

The Rapture Timing Mystery *Weighing the Evidence*

By

Craig R. Cordle

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Preface

I have been a believer in the Rapture of the Church for most of my adult life. What has always intrigued me is the different views of the timing of the Rapture. Will it occur before the seven-year tribulation, during it, or at the conclusion of it? Several years ago, I came across a survey about people's view on when the biblical Rapture will occur. The results were shocking in that it truly showed the variety of opinion among believers of when the Rapture will occur. This prompted me to research various articles and videos by those who believed in the different Rapture timing views. Ministries that I highly respected had different views on the timing of the Rapture based on their understanding of scripture. This lack of agreement among Christians served as the motivation for the writing of this book to determine if the biblical evidence truly identifies the timing of the Rapture.

Many Christians have just accepted what they have been taught about the Rapture without testing their beliefs with scripture. A unique quality of this book is that it guides the Christian through a review of the scriptures that deal with Christ's Second Coming. What does the Bible actually say about the Rapture and when it will happen? That question is addressed in an unbiased manner in examining the scriptures and weighing the biblical evidence to find the answer. The mystery we will be seeking to uncover is determining if Jesus Christ's Second Coming involves one event or two. Are the Rapture and the Second Coming one single event happening simultaneously or two distinct events separated by a period of time? Another unique aspect of this book is that it does not promote one view over the other, but encourages the reader to evaluate the biblical evidence for themselves.

Being an avid student of the Bible for over 40 years, I have developed an expertise in teaching Bible eschatology and apologetics. My in-depth knowledge of Bible end time events and over 35 years of experience in the teaching ministry qualifies me to write on the subject of the Rapture.

Anybody who is interested in end time Bible prophecy should find interest in this book. More specifically, this book is intended for the reader who wants more information about the different main Rapture timing views to confirm if their beliefs are supported by scripture. It can also benefit those who are uncomfortable with hearing criticisms about what they believe concerning the Rapture and want to understand if the scrutiny is justified.

Other books will endorse their accepted position for the timing of the Rapture and provide inadequate arguments for the other viewpoints. A fair and balanced approach is of great benefit to the reader seeking a greater understanding on this topic.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is a very real event that can be sooner than you think. I believe there is an urgency in communicating this truth to our world. This book will definitely inspire discussion and debate on the topic of the Rapture.

Introduction

As I am writing this book, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has very quickly turned our world upside down. This global pandemic has a resemblance to the plagues described in the Book of Revelation and has led many to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ could be coming very soon. The speculation is that the tribulation of the last days could be upon us. What does this mean for Christians? I believe this can be the greatest time for us to share our faith in Jesus Christ and help prepare people for His coming.

One of the great truths of the Bible is the promise that Jesus Christ is coming again. Jesus first came to complete the plan of redemption by dying on the cross for the sins of the world. In His sacrificial death, He paid the penalty of sin for us in order that we can have a relationship with God and live with Him in Heaven. At Christ's second coming, He will punish the world for its evil and set up His Kingdom on the earth where He will rule for one thousand years. The Lord executes judgment followed by great blessing. Jesus first came as a humble servant to be a sacrifice, He is coming again as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Associated with Christ's Second Coming is the resurrection of the dead. Just as there are two comings of the Lord, there will be two resurrections of the dead. The first resurrection will take place when Jesus comes again, the second resurrection will occur at the end of the thousand-year kingdom age. The righteous dead (those who are saved) will be raised first and the lost (the unsaved) will be raised later to face the Great White Throne Judgment.

The Bible speaks of a time where the world will experience the worst events it has ever seen in history (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21). A number of plagues will come on the world before Christ comes again to urge people to repent of their sins and turn to Jesus Christ. This will occur during a seven-year period of time many Bible scholars call the "Tribulation." Jesus referred to the last three and one-half years of this time as the "Great Tribulation" because of the severity of the events happening in the world. Prior to the coming of Christ, God's wrath will be poured out on the world. The wrath of God is His fierce anger that moves Him to punish all who will not follow Him. God's wrath has been seen in the Old Testament and it was never directed toward those who believed in Him. God always removed or shielded the righteous before unleashing His wrath against the ungodly (Genesis 18:23).

The scripture plainly teaches that believers will not experience God's wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This principle comes into focus in the end-times when Jesus comes again. How will Christians be protected from the wrath of God? What exactly is the wrath of God? These questions will be addressed in this book.

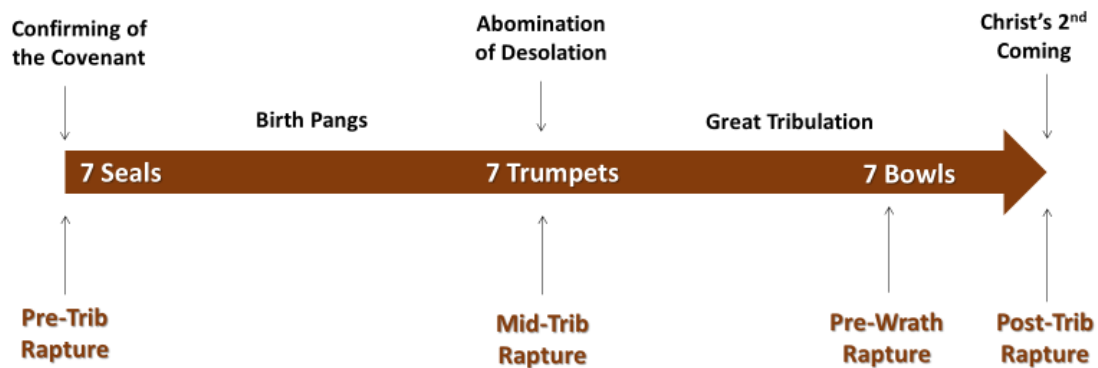
An event that is part of the first resurrection is called the "Rapture." The Rapture is defined as the event when Jesus Christ returns to give believers who have died and those currently alive, their resurrected/glorified body. It is a body designed to live in Heaven in the presence of God for all of eternity. The transformation of the mortal body into an immortal body takes place and the believer is "caught up" (rapture) to meet Christ in the air to be with Him forever. The two main texts for this event are in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

The word “Rapture” is not found in English translations of the Bible and is used as evidence by some that the teaching of the Rapture is a false doctrine. The word “Rapture” is the term used to describe the event of being “caught up” (1 Thess. 4:17) to meet the Lord in the air. The word “rapture” actually comes from the Latin word “*rapio*” that is used in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible. It is the translation of the Greek word “*harpazo*,” meaning to seize or snatch out or away, that is used in the original Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The definition of the English word “rapture” is a feeling of intense joy or a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion. When we put the word “the” in front of it, the term “The Rapture” takes on the Biblical meaning of Jesus catching away believers to be with Him.

A question concerning the Rapture is WHEN will the Rapture take place. This is not identifying the date that it will happen, but where on the timeline of end-time events does it occur. That is where the mystery comes in. Is the timing of the Rapture hidden in the scriptures and it’s up to us to uncover it? How will Christians be kept from experiencing God’s wrath? Will they be rescued by being removed from the world before the wrath comes or will they be supernaturally shielded from it? This question has led to different interpretations of how God will miraculously keep believers from experiencing God’s wrath. That is what this book will focus on. Examining the scriptures in hopes of uncovering the mystery of the timing of the Rapture.

There are four main views concerning the timing of the Rapture. These four views are the Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Pre-Wrath, and Post-Tribulation Rapture. The timing is in reference to the seven-year time period called the Tribulation where the end-time events, as mentioned in the Book of Revelation, will take place. These events lead up to the Second Coming of Christ. See the timeline below that illustrates the different Rapture views.

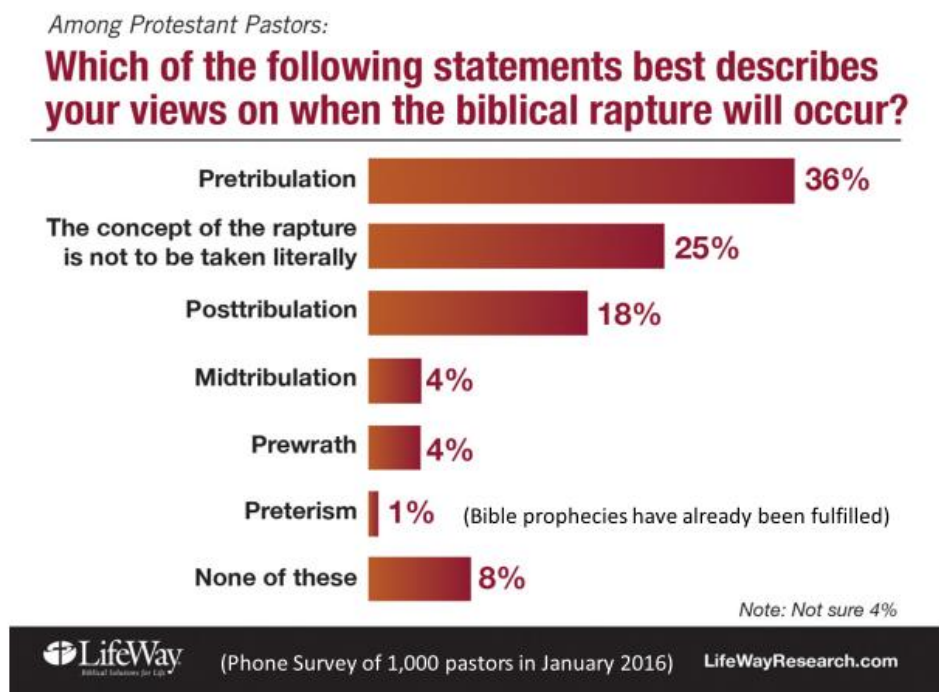
7 Year Tribulation Timeline



Rapture Timing Interpretations

There are differences of opinion on the timing of the Rapture as evidenced by the four different views identified on the timeline. A survey was conducted in January 2016 by LifeWay Research concerning Pastors Views on the End Times. One thousand protestant pastors were surveyed by asking a variety of questions concerning the end times. One of the questions reads as

follows, “Which of the following statements best describes your views on when the biblical rapture will occur?” The survey results for this question are reflected in the following chart.



