds with power and great glory.

So the only thing that is really new, is the title, "Pre-Wrath". The principles have been believed by the church for 2000 years.

Second, I believe, that in the last days as we get closer to Christ's return, more light will be given to the Church as it relates to prophetic events. I believe we will see a resurgence in the early church view as the Lord begins to prepare his people for the Great Tribulation that is to come. The Pre-Wrath view, without question, is the fastest growing view in America today. And it is so, because it is not based on emotionalism and inference, but sound biblical exegesis.

C. How can such Godly Men be Wrong? You may ask, how can such learned, godly men be wrong on such an important issue? This question I have wrestled with more than any other. I mean, who am I to question great men like Scofield, Ryrie, Walvoord, and Pentecost?

But that's just it. These men are human beings. And humans make mistakes. But let me give you two specific reasons why they aren't willing to change..

The first has to do with the regathering of the nation of Israel which the Bible clearly stated must occur before we would see the end. In 70 AD, the Jews were scattered all over the world, and many thought that that would be the end of Israel. And I believe even the Church asked themselves, "how would Israel ever become a nation again?" So some in the Church began to spiritualize the scriptures, and teach that the church is now Israel.

But others, wanting so much to see the return of Christ, began to invent this doctrine of imminence. These men loved the Lord Jesus, but wanted so much to see Christ, and seeing the near impossibility of Israel ever becoming a nation again, that they rationalized it with the Pre-Trib view.

Ok, but what about now? Israel is a nation. Why haven't these men renounced what the Bible clearly does not teach? Some have. But let me give a second reason why I believe these men won't change by reading a portion of a letter written by a well-known, national Bible teacher.

"God has given to me a group of precious and wonderful people who serve alongside me...Built into the fabric of all who serve in these various ministries is a commitment to our doctrinal statement which has been historically pretrib. I don't own these ministries. They belong to the Lord and are a stewardship in the hands of God's people. They are at best fragile--even the church which is so strong spiritually and financially. People all over the world are linked to us. Our commitment to a common belief is our foundation. If I were to announce that I had become Post-Trib or Pre-Wrath, the fragile line that holds my ministries together could break. Some of the leadership would turn against me. Many others across the country that feel the kindred spirit and trust us would turn away...would go elsewhere. Even our peripheral ministries would be affected. A lot is at stake for me."

Without question, I believe the major reason why these men don't change is the fact that pre-trib has become such an important part of the Church in America, that if we go against it, people think will think we are preaching some sort of heresy. Without a doubt, if men today like John MacArthur, James Kennedy, Chuck Swindol, and others were to announce that they now believed the Church was to go through the 70th week, it would no doubt cause major divisions within the church. They feel that this doctrine is not that major of an issue to cause division. While I certainly can understand their desire to protect division, they are doing so at the expense of the truth of God's word.

And while they may feel they are doing the church a favor by protecting her from unnecessary division, in reality they are feeding the church a lie which will have devastating consequences on those who enter the 70th week unprepared. There are warnings throughout the New Testament, but especially in Revelation concerning those who are not prepared, and those who are not alert.

For some of these leaders, they have been ingrained in the Pre-Trib view for so long, and have taught thousands of people on it, that for them to recant and say they were wrong would be too much for them to do. But many are admitting their error, and I pray many more will do so before we enter this period.

D. Why is this important for us? So why is this important for us? Some of you still may not think this is important? You may say, it is not an essential part of the faith. Or, even if I had to go through this period, I would never take the mark.

Let me tell you something, Christianity worldwide, but in America in particular, is weak at this moment. In America, we have everything we want. We put a great emphasis on our schooling, our jobs, and our standard of living, but very little emphasis on living holy and being prepared for his return.

I am going to make a statement that will be very strong, but also very biblical. Here it is:

The amount of persecution we receive in the 70th week will be in direct proportion to the degree of our faithfulness to God right now!

I firmly believe that most Christians, especially those in our own country, will enter the 70th week totally unaware and unprepared. Most Christians do not put a high priority on holiness in their lives.

I believe the 7 churches in Revelation can be characterized in 3 categories:

1. The faithful Church (Philadelphia)

2. The compromising Church (Thyatira)
3. The dead Church (Sardis)

Very few believers are like Philadelphia and Sardis. But most are like those found in Thyatira.