<https://lifewayresearch.com/2016/04/26/pastors-the-end-of-the-world-is-complicated/>

The Pre-Tribulation rapture view was the most accepted view by 36% of the pastors. The next highest rapture timing view was Post-Tribulation at 18%, while the Mid-Tribulation and Pre-Wrath views each only received 4%. An amazing 25% said the rapture was not to be taken literally. The results of this survey clearly show that there is no consensus of opinion on the timing of the Rapture.

The survey’s findings inspired the writing of this book to weigh the evidence of scripture to determine which timing view of the Rapture is biblical. As the findings of this survey illustrates, there is considerable disagreement regarding this aspect of the Rapture.

The Pre-Tribulation view has been the prevailing view for a number of years, but has received increased scrutiny. It can be said that the trend seems to be favoring the Post-Tribulation view. Why is there a shift in what people believe concerning the Rapture? In taking a closer view of the scripture, people are changing their positions and going against the traditional teaching. The teaching of the Rapture is not a cardinal doctrine that affects one’s salvation. There are doctrines in the Bible that cannot be compromised and do affect our salvation. The teaching that Jesus is the only way to God is fundamental to the Christian faith. Jesus plainly said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). This doctrine is one that cannot be compromised. The different views held by Christians concerning the Rapture should not cause divisions in the Church.

The purpose of this book is to help you form your belief concerning the timing of the Rapture based on scripture and not on what you may have assumed to be true. For example, you may have always been taught a Pre-Tribulation Rapture and have not heard other teachings about it. The danger is that one can become narrow-minded and unwilling to consider other believers’

opinions that are biblically based. Too many Christians just accept what they have been taught and never test it with scripture. The Bible teaches us to do this very thing, “Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:20-21). It’s not being disrespectful to your pastor or Bible teacher to verify what they are teaching is supported by scripture. If you want to test the validity of your views, you need to try to disprove them. If they still hold true after legitimate scrutiny, then you can feel assured and have confidence in the Rapture timing view you believe. If the scriptures lead me to change my beliefs on the rapture, then so be it. The truth is more important than my pride. In this book, I want to share the insight I have gained from studying Bible prophecy over a number of years on the topic of the Rapture.

We will be weighing the evidence for the two main views of the timing of the Rapture. I will be comparing the Pre-Tribulation with the Post-Tribulation Rapture views. I believe the fundamental points I will be sharing can also be applied to the Mid-Tribulation and Pre-Wrath views, so I will not be specifically commenting on them throughout the book.

This book poses six questions that are foundational in forming one’s belief about the timing of the Rapture. Your answers to these questions should greatly impact what view you hold. Many Bible scholars answer these questions differently. We need to respect every person’s opinion when they base it on scripture.

My goal is not to answer the timing of the Rapture for you, but to give you biblical evidence to answer the question for yourself. Base what you believe on scripture. Be able to point to the passages in the Bible that support your beliefs. We will be weighing the biblical evidence so you can have confidence in what you believe. The objective here is to help you validate your own view with biblical evidence.

CHAPTER 1 - Weighing the Evidence

In considering the question of the timing of the Rapture, I ask that you put aside everything you have been taught about the Rapture. If you have ever served on a jury, you had to be willing to be impartial. Impartial jurors are those who are willing and able to consider the evidence presented at trial without preconceived opinions about the defendant's guilt or innocence. They must also apply the governing law as instructed by the trial judge, and to deliberate in good faith to render a legally and factually justifiable verdict. This is the approach we will be taking.

There are different standards of proof used in trials. A standard of proof is the level of certainty and the degree of evidence necessary to establish proof in a case. There are three general standards of proof. The highest standard is “*beyond a reasonable doubt*,” where the evidence must be so convincing that no reasonable person would ever question the defendant’s guilt. This highest of standards requires—after consideration of all facts—only one logical conclusion: that the defendant is indeed guilty. The next highest standard is “*clear and convincing evidence*” which means the evidence is highly and substantially more likely to be true than untrue; the jury must have an abiding conviction that the truth of the factual contention is highly probable. The lowest standard of proof is “*preponderance of the evidence*” where evidence presented is more credible and convincing than the evidence presented by the other party. This burden of proof is met if there is greater than a 50% chance that, based on all the reasonable evidence shown, that the argument is true. We are not putting the Rapture on trial, but will use the preponderance of the evidence as the standard of proof to determine which rapture timing view carries the greater weight of evidence.

Since there is no consensus of opinion concerning the timing of the Rapture, it shows that Christians interpret the evidence differently. When we consider the evidence, you will see that each Rapture view has its credible evidence. That is why I am asking you to weigh the evidence based on the preponderance of the evidence standard.

We will weigh the scriptural evidence, like a jury considers the evidence in a trial to come to a verdict, to form your view concerning the timing of the Rapture. *What does the Bible say?* That is the standard we must use when studying any topic in the Bible. It is easy to make assumptions and read things into the text that are not explicitly there. One can also interpret a passage with a preconceived view and try to manipulate the scripture to fit that view.

We should exercise the same discipline as the Berean Christians mentioned in the book of Acts in how they received the Word of God. When Paul and Silas arrived at Berea during their second missionary journey, they went to the Jewish synagogue and preached the gospel to them. The Bereans possessed a remarkable moral character and practiced the discipline of reading and studying the scriptures daily. The Bible says, “Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11 *NASB*). They received the gospel message and examined it in light of the Old Testament scriptures. They weighed the biblical evidence and many concluded that Jesus was indeed the prophesied Messiah. The Bereans serve as a positive example of how a person or a group should respond to biblical teaching. We should have an eagerness to receive the Word and examine what we are taught in light of what the scriptures

actually say. We should hold scripture in such a high regard, that it becomes our daily pursuit and source of truth in our lives.

Listed below are some points to consider when weighing the evidence:

1. A prophetic passage will not always contain ALL the details concerning an event.
2. The Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation will be the primary sources to identify the details. If one passage does not mention a detail, we will look to the other source to determine if additional details are provided.
3. Other passages can be considered if they have a detail not mentioned in the primary sources. (Books such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah.)
4. Draw a conclusion based on the scriptural evidence.

In considering the timing of the Rapture, we will establish the *default position* as the Post-Tribulation Rapture. The term “default position” refers to a belief (or lack of belief) that is preferable prior to debate or before any evidence is considered. The burden of proof is with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view.

What scriptural evidence is there that gives us an understanding that Jesus’ return will be in two phases (separate events)? The first event being the Rapture of the church before a period of time that God’s wrath is poured out and a separate event being the Second Coming when Jesus returns to execute judgment on the world.

If we accept as the default position that Christ’s return is a one phase/single event, what scriptural evidence would tell us that the Rapture is a separate event? There is no direct scriptural evidence for a Pre-Tribulation rapture. If you were reading the Bible for the first time, you probably would not come away with seeing two phases of Christ’s Second Coming. The mystery of the timing of the Rapture may be solved by the conclusion drawn in connecting various scriptures together that infer it takes place prior to the Second Coming and is a separate event.

There are two forms of evidence that we need to identify. The first is direct evidence. It is evidence from a witness to testify of a truth or fact. Direct evidence speaks for itself such as an eyewitness account. In this book, we will be looking for direct scriptural evidence which is information that is explicitly, or plainly stated. There is also circumstantial evidence that usually suggests a fact by implication or inference. It is drawing a conclusion based on known facts. It involves a process that leads one to draw a final conclusion. An example of circumstantial evidence is fingerprints left at a crime scene. When we tie various scriptures together to form a conclusion, it is being done by reasoning or inference. The more circumstantial evidence there is, the greater weight it carries.

The two forms of evidence, direct and circumstantial, seem to favor different Rapture timing views. When weighing the types of scriptural evidence, they tend to favor the following views:

- Pre-Tribulation Rapture = *inference* or circumstantial evidence
- Post Tribulation Rapture = *explicit* or direct evidence

One would think that explicit scriptural evidence would carry the most weight. However, could enough scripture references cause one to come to a different conclusion? We have two kinds of evidence. Which one will carry the most weight? This is the matter at hand when studying the Rapture timing question.

In considering the evidence, pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten you. The scriptures came from Holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (see 2 Peter 1:21). Since the Bible was written under the inspiration of God, it is understood through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13). Do not make this an intellectual exercise only, but also a spiritual one.

Both sides of the issue must focus on arguing the evidence and not arguing with each other.

CHAPTER 2 - Basic Facts

Bible end-time prophecy is complex. Prophetic passages must be pieced together like a puzzle.

As more pieces of the puzzle are put together, the understanding of events can change. There are four different views of interpreting the Book of Revelation. They are Historic Premillennialism (includes post-trib. rapture), Dispensational Premillennialism (includes pre-trib. rapture), Postmillennialism, and Amillennialism. To put in very basic terms, some believe the Second Coming of Christ is before the millennium (premillennialism), while some believe Christ returns after the millennium. This book is presenting biblical evidence from a premillennial perspective.

Listed below are some basic facts concerning Christ's coming from a premillennial viewpoint where most should be in agreement. The question we are considering is where does the Rapture fit in the timeline of events.

1. Jesus is coming again (Matt. 24:29-30; Mark 13:24-26; Luke 21: 25-27; John 14:1-3).
2. Jesus coming back in the same manner as He ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11).
3. He is coming in the clouds (Matt. 24:30; Rev, 1:7)
4. There will be a trumpet sounded (Matt. 24:31).
5. His "elect" will be gathered by the angels (Matt. 24:31).
6. His coming is called the "Day of the Lord" (Isaiah 13:9).
7. Jesus coming to execute Divine wrath (Isa. 13:9-13, to judge and wage war (Rev 19:11).
8. His saints will be resurrected (Rev. 20:4-6; Dan. 12:1-2).
9. There will be 21 plagues unleashed during the last days (Rev. Chapters 6, 8, 9, 11, 16).
10. After the Abomination of Desolation there will be 3 ½ years of Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21).
11. The worst events ever to happen on the earth will occur (Dan. 12:1; Matt, 24:21).
12. Three main events; confirming the covenant, the abomination, and 2nd coming (Dan 9:27)
13. The time of His coming will be like the Days of Noah and the Days of Lot (Matt. 24:37; Luke 17:26, 28-29).
14. Jesus' feet will stand on the Mount of Olives when He returns (Zech. 14:4).
15. At His coming the wicked and the righteous will be separated (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50).
16. Jesus returns riding a white horse followed by the armies/saints of Heaven (Rev. 19:11-16).
17. Jesus will judge the nations (Matt. 25:31-46; Joel 3:12).
18. Israel will be saved (Rom. 11).
19. Christ will reign on earth for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4).
20. Believers are not appointed unto God's wrath (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).
21. No one knows the day (Matt.24:42; 25:13).

I wanted to make the point that there are many areas where we are in agreement. When it comes to the Rapture and other end time Bible prophecies, it is wrong to label someone a false teacher, liar, misguided, or just plain ignorant because they do not agree with your view. No one should teach prophecy in a condescending way. The end time prophetic scriptures can be interpreted differently so we cannot be so dogmatic or arrogant in insisting our views are correct. The way of salvation cannot be compromised because it is plainly stated in the Word of God. End time Bible prophecy is not a salvation issue so we need to present our interpretations with meekness and fear as we would in defending our faith with unbelievers.

It can be said that many people, even if they are not Christians, know that the Book of Revelation in the Bible deals with end-time prophecy. Another book in the Bible that deals almost entirely with prophecy is Daniel in the Old Testament. There is a very important prophecy in Daniel that is the chronological key to end-time Bible prophecy. It is called Daniel's Seventy Weeks prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27. There is much that can be said about it and it would take another book to delve into it. The text of the Seventy Weeks Prophecy is given below.

²⁴“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

²⁵“Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. ²⁷He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him” (Daniel 9:24-27 NIV).

In summary (according to the *Futuristic View*), the prophecy states that God will deal with the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem over the course of 490 years, or 70 weeks of years (a day equals one year, so $70 \times 7 = 490$ years). Verse 24 lists six key activities that will be fulfilled or accomplished at the conclusion of the seventy weeks. Verse 25 states the seventy weeks will begin when a commandment is given to build and restore Jerusalem. There are several decrees given in history that could be this specific commandment with the most probable dates being in 457 BC and 444 B.C. Once the commandment is given, there will be 483 years during which the city will be rebuilt, concluding with the Messiah being put to death, as mentioned in verse 26. This death or cutting off of the Messiah was the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross. After this the Temple and the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed which occurred in 70 A.D. by the Roman army. The term “Messiah the Prince” is a reference to Jesus Christ and the phrase, “the prince who is to come” is speaking of the Antichrist. The “*people* of the prince who is to come” are the Romans and many believe that the Antichrist will come from a modern country that was once part of the Roman Empire. Verse 27 speaks of the final, or seventieth week of the prophecy which begins when the Antichrist confirms a covenant. In the middle of this seventieth week, the Antichrist stops the daily

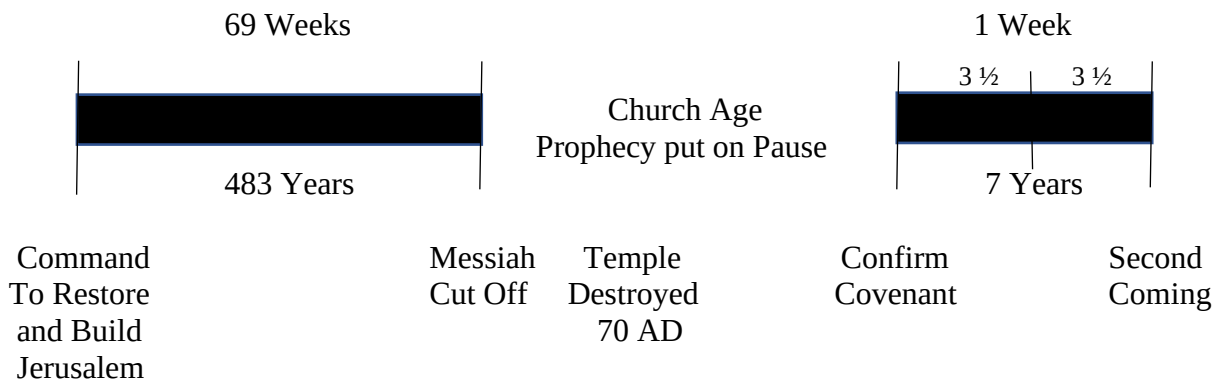
sacrifice (which may have started as part of the covenant agreement) and demands to be worshipped as God. The Antichrist sets up an image in the rebuilt Jewish Temple (the 3rd Temple) which is called the Abomination of Desolation. At the conclusion of the seventy weeks, we know from Matthew 24:29 that Jesus Christ comes after the tribulation of those days.

The first 69 weeks (483 years) of this prophecy have passed, ending with Christ's crucifixion, followed with the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 A.D. The final week, or seven years has not occurred because the prophecy has been put on pause. The final seven years will be the Tribulation period that leads up to Christ's Second Coming. This final week of the prophecy is set back in motion when the Antichrist makes a covenant or peace treaty with Israel. The prophecy says, "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering... (Daniel 9:27a)." This is where we get the understanding that there will be a seven-year period that leads up to the coming of the Lord.

I must point out that there are some who do not agree with the pause or gap in this prophecy between the 69th and 70th weeks (*Historicist View*). They claim that this radical interpretative gap is being read into the text because it is not plainly there. To go into a detailed defense for the gap interpretation is outside the scope of this book, but there is considerable scholarly support for placing a pause or gap between the 69th and 70th weeks.

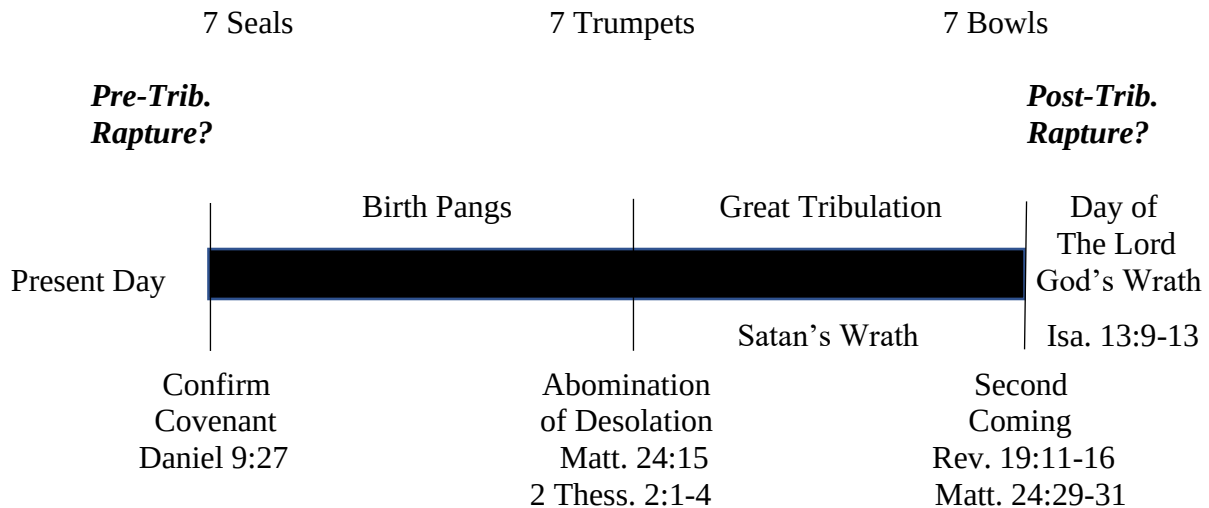
The following timelines will help illustrate.

Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy



When speaking of the timing of the Rapture, the issue is where to place it on this seven-year timeline. Those who believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture place it just before the beginning of the seven years, and conversely, the Post-Tribulation adherents place it at the conclusion of the seven years. The final seven years is expanded on the next timeline.

Daniel's 70th Week



As you can see, I have identified the Rapture just before the beginning of the Tribulation which represents the Pre-Tribulation view. The Rapture placed just after the end of the Tribulation represents the Post-Tribulation view. There are some variations in the Post-Tribulation view where some place the Rapture shortly before the end of the Tribulation, taking place during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation and others believe the final set of Revelation plagues, the Seven Bowls of Wrath, occur after the Tribulation immediately preceding the Second Coming. In either case the Post-Tribulation view is seen as one event after the Tribulation.

There is a belief by a small number of Pre-Tribulationists, called the Partial Rapture, that only faithful Christians will be taken in the Rapture. Unfaithful Christians are left on the earth to suffer through the Tribulation. To them, the Rapture is seen as a reward for being faithful to Christ. Proponents of this view turn to passages that emphasize waiting and watching (some references include Matt. 24:40-51; 25:1-13; Luke 20:34-36; 21:36; 1 Cor. 9:27). It is generally held by the different Rapture views that all true believers will be included. The translation and resurrection of believers is a part of one's salvation, not a reward for faithfulness. It is inconceivable that the church formed by grace would be divided by works. This book will not go into the details of this teaching, but it is important to identify it as a belief held by some Christians.

The Book of Revelation lists 21 plagues, or judgments, that will take place during the seven years of Tribulation. They are referred to as the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, and the Seven Bowls of Wrath. The events during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation are the worst times the world has ever experienced (See Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:19). I need to mention that some believe these plagues have occurred over the course of church history and they have some valid points. This book will work from the assumption that the 21 plagues occur during the seven years.

Jesus gave a very important teaching concerning the end of the age in what is called the "Olivet Discourse." It is found in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Jesus answered several questions posed by His disciples. The Bible says, "Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples

came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:1-3).