What are the warnings and promises to these 3 categories?:

1. Sardis (dead church): Rev 3:1-3
2. Thyatira (compromising church): Rev 2:18-22
3. Philadelphia (faithful church): Rev 3:10

Remember, each of these churches have strengths and weaknesses which, I believe, will mark believers who enter Daniel's 70th week. Those who are faithful, who are living holy, will be protected during this time of testing. Those who are dead, who are not believers, the Day of the Lord will come as a thief. But for the majority of compromising Christians, they will take the heat of the fire. And I believe it will be this group that will have the greatest number of martyrs. I believe the Great *Thlipsis* is to separate true Christians from the dead ones, and when given a choice of taking the mark and living, or refusing the mark and dying, only true believers will refuse the mark but at the expense of their very life.

You have a right to disagree with how I see these passages, but again, you must see the messages to the 7 churches in light of what Jesus and Paul says concerning the 70th week. These messages are urgent. They are strong. There are promises to overcomers. There are warnings to those who are unfaithful.

Yes, it is important to us! This is a litmus test for all of us. What is your commitment level to the Lord Jesus Christ? Salvation is free, but rewards are not. Are you prepared to give your life, right now, for Jesus Christ?

I want to say one more time this information is very important. Although it is not critical as it relates to the Doctrine of Christ and salvation, Paul was very clear on how one receive this particular doctrine.

Remember, Paul was writing to the Thessalonians in his 2nd epistle concerning the false teaching that the Day of the Lord had already come, And he was trying to show what must first occur before that Day would occur. Listen to what Paul says concerning the importance of this doctrine.

2Th 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

2Th 3:15 Yet count [him] not as an enemy, but admonish [him] as a brother.

What Paul is saying is this: This is important. Don't let men (even fellow believers) deceive you. The Day of the Lord cannot come until certain things happen. And if anyone teaches you otherwise, admonish him, and even keep no company with him. Those are pretty harsh words for a doctrine we say is not that important. I say to you it is important and as the Church of Christ, we better wake up to that fact.

I have shared this information with you because it is what God has laid on my heart to do. You are now accountable before God to live in light of what the Scriptures teach.

"Let him who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches."

E. How soon and What should we do? How soon will this be? I don't know. Jesus said that no one would know the day or the hour of his return. But I'll tell you this: we are the first generation since before 70 AD, that legitimately can say, right now, the next event on the prophetic timetable is the covenant between antichrist and Israel. No one has been able to say it because Israel did not become a nation again until 1948, and did not recapture Jerusalem until 1967--and those two things had to happen.

No other event need occur until that confirming covenant.

So, in the light of this, what should we do to prepare?

1. Be faithful to God. If there are secret sins in your life, repent. Study the Word, meditate in the Word. Cultivate a close relationship with the Saviour. Stop living for the world, and start living for Christ. Live holy. Watch, eagerly wait, and prepare for his coming.
2. Don't do anything else until you see the confirming of the covenant. When you see that, if you are watching, you will have 3.5 years in which to prepare in an orderly manner. In that time, the saints of God will need to band together. Try to get involved in a church that believes the way you believe. And if you can't find one, get with some believers who will encourage you. Remember, most pre-tribbers are counting on an escape from persecution. Don't fall in the same trap.

Let me share one more quote with you on the credibility of this view and a parable, and then we'll be done. This quote is from Dr Walter Kaiser, former dean at Trinity Seminary. He is considered one of the finest OT scholars of our day.

The Pre-Wrath position is the prophetic position that best understands and properly applies OT prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord as it relates to the 2nd coming of Christ. If the fathers of dispensationalism had been able to choose between the pretribulation and the pre-wrath views, the pre-wrath position would have received their vote, hands down

Let me end with a parable.

Mat 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [is] nigh:

Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, [even] at the doors.

Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Be ready, be watchful, and be prepared!!

Information compiled and quotations taken from the following sources:

"The PreWrath Rapture of the Church" by Marvin Rosenthal

"The Sign" by Robert Van Kampen

"The Rapture Question" by Robert Van Kampen

"The New Scofield Reference Bible"

"The Rapture Question" by John Walvoord

If you have any questions or comments concerning this bible study, please mail to Kenneth W. Eckerty or to [this sites webservant.](#)

Thank you and God Bless you