Jesus’ teaching is an excellent overview of the events leading up to His Second Coming. I must emphasize, not every detail is given in the Olivet Discourse. No single passage gives all the details of His Coming and the resurrection of His saints. We also have to look to the Book of Revelation to get more details of what will take place. As I mentioned before, these are the two primary sources we will use to look for the timing of the Rapture. However, the most detailed description of the Rapture is given in the Pauline Epistles. Does the scripture explicitly describe when the Rapture takes place? That is what we will be investigating in this book.

Conclusions Drawn

The complexity of end-time Bible prophecy is evident. Even though there are many areas where we can agree, there are other areas that are subject to different interpretations.

CHAPTER 3 - Six Questions

I am going to present six questions. Your answers to these questions should have a major influence on what Rapture timing position you hold. The questions are as follows:

1. Who are the “elect?” (Is there is distinction between Israel and the Church?)
2. When does God’s wrath begin?
3. What is the “last trumpet?”
4. How do you define the Day of the Lord?
5. Can Jesus come at any moment?
6. One Event or Two? (The Rapture & The Second Coming)

Your answers to these questions are framed by the *lens of interpretation* you use. A person may just blindly accept what they have been taught about the Rapture. Whether Pre- or Post-Tribulation, they force the meaning of passages to fit their preconceived view of the Rapture’s timing, without first testing it with scripture. We need to honestly answer these questions based on scripture alone, and then form our view.

I will devote a chapter for each of the questions to present the scriptural evidence to consider in forming your view. There are a number of questions one can ask concerning the Rapture, but I feel these six forms the foundation in understanding the Rapture.

At this time, I want to present several main passages for each of the Rapture views. These should serve as the foundation for each position. Keep these scriptures in mind as we explore the six questions. Please consider these comments as an opening statement for our study.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture View:

From the Pre-Tribulation Rapture viewpoint, the strongest scripture evidence is John 14:1-3 which states, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.” These verses do not explicitly identify the timing of the Rapture, but they make a strong point that when Jesus receives us to Himself, He will take us to a place He has prepared for us which is in Heaven. When Jesus ascended after His resurrection, the place that He went to was Heaven. The implication is, when we are resurrected (the Rapture), we will go to where He is, and in keeping with the context of this passage, that is Heaven.

Another strong scripture supporting the Pre-Tribulation view is Revelation 3:10 which states, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” The trial that is coming for the world is the Tribulation. In order to be kept from this trial, the church will be taken out of this world prior to the coming judgments of the Tribulation.

Finally, Jesus makes this statement, “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36 NASB). This verse that many claims support the Pre-Tribulation view because it speaks of escaping all the things (judgments, plagues) Jesus said will come before His return.

The Tribulation, according to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view, is the wrath of God and that the church is not subject to God’s wrath. This principle is expressed in several passages (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). For example, 1 Thessalonians 5:9 states, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The question of what constitutes God’s wrath will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Even though there are no explicit scriptural references that would place the Rapture before the seven-year period, it is acceptable to consider passages that imply the Rapture must occur before the Tribulation. Some may say that explicit scriptural evidence is the best evidence. However, some explicit statements in scripture can only be taken literally within the context where they are found. When other passages are included in studying a topic, the interpretation can change. For example, some use Isaiah 45:5 which says, “I am the LORD, and there is no other, Besides Me there is no God,” to support a teaching that denies the Trinity. However, there are numerous other passages that gives additional evidence into the nature of God that are used in supporting the Trinity. The Post-Tribulation rapture view is concluded from explicit scriptural references while the Pre-Tribulation rapture view is concluded by inference, a view formed from reasoning (logically applying scriptural principles).

Post-Tribulation Rapture View:

The Post-Tribulation rapture view is evidenced by explicit scriptural statements. Some of the main scriptures used to defend this position are as follows:

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:29-31). The scripture explicitly states Christ comes *immediately after* the Tribulation and His coming is one event.

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). The term “that day” is in reference to the Day of the Lord when Christ comes to judge and wage war. This passage is not speaking of two events (the Rapture and the Second Coming), but that the Day of the Lord cannot come until the antichrist is revealed. We will explore the definition of the Day of the Lord in Chapter 6.

“⁴Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4-5 NASB). The emphasis made concerning this verse is that it mentions the “first” resurrection. This is one event, not one of several that make up the first resurrection. If there are several events, then it cannot be the first and there would be more than two comings of Christ. Chapter 9 will examine if the Lord’s return is one event or two.

Some Other General Comments

A major point to be made is that the Bible is silent in mentioning a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Jesus’ Olivet Discourse makes no mention of a catching away before the signs of the end of the age begin. The Book of Revelation does not explicitly identify a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Some claim that Revelation 4:1 implies a Pre-Tribulation Rapture and that the church is not mentioned after chapter 4 until chapter 19:7. The absence of the church in these chapters they claim is due to the fact the church has been raptured out of this world.

As I have mentioned, the default view is the Post-Tribulation Rapture. An often-cited argument against a Pre-Tribulation Rapture is that it is an invention of the 1830s by a minister named John Nelson Darby. He was an influential proponent of the dispensational view of scripture which sees a distinction between Israel and the Church, teaches God’s progressive redemption plan involves seven dispensations (Paradise, Noah, Abraham, Israel, Gentiles, the Spirit, and the Millennium), and that the Rapture and Second Coming are two separate events. The argument against this doctrine is why did it take 1,800 years before the Church saw the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church. The counter-argument claims that Darby was not the first to teach a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, but it was a belief in the early church. Some of the early proponents of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture are (list taken from “The Rapture” by Ken Johnson, Th.D., page 74): Shepherd of Hermas, AD 150, Irenaeus, AD 170, Hippolytus, AD 210, Cyprian, AD 250, and Ephraim the Syrian, AD 373.

A quote supporting an early church understanding of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture says, “In the final analysis, it was determined that the preponderance of evidence supports the fact that the Early Church Fathers believed in and taught the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position. There is not a voluminous amount of evidence from a wide spectrum of the Fathers, yet there are more than two or three credible and authoritative historical witnesses (including several noted Bishops of the Church and the “father of early church eschatology”—Irenaeus) to that fact.” (Hebert, David, K. “The Rapture of the Church: A Doctrine of the Early Church or a Recent Development of the Dispensational Movement?” M.A. thesis, Oral Roberts University, 2006, page 101.) Based on further review, the claim the Pre-Tribulation is a modern invention can be challenged. It can be said that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view was held by a small number in the early church, but gained much wider acceptance through the teaching of John Nelson Darby many years later.

The Scofield Reference Bible, first published in 1909 and revised in 1917, was a first of its kind in that it included notes to help readers understand the scripture. This Bible promoted the

dispensational view of scripture and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. This reference Bible has been used by many Christians over the years and may be a big reason the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view has the most support.

The following is a teaching of Rabbi Kirt Schneider, from the *Jewish Jesus* broadcast, that supports the Post-Tribulation view of the Rapture. He states that the book of Revelation follows the blueprint of the Exodus of the Jewish people from the land of Egypt. The word “Lamb,” which is used as a name for Jesus, is found 29 times in the book of Revelation. In using the word “Lamb,” it is a connection to the Jewish Passover. In the account of the Exodus, the Hebrews represent God’s people and Pharaoh represents Satan. God sends ten plagues locally on Egypt, but the Revelation plagues (Seals, Trumpets, Bowls of Wrath) are global. When the 10 plagues fell on Egypt, where was Israel? They were in Egypt while the plagues fell, but there was protection for them. They felt the effects of the plagues, but they were marked and protected by God. The Hebrews were protected from the ten plagues while in Egypt just as believers will be protected from the seven Seals and six of the Trumpet judgments in Revelation. For the 10th plague, they had to be protected by the blood of the Lamb. God’s final wrath on the Egyptians was poured out after the ten plagues while they were in the midst of the Red Sea. The waters came down on the Egyptians in judgment as they were crossing the sea. The 7th Trumpet is the last trump. After that, the Wrath of God is poured out with the coming of Jesus via the 7 Bowels of Wrath. I am presenting this view as a piece of evidence that needs to be considered in determining the timing of the Rapture. This is a biblical “type,” or example, of how a historical event can be a pattern of a future event fulfilled in the life and mission of Jesus Christ.

We will now begin to address the six questions.

CHAPTER 4 - Who are the Elect?

Jesus made the following statement, “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31). Identifying who are the “elect” in Jesus’ Olivet Discourse will have an impact on how one sees the timing of the Rapture. Those who support the Post-Tribulation Rapture say that the “elect” is a reference to the Church and that the gathering together of His elect is the catching up of believers, when they receive their glorified bodies. The Pre-Tribulation position states that the “elect” is a reference to Israel and the angels are gathering Jewish people from all over the earth to take them to the land of Israel in their mortal bodies. We will examine these two views to determine which is supported by the weight of evidence.

In order to understand the identity of the “elect,” we need to define what is meant by the term elect. The word “elect” or “election” as it appears in both the Old and New Testaments means “chosen.” Those who are called “the elect” have been picked out, or chosen by God. In the Old Testament, God chose Israel out of all the nations of the world to be His people. The scripture says, “For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6). In the New Testament, believers in Christ are also His special people as it states, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). As you can see, the concept of election is referring to those who have been chosen by God.

The word “elect” is used in scripture in several ways. As in the scriptures given above, it can refer to Israel and the Church. The word “elect” can also be a reference to Christ, “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1). The term can also be a reference to angels, “I charge *you* before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality” (1 Timothy 5:21). Another example from the Old Testament where God specifically calls Israel His elect states, “For Jacob My servant’s sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me” (Isaiah 45:4). Other references identify the elect as those who inherit the Millennial Kingdom and Eternal State (Isaiah 65:7-16, 17-25).

Some take the position that when the term elect is used in the New Testament, it is always referring to the Church. When they consider scriptures such as Matthew 24:31, they associate the elect with the church. The word “gather” in Matthew 25:31 comes from the same Greek word used for “gather” in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 which says “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him ...” They claim these verses are connected and that Paul is referring to the Rapture where believers will be gathered together to Him immediately after the Tribulation.

The main proof text that is used for identifying the Church as God's "elect" or "chosen" in the New Testament says, "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Romans 11:7). Israel was spiritually unable to accept Jesus as their Messiah so God chose the Church and everywhere the word "elect" is used in the New Testament is a reference to the Church.

In order to determine who Jesus is talking about when He uses the term "elect," we need to understand who Jesus is addressing in the Olivet Discourse. Who is the audience? In taking a closer look at Matthew Chapter 24, we can determine to whom He is speaking.

The Bible says, "Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:1-3). Jesus' disciples were showing Him the buildings of the Temple and He makes a statement that foretells the destruction of the Temple. This would be a disturbing prophecy to any Jewish person. Later as they were on the Mount of Olives, they asked Him several questions. They basically asked Him, when will the Temple be destroyed, and what will be the sign of your second coming and the end of the age. Jesus answers their questions by giving a general overview of the end time events, the teaching we call the Olivet Discourse that is found in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

The Temple was the center of Jewish life. The very plot of land where it stood was sacred to God. "But *when* you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD" (Deut. 12:10-11). King Solomon prays the prayer of dedication for the first Temple and the scripture says, "And the LORD said to him: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually" (1 Kings 9:3). The importance of the Temple was monumental.

A strong case can be made that Jesus was speaking to a Jewish audience. The disciples demonstrated a concern for the Temple. The Temple is not significant to a Christian. In the New Covenant, the believer is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Another reason why the Olivet Discourse is addressed to a Jewish audience is Jesus' reference to the abomination of desolation. Jesus said, "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Matthew 24:15-16). This is the event where the Antichrist stops the daily sacrifice in the Jewish Temple that will be rebuilt during the last week of Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy (see Daniel 9:24-27) and demands to be worshipped as God. Again, this event is not significant to the Church, but it is to Israel.

Jesus' statement that the angels will gather His elect needs closer consideration. As I have stated earlier in this book, not every prophetic passage in the Bible contains all the details of an event. The Olivet Discourse is a great summary of the signs leading up to Christ's Second Coming,

but it does not provide many details that are found in the Book of Revelation and some other passages. In reading Matthew 24, there is no explicit statement regarding the Rapture or the resurrection of the saints. The gathering of the elect is done by angels. At the Rapture, the dead in Christ are resurrected and the living are changed as they receive their glorified bodies. They are changed instantly and caught up into the air to meet Jesus in the clouds. Angels are not mentioned as gathering believers in this event.

The angels gathering His elect is a fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah in the Old Testament. The prophecy states, “And it shall come to pass in that day *That* the LORD will thresh, From the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; And you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; They will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, And they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, And shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isaiah 27:12-13). This is the only reference in the Old Testament of the blowing of a “great trumpet.” Matthew 24’s reference to the great trumpet is another piece of evidence to support the “elect” is referring to the Jews. Another verse to consider says, “If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers” (Deut. 30:4-5). This speaks of God gathering His people from the farthest parts of the world back to the land He gave them.

The fact that Jesus is speaking of the Temple, abomination of desolation, and the great trumpet, puts this teaching in a Jewish context. The weight of evidence seems to favor the interpretation that the “elect” is speaking of the Jews. Jesus is addressing the events that will befall the Jewish people, national Israel at the end of the age.

If the elect is referring to the Jews and not the Church, then Matthew 24:31 is not a proof text for the Post-Tribulation Rapture. Yes, it does say that Jesus is coming immediately after the Tribulation, but He does not speak of the resurrection or Rapture. The angels are gathering the Jews and not the Church. There is nothing in Jesus’ teaching that suggests a Pre-Tribulation Rapture either. The fact that Jesus does not speak of the Rapture means we will have to examine other texts to look for evidence of its timing.

CHAPTER 5 - When does the Wrath of God begin?

The question concerning God's wrath has a very big impact on the timing of the Rapture. Scripture declares that the Church is not appointed to wrath (suffer God's judgment). The Pre-Tribulation Rapture position states that all 21 plagues identified in the Book of Revelation represent God's wrath that begin at the start of the seven-year Tribulation. Since believers in Christ are not subject to the wrath of God, the church has to be raptured out of this world before the wrath of God begins to be poured out. The Second Coming at the end of the 7 years is a separate event from the Rapture. The Post-Tribulation Rapture position identifies the last set of Revelation plagues, known as the Bowls of Wrath, as God's wrath that is poured out near the end of the Tribulation, or immediately after it when Christ returns at the Second Coming. They see the Rapture and the Second Coming as one event. If the Bowls of Wrath begin near the end of the Tribulation, the Church will be shielded from God's wrath until Christ returns, and not taken out of this world.

Questions concerning God's wrath that need to be answered in determining the timing of the Rapture are as follows:

1. What is the wrath of God?
2. When does God's wrath begin?
3. How are believers kept from God's wrath? (Taken/rescued out of this world or hidden/shielded from it)

Before we get into seeking answers to these questions, let me share the following verses that speak of God's wrath.

- "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness," (Romans 1:18)
- "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:6)
- "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)
- "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

I must point this out concerning these verses that speak of God's wrath. When you look at the context of where these verses are found, you can make the case that the wrath is a reference to God's final punishment in hell for those who have rebelled against Him (see Romans 1:28-32). The salvation that is in Jesus Christ delivers us from the wrath of God that is carried out by eternal punishment in hell. The context of these passages is not speaking of deliverance for the last generation alive at the time of the Tribulation, but salvation for those who are in Christ. Those

who believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture put a lot of weight on the principle that “God has not appointed us (believers) to wrath” (see 1 Thessalonians 5:9). You will need to examine these verses for yourself concerning the wrath of God to determine if they are speaking of deliverance from the Tribulation or from eternal punishment.

God has been provoked to wrath at times in the Old Testament where He poured out wrath against His disobedient people while still in this life. For example, God’s wrath burned against Israel as they wandered in the wilderness during the Exodus (see Exodus 32:11; Deut. 9:7-8). Other examples include wrath against Israel and Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron 34:24), at the fall of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:15-17) where God used Nebuchadnezzar as a human instrument of His wrath (Ezra 5:12). During these times, God gave the people an opportunity to repent, but they would not in many cases, so His wrath burned to the point that moved Him to execute punishment. Many times, Moses interceded for the people and God turned from destroying them. God also heard Josiah’s prayer and delayed pouring out His wrath. I am mentioning these just to show that God’s wrath is not unique to the Tribulation in the last days.

At this time, we will define the term “wrath.”

“Wrath” is defined as *the emotional response to perceived wrong and injustice*. Both humans and God express wrath. There is a vast difference between the wrath of God and the wrath of man. Some other definitions are as follows:

- Wrath - extreme anger. Great anger that expresses itself in a desire to punish someone.
- Biblical meaning of Wrath - strong vengeful anger or indignation; retributory punishment for an offense or a crime.
- Wrath involves action. Anger is an emotional response to an activating event (a broken law or promise). When anger escalates from feeling to action, it becomes wrath.

The Tribulation is considered to be a time of reckoning. It is the time when one is called to account for one’s actions, to pay one’s debts, or to fulfill one’s promises or obligations. Also, it is a time when you are judged or punished for your actions, or lack thereof.

It is not a good thing to be on the receiving side of God’s wrath. The scripture says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). Every person will be judged by God according to how they responded to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

The distinction has to be made between God’s wrath and man’s wrath. God’s people all through the world’s history have suffered at the hands of men. Christians have been martyred all throughout the church age. In fact, out of more than 70 million Christians that have been martyred over the course of church history, more than half were martyred in the 20th century. The Jewish people have been severely persecuted and killed as evidenced by the Holocaust during World War II when Hitler exterminated 6 million Jews in the death camps. This Anti-Semitism dates back to ancient times. All these deaths were from the hands of evil men with influence from Satanic forces. In all of this, God has allowed this suffering to take place for reasons we will not know until we pass on from this life and are with Him.

God at times delivers His people from terrible situations, but suffering is something we will all face at times in our life. As the scripture says, “For I consider that the sufferings of this

present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18) and “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17). These verses are speaking of suffering as a result of man’s wrath.

When it comes to God’s wrath, we are not talking about suffering that comes from man. It is God’s punishment for sin, for rebellion against His commandments which are for our good. God’s wrath is Holy and always justified. It would not be just for God to allow His wrath to fall on those who have obeyed the gospel and have been born again. That is what we have to keep in mind when thinking of what constitutes God’s wrath during the Tribulation. Are the plagues that will occur during the Tribulation an increased version of man’s or Satan’s wrath, or are they God’s wrath on the world that has rebelled against Him? At what point during the course of these plagues will God deliver His people from His wrath? These are major questions that must be answered when examining the timing of the Rapture.

When does the wrath of God begin?

The Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture considers all the 21 plagues mentioned in the Book of Revelation as the wrath of God. These plagues fall into three groupings, the Seals, Trumpets, and the Bowls of Wrath. The Pre-trib. position states that God’s wrath begins with the 1st Seal judgment. The following is a listing of these judgments or plagues:

Seals:

- 1st Seal – White Horse: Deception/False Christs (Rev. 6:1-4)
- 2nd Seal – Red Horse: War (Rev. 6:3-4)
- 3rd Seal – Black Horse: Famine (Rev. 6:5-6)
- 4th Seal – Pale Horse: Death via the Sword, Famine, and Pestilence (Rev. 6:7-8)
- 5th Seal – Martyrdom (Rev. 6:9-11)
- 6th Seal – Natural Disasters (Rev. 6:12-17)
- 7th Seal – The 7 Trumpet Judgments (Rev. 8:1-6)

Trumpets:

- 1st Trumpet – 1/3 of Green Grass and Trees Burned Up (Rev. 8:7)
- 2nd Trumpet – 1/3 Sea becomes Blood (Rev. 8:8-9)
- 3rd Trumpet – 1/3 Fresh Waters become Blood (Rev. 8:10-11)
- 4th Trumpet – 1/3 Sun, Moon, Stars Struck (Rev. 8:12-13)
- 5th Trumpet – 1st Woe; Locusts (Rev. 9:1-12)
- 6th Trumpet – 2nd Woe; 4 Angels at Euphrates; 200 million army; 1/3 killed (Rev. 9:13-21)
- 7th Trumpet – 3rd Woe; God’s Kingdom Proclaimed (Rev. 11:15-19)

Bowls of Wrath: *(The Post-trib. view says God’s wrath begins with the Bowl judgments)*

- 1st Bowl – Sores (Rev. 16:1-2)
- 2nd Bowl – Sea turns to Blood (Rev. 16:3)
- 3rd Bowl – Rivers turn to Blood (Rev. 16:4-7)
- 4th Bowl – Sun Scorches (Rev. 16:8-9)
- 5th Bowl – Darkness (Rev. 16:10-11)
- 6th Bowl – Euphrates dried up (Rev. 16:12-16)

7th Bowl – Great Earthquake (Rev. 16:17-21)

The Mid-Tribulation & Pre-Wrath Rapture Views (*these two views are very similar*) do not see the Seal & Trumpet Judgments as the wrath of God and that the seal and the trumpet judgments represent the wrath of Satan, not God. The Bible says, “Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Rev. 12:12).

Why does the Pre-Tribulation Rapture consider all these plagues to be the wrath of God? The Apostle John was taken up to the throne room in Heaven in Revelation Chapters 4 and 5. Some believe that this symbolically represents the Rapture where it says, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1). One of the things he saw was a scroll or book with seven seals that only the Lamb of God was worthy to open. The scroll contains the judgments that will be unleashed during the Tribulation period. As each seal is opened, another plague is revealed that comes on the world. Since Jesus is the one who is worthy to open the seals, it can be said that He is sanctioning the judgments that are coming on the earth. With that said, these plagues or judgments are allowed by God, and therefore, it can be said that they are the wrath of God.

Some argue that these seals are the wrath of man, and that later in the Book of Revelation, the Trumpets are the wrath of Satan. God’s wrath, they say, does not come until the end of the Tribulation with the Bowl judgments. In the Old Testament, God used man as an instrument of His wrath. He used King Nebuchadnezzar to execute His wrath where the scriptures says, “But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, *who* destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon” (Ezra 5:12). God’s wrath is not limited to when Christ returns and the sun and moon are darkened. As we can see, it is not unusual for God to use man to carry out His wrath.

Another reason for calling all the 21 plagues the wrath of God is seen in the following verse of scripture, “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete” (Revelation 15:1). There are two ways in which this verse can be interpreted. First, it mentions the “seven last plagues.” By calling the Bowl Judgments the seven last plagues, it implies that the first two sets of seven plagues, the Seals and Trumpets, are also God’s wrath. This last series of plagues finalize God’s judgment. A second way to interpret this verse is to say that the seven last plagues, by themselves, contain the wrath of God. It is with these last plagues God’s wrath is carried out. The Seal and the Trumpets are not God’s wrath. The very fact that these last plagues are called the Bowls of Wrath, with the word “wrath” contained in the name, makes a case that these alone constitute God’s wrath.

Let me remind you that the 1st seal begins by saying, “And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer” (Revelation 6:2). This corresponds to what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse. “And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:4-5). The Antichrist rides a white horse deceiving the world as he conquers by peaceful means. Riding a white horse is a counterfeit of Jesus’ return riding a white horse as stated in Revelation 19:11. The early plagues begin as birth pangs and they intensify as the plagues progress like a woman in labor whose labor pains increase and become more severe. The last 3 ½ years of the seven-year period is called by

Jesus the Great Tribulation. It is the worst times the world has ever experienced (see Matthew 24:21 and Daniel 12:1).

In the 4th seal, one fourth of the world's population will die. With three of the trumpet judgments, another one third of the world will be killed (see Revelation 9:18). I will give you the number of deaths that will occur, but first, let me share a few terrible times the world has experienced before I reveal these end time numbers.

World War II was fought between 1939-1945 and was the deadliest conflict in history. It is estimated that 70-85 million people were killed. The world population in 1940 was approximately 2.3 billion people, so between 3.0%-3.7% of the world's population were killed during the war. That is a very large number of deaths worldwide.

The Bubonic Plague, also called the Black Death, killed an estimated 50 million people in Europe between 1346-1353 in the 14th century. This was about 60% of Europe's population. Some estimates put the worldwide death toll anywhere between 75-200 million. The world's population at that time was between 350-450 million and some estimate it may have been as high as 475 million. That means 15%-42% of the world's population of 475 million died from that plague. The percentage of deaths resulting from the Bubonic Plague are staggering.

These are very high numbers of people who have died during these times of crisis. However, these pale in comparison to the number of people who will die during the seven-year Tribulation. In 2020 the estimated world population is approximately 7.8 billion people. Let's round that up to 8 billion to make our calculations easier. The scripture says, "So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (Revelation 6:8). One fourth of the earth is 2 billion people. During the last three trumpet judgments it says, "By these three *plagues* a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths" (Revelation 9:18). Another third of the remaining 6 billion are killed by these plagues. This figure is 2 billion more for a total of 4 billion people dead from just these plagues or 50% of the population since the plagues began.

Those numbers are not the end. It's hard to tell how many more people will die from the other plagues. Consider this passage from a portion of scripture that is called the Isaiah Apocalypse, "³The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, For the LORD has spoken this word. ⁴The earth mourns *and* fades away, The world languishes *and* languishes fades away; The haughty people of the earth languish. ⁵The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. ⁶Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, **And few men are left**" (Isaiah 24:3-6, emphasis added). Take note of that last statement, "and few men are left."

I am not sharing these numbers to cause you fear, but to show how devastating the Great Tribulation is going to be. I do not believe I have ever heard a minister teach about the sheer number of deaths during the Tribulation. My point is, this period of time is the absolute worst the world has ever seen. It is unparalleled in history. Can anyone say this is not the wrath of God? Along with the plagues, the Antichrist will *force people* to take the mark of the beast, the scripture says, "**He causes all**, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, **to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads**, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16-17, emphasis added).

Any Christian who is alive during this time will have to face the prospect of receiving the mark of the beast. Whether the person misses a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, or is here because of a Post-Tribulation Rapture, this is a real issue. The Bible gives a dire warning for those who take the mark. The Bible says, “⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and **receives his mark** on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. **He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone** in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and **they have no rest day or night**, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11, emphasis added). God can surely provide a way of deliverance for those facing the mark, but one may have to give their life in this ultimate test of faith, rather than receiving the mark of the beast.

Would a loving God allow his people, His bride, to face the awful prospect of receiving the mark of the beast? It appears that it will be “forced” upon all people. Many Christians could succumb to receiving the mark, especially if their loved ones are threatened if they do not comply. Will God allow believers in Christ, who have obeyed the gospel, to go through a living hell on earth, and a possible horrible death? I know Christians have suffered immeasurably and have been martyred for their faith, but facing the mark of the beast is unprecedented. This is a case some could make for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. No matter what Rapture timing view you believe, every Christian needs to be built up in their faith and know what they will do if they ever face such a test of their faith. If you take anything away from this book, please take this seriously.

How are believers kept from God’s wrath?

There are two ways in which God’s people can be delivered from God’s wrath. They can be rescued from it by being taken out of this world, or they can be shielded or guarded from it while remaining in this world.

The Pre-Tribulation view is that the Church is rescued or taken out of this world. Many have called this the Secret Rapture or His Secret Coming because no one will see Jesus coming except believers; this is in contrast to the Second Coming when “every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). They use the scriptural accounts of Noah and Lot to support their position. Noah was lifted up in the ark from the waters of the flood that was sent as judgment on the world. The righteous were taken and the wicked left. Lot and his daughters also were delivered from destruction by the angels escorting them out of Sodom before God rained down fire and brimstone. God had warned Abraham that he was going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham knew that his nephew Lot was living in Sodom, so he asked God, “And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (Genesis 18:23). Later two angels came to lead them out and the scripture says, “So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.” (Genesis 19:17). The message portrayed throughout these passages is God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, but will make a way of escape.

Since the Tribulation will be a global event, it makes sense that God will rapture the Church out of this world. There is no explicit scripture that confirms the Rapture will take place as a separate event from the Second Coming. This view is determined by inference, or using scriptures to reason and arrive at the conclusion that the Church will be removed from the earth.

There is an often-misunderstood part of Jesus' Olivet Discourse. Jesus used the Days of Noah analogy to teach that the "flood" is a type of His coming. The "flood" is not a type of God's wrath during the Tribulation. When Jesus comes, the wicked will be taken and the righteous left. This is the opposite of what the Pre-Tribulation view says. Consider the passage below:

³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and **took them all away**, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. (Matthew 24:37-41, emphasis added).

What I want to point out are those being taken away to judgment are the wicked. Note that it says, "took them all away." We have to be true to the text and not stray away from the context. As I have said earlier, there just is no plain statement in the Olivet Discourse that points to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Again, that does not mean there can be other scriptural reasons by inference for coming to that conclusion.

If the church is not rescued or taken out of the world before the Tribulation, will believers be shielded or kept away from the wrath? Jesus when praying said this, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15). Paul also wrote, "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one" (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

God can miraculously protect His people in times of danger. For example, the three Hebrew children in the book of Daniel refused to serve other gods, "If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). God provided a miracle and delivered them, ... "and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them" (Daniel 3:27b). Another time God miraculously protected Daniel was when he was thrown in the lion's den. The Bible says, "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty" (Daniel 6:22).

During the time of the Exodus, God sent ten plagues on Egypt in order to force Pharaoh to let God's people go. The first nine of the plagues did not come upon the Hebrews. God protected them from the plagues. For example, for the fourth plague it says, "And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms *of flies* shall be there, in order that you may know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the land. I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be" (Exodus 8:22-23). God put a difference between His people and the Egyptians and divinely protected them while they were still in the land. Even though the tenth plague came on both the Hebrews and the Egyptians, God gave them deliverance through the blood of the Passover Lamb that was applied to their door posts. The scripture says, "Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike

the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13). This was a type of our salvation that we have through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Our salvation rests in our faith in Jesus Christ so that we are delivered from the wrath of God, the judgment of eternal hell.

God also parted the Red Sea and delivered up to 2 million people from Pharaoh’s army, “And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:13-14). The Lord can deliver a multitude of people and not just a few. Is it possible that this type of deliverance will occur for believers during the Tribulation?

In Ezekiel Chapters 8-9, the prophet has a vision where the Spirit takes him to see the wicked abominations being done in Jerusalem. Because of this, God says, “Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them” (Ezekiel 8:18). God’s wrath was sent in the form of the sword, the plague, and famine and no one was to be spared except for those God placed a mark on their forehead. The Bible says, “⁴ and the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” ⁵ To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶ Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom *is* the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple” (Ezekiel 9:4-6). In Revelation the 144,000 remnant of Israel are also sealed on their foreheads (Revelation 7:3-4; 9:4) and during the 5th Trumpet, the plague of locusts, the Bible says, “They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads” (Revelation 9:4). The righteous were sealed and protected from the wrath, but they were not removed from the land.

One final point to be made from the Post-Tribulation standpoint. Some who hold to this view say the Great Tribulation is not God’s wrath. When the Great Tribulation ends, then God’s wrath begins. The plagues poured out during the Great Tribulation is Satan’s wrath (Revelation 12:12). God’s wrath is characterized by the sun, moon, and stars going dark (Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:1-2, 10-11; 3:14-16; Zech. 1:14-16; Matthew 24:29). This is called the Day of the LORD and is described in the 6th Seal, the 7th Trumpet, and the 7th Bowl Judgments. The purpose for all the plagues poured out during the Tribulation is to get the world to repent. The Bible says, “The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues **still did not repent** of the work of their hands: they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. **Nor did they repent** of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts” (Revelation 9:20-21, emphasis added). Because the world could have repented, these plagues are not considered God’s wrath. God’s wrath is the time of punishment on the world for its evil. It is God taking action in executing His divine justice and there is no repentance at that point.

In Conclusion for the Chapter

We can see that the Wrath of God is His punishment on the wicked for sin. It is a time God takes action to execute judgment. When does God’s wrath begin? I have presented some evidence that suggests all the 21 plagues given in Revelation are a form of God’s wrath. There is also scriptural evidence, that some will argue, that the wrath of God does not begin until the Bowl

Judgments. We have to weigh the evidence to make a determination of where we stand. Finally, will a Secret Rapture rescue believers out of this world before God's wrath is poured out, or will God put a difference between the righteous and the unrighteous while God's people are still in this world? The Tribulation is a global event, and it would seem that with death and destruction all around, the Church would be removed. On the other hand, God can shield believers from the wrath and divinely protect them from harm. Some state that God's wrath is poured out after the Tribulation. Jesus raptures the saints at His Second Coming and they return to the earth with Him. You will have to decide which evidence weights the most.

CHAPTER 6 - What is the Day of the Lord?

In order to place the timing of the Rapture, it is important to have an understanding of the concept of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord can be defined as a day of God's wrath when He executes vengeance on His enemies. It is when God punishes the world for its rejection of Christ and its treatment of Israel. God's anger eventually leads Him to taking action in executing punishment. The Day of the Lord can also be a time of blessing and salvation where He fulfills promises made to His people. Other names associated with the Day of the Lord in the New Testament are a day of wrath, a day of visitation, the day of God, and the Great Day of God Almighty. There are times when it is simply referred to as "that day."

There are passages in the Old Testament which describe historical judgments that have been fulfilled and future judgments where God's wrath is poured out on Israel and an unbelieving world. So, there is both a near and a far element to the Day of the Lord. For the purposes of our examination of the Rapture, we will be considering the future Day of the Lord which culminates in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The following are some scriptures that describe the Day of the Lord.

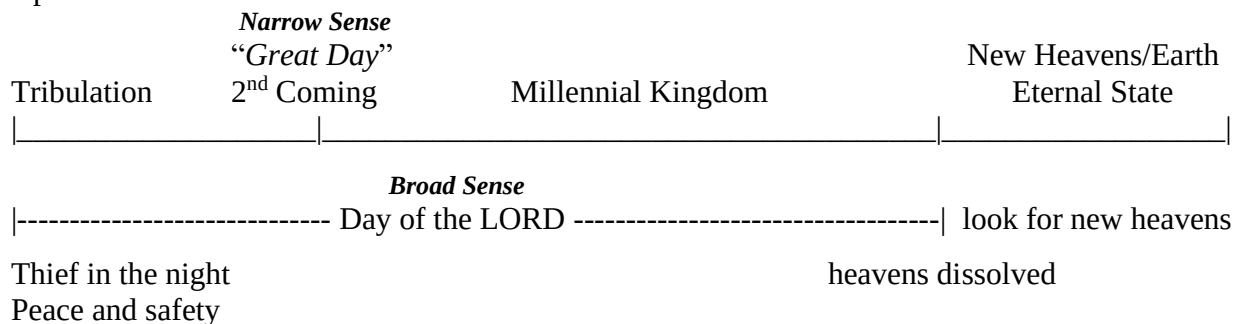
- Shall come upon the proud and lofty (Isa. 2:12)
- It will come as a destruction from the Almighty (Isa. 13:6; Joel 1:15)
- Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger (Isa. 13:9)
- A day of vengeance (Isa. 34:8; Jer. 46:10)
- It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles (Eze. 30:3)
- Is great and very terrible (Joel 2:11)
- The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20)
- It will be darkness and not light (Amos 5:20)
- Comes as a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10)
- Heavens pass away ... elements will melt ... earth burned up (2 Pet 3:10)

Some Bible scholars see the Day of the Lord as occurring on a single day. It is characterized by great cataclysmic signs at Christ's Second Coming. A passage often cited is, "Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine" (Isaiah 13:9-10). Those who profess that the Day of the LORD is a single day also point to the Olivet Discourse as evidence of their view where Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matthew 24:29). The Second Coming of Christ, in their view, fulfills the prophecy of the Day of the Lord at that moment in time. The evidence of cosmic disturbances signifies the coming of the wrath of God.

The Day of the Lord can also be viewed as occurring over a period of time. The Apostle Peter sheds light on this by saying, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:10-13). Peter describes the Day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night, then speaks of the heavens passing away by being burned up at which time God creates the new heavens and a new earth (see Revelation 21:1; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). If the Day of the Lord includes Christ’s glorious coming (see Titus 2:13), then it also includes the millennium up to the time God creates the new heavens and new earth. This means that the Day of the Lord is at least one thousand years long. It can also be defined as a period of time. We may think of the sabbath as being the Lord’s Day. The Kingdom Age is the seventh millennium described in the Bible. You could say that Biblical history covers 7,000 years and that the thousand-year Kingdom Age is a sabbath. This can be seen where the Bible says, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). The millennium, is an age of sabbath day rest where even Satan is bound for a thousand years where he cannot do his work, which is to steal, kill, and destroy (see John 10:10).

The Apostle Paul gives us some more information regarding the Day of the Lord that it is a period of time. He writes, “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “*Peace and safety!*” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief” (Thess. 5:1-4, emphasis added). At Christ’s Second Coming, the earth will be reeling under the Great Tribulation and at least half the world’s population will be killed from war, famine, and pestilence. How will the world be saying they have “peace and safety?” Paul is giving us a clue that the Day of the Lord begins at a time when the world thinks they have achieved peace and safety. That may occur after the covenant is confirmed (see Daniel 9:27) when the Antichrist will broker a peace agreement between Israel and its Arabs neighbors. This begins the 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy. This peace is short lived since war comes with the 2nd Seal judgment. This confirms the Day of the Lord also represents a period of time.

The following timeline illustrates that the Day of the Lord is a moment in time as well as a period of time.



It needs to be pointed out that the Day of the Lord begins unexpectedly as indicated by the thief in the night analogy at a time when people are saying peace and safety. It begins with a time of judgment and is followed by a time of great blessing and fulfillment. We can conclude that the Day of the Lord can be spoken of in a *broad sense* or over a period of time, and in a *narrow sense*, as occurring at a moment in time on a single day.

The purpose for this chapter is to get us to this next point. The reason why it is important to gain this understanding of the timeframes associated with the Day of the Lord, is to help interpret the following passage. “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thess. 2:1-4 NASB).

This is a major proof text for the Post-Tribulation Rapture. When defining the future Day of the Lord as occurring on one day, this passage plainly can be interpreted as such:

1. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him is ONE event in verse 1. The *gathering together* is not a separate rapture event.
2. The phrase “*it will*” is speaking of the Day of the Lord in verse 3 (*narrow sense*).
3. The Day of the Lord cannot come until the apostasy (falling away) comes first and then the *man of lawlessness/sin* (the Antichrist) is revealed by committing the abomination of desolation.
4. The Antichrist commits the abomination of desolation in verse 4.

Those in Thessalonica were worried that they missed the Day of the Lord. Paul is reassuring them that they had not because the man of sin had not been revealed. According to the Post-Tribulation view, the Church will see the Antichrist. When interpreting the Day of the Lord as a single day, this meaning becomes very clear.

The Post-Tribulation view will also refer to the angels “gathering His elect” in Matthew 24:31. The “gathering” being done is at Christ’s Second Coming, not a Rapture event occurring seven years prior. Since they see the “elect” as the Church (refer to Chapter 2), the “gathering together” statement by Paul (in 2 Thess. 2:2) is obviously referring to the Second Coming.

During Jesus’ earthly ministry He speaks about raising, or resurrecting, believers at the *last day*. This is similar to the term, *it will/that day* Paul used referring to the actual appearing of the Lord. Consider what Jesus says, “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should **raise it up at the last day**. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and **I will raise him up at the last day**” (John 6:39-40, emphasis added). Again, Jesus said when speaking about the eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood (when referring to being in covenant with Him as symbolized by taking communion), ... “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and **I will raise him up at the last day**” (John 6:53-54, emphasis added). These are plain statements made by Jesus that places the resurrection at the time of His coming at the Last Day, not sometime prior to that. One may suggest that Jesus could be speaking of the Last Day in the *broad sense*, that it is a period of time and not a moment

in time. We will need to look to the context of these passages to determine if that is the case, which seems to be a difficult assumption to make based on Jesus' explicit statement.

The Pre-Tribulation view must provide an alternative interpretation of this proof text (2 Thess. 2:1-4) in order to validate their view. A case can be made for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture using the broad sense of the Day of the Lord. When defining the Day of the Lord as occurring over a period of time, this passage can be interpreted as follows:

1. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him are TWO events in verse 1. The coming is a reference to the Second Coming and the gathering together is speaking of the Rapture.
2. The phrase "it will" is speaking of the Day of the Lord as the day Christ returns (*narrow sense*), but with the understanding that the Day of the Lord (*broad sense*) begins when people say "peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:3) signaling the start of God's wrath.
3. The Day of the Lord cannot come until the apostasy (falling away) comes first and then the *man of lawlessness/sin* (the Antichrist) is revealed when he confirms the covenant (Daniel 9:27).
4. The Antichrist commits the abomination of desolation in verse 4.
5. The first three points are different. In order to separate the coming and gathering together into two events, one needs to understand the Day of the Lord in the *broad sense*.

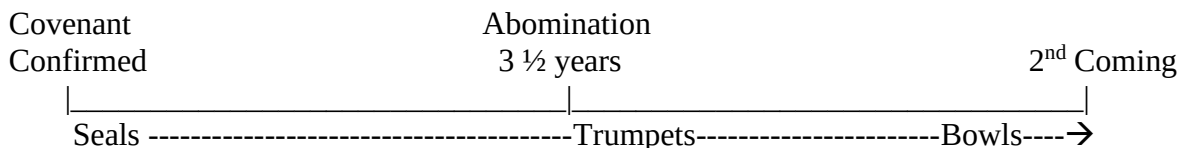
Paul is speaking of "it will" in the context of the Great Day of God Almighty (see Rev. 16:14), or the actual appearing of Jesus Christ on the day of His Second Coming. This is the climax of all the events that have been happening during the Tribulation. The "gathering together" can be inferred as being the Rapture when considering what Paul said about the time people say "peace and safety" (see 1 Thess. 5:1-4 quoted above). The phrase "peace and safety" puts the Day of the Lord in the *broad sense* (occurring over a period of time). In this context, the believers in Thessalonica can rest assured that they did not miss the Rapture because they have not been caught away since the wrath of God has not begun. In the Pre-Tribulation view, the gathering together is understood to be a separate event. In the broad sense, the Day of the Lord is the beginning of the wrath of God. It is like comparing the Day of the Lord to a woman in labor, it begins as birth pangs and grows more intense as the hard labor pains come. The Revelation plagues grow more severe as time passes culminating in the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's teaching, according to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view, shows that the Thessalonians understood there to be two events, the "coming" and the "gathering together" (2 Thess. 2:1) concerning Christ's Second Coming.

Additional Details of the Day of the Lord / Last Day / That Day

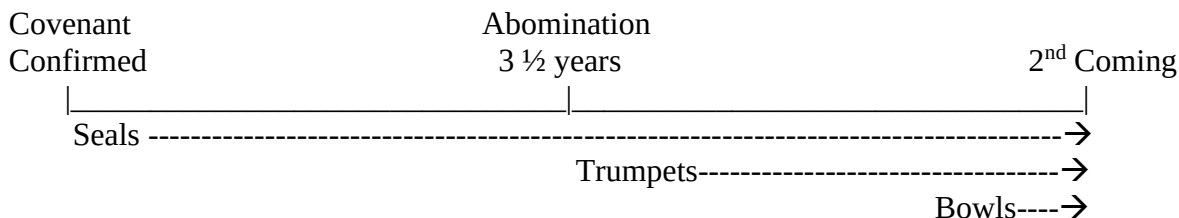
The actual day of Jesus' appearing at His Second Coming is, without question, a very significant event. I have provided explanations that the Day of the Lord can be thought of in terms of a period of time and a moment in time. I want to provide some passages that speak of that great day of His appearing so you can get the impact of that event. These explicit statements may have a bearing on how you weigh the evidence concerning the Day of the Lord and how the Rapture is impacted by it. The plagues poured out during the Tribulation may not be sequential, but overlapping. This means that some of the seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath could be occurring

at the same time. The following timeline of the seven-year period is given to illustrate how the plagues could be sequential or overlapping.

The Plagues occur consecutively:



The Plagues overlap:



The overlapping of the plagues is apparent when you consider the 6th Seal, the 7th Trumpet, and the 7th Bowl of Wrath. They all appear to be describing the same event, namely, the Day of the Lord when Jesus literally appears on that single day. These plagues all mention the sun, moon, and stars being darkened, the heavens and earth being shaken, a great earthquake, and the coming of God’s wrath. I have provided some of these scriptures previously, but I am putting these passages together to show that this event has been prophesied throughout the Bible. Consider the following:

6th Seal

¹²I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a **great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.** ¹³And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. ¹⁴Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. (Rev. 6:12-14, emphasis added).

¹⁷For **the great day of His wrath has come**, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:17, emphasis added).

7th Trumpet

¹⁵Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. ¹⁸The nations were angry, and **Your wrath has come**, And the time of the dead, that they should

be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth. ¹⁹ Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were **lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.** (Revelation 11:15-19, emphasis added).

7th Bowl of Wrath

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, **for in them the wrath of God is complete.** (Rev. 15:1, emphasis added).

¹⁷ Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” ¹⁸ And there were **noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake,** such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth (Rev. 16:17-18, emphasis added).

Other Scriptures concerning the Day of the LORD:

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days **the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.** ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:29-31, emphasis added).

²⁵ “And there will be **signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars;** and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, **for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.** ²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21:25-27, emphasis added).

¹⁰ The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; **The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness.** ¹¹ The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong *is the One* who executes His word. For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; Who can endure it? (Joel 2:10-11, emphasis added).

¹⁵ **The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness.** ¹⁶ The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; **The heavens and earth will shake;** But the LORD will be a shelter for

His people, And the strength of the children of Israel (Joel 3:15-16, emphasis added).

⁹ Behold, the **day of the LORD** comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. ¹⁰ **For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.** ¹¹ “I will punish the world for *its* evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. ¹² I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. ¹³ Therefore **I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts** And in the day of His fierce anger (Isaiah 13:9-13, emphasis added).

As you can see, these passages are all in agreement in describing the Day of the LORD.

Conclusions from the Chapter

Only a Pre-Tribulation Rapture satisfies the requirement that the Day of the Lord comes as a “thief in the night” when they are saying “peace and safety.” This recognizes the *broad sense* of the Day of the Lord. The seven-year Tribulation period begins simultaneously with the beginning of the Day of the Lord as God’s wrath is systematically unleashed over a period of time, coming to a climax on the actual day of His return to the earth. This conclusion is based on reasoning by linking scriptures together.

The Post-Tribulation Rapture is plainly evident by the proof text of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 and Matthew 24:31. The wrath of God is not poured out until the Bowls of Wrath; thus, the Day of the Lord is seen as a single day event. This single day event appears to be confirmed by Jesus when saying He will raise us up at the Last Day. This conclusion is arrived at by explicit statements of scripture.

Each of these conclusions have creditability. What needs to be determined is which view does the weight of evidence favor.

CHAPTER 7 - What is the Last Trumpet?

The trumpet is used for various purposes in the Bible. Trumpets were used for the calling of the assembly together and for the sounding of an alarm. The trumpets were also blown for different occasions such as on the appointed feast days, at the beginning of each month on the new moon, times of war, over various burnt and peace offerings, and at the coronation of a king. The common trumpet blown at these occasions was known as the “shofar,” or “ram’s horn.” Some have even suggested that the shofar blast is representative of the voice of God. Consider what the Apostle John writes, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,” (Revelation 1:10) and again, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1). As we can see, the voice of Jesus was like that of a trumpet. We are now going to address the question of, what is the last trumpet?

The two main passages that speak of the Rapture, both make a reference to a trumpet. They are given below for your reference.

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, emphasis added).

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the **trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16-17, emphasis added).

The scripture plainly states that we will be changed “at the last trumpet.” The question then becomes, what is the last trumpet? Each Rapture timing view has their own interpretation of what trumpet Paul is speaking about. We will now examine the scriptures in order to weigh the evidence in the identification of the last trumpet.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture Explanation

Let me start by saying what the last trumpet is not. It is not the last trumpet judgment of the book of Revelation (see Revelation 11:15-19). We will take a closer look at that interpretation when we examine the Post-Tribulation view of the last trumpet. The Pre-Tribulation view is that the last trumpet in Revelation is a trumpet of judgment and the trumpet at the Rapture is the trumpet of God. The angel is blowing the 7th trumpet in the book of Revelation, but God is blowing the

trumpet at the Rapture. Since Jesus' voice is likened to a trumpet, the trumpet of God could be another way of saying that Jesus calls the dead in Christ and those who are alive to be caught up with Him in the clouds. It is similar to when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead when He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43b). If Jesus did not call Lazarus by name, all the dead may have raised. There will be a time when Jesus does call the dead as He said, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29). In fact there will be two resurrections. The first resurrection is of the righteous dead and the second, occurring one thousand years later (see Revelation 20:5-6), will be of the unrighteous dead. It is called the second death.

There is a problem with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view concerning the last trumpet. How can the last trumpet be blown before the Tribulation begins and be "last" when there are the seven trumpets sounded in Revelation 8-11, a later trumpet sounded in Matthew 24:31, and trumpets used at the Feast of Tabernacles during the Millennium (see Zechariah 14:16-19)? Paul obviously did not mean the "last trumpet" would be the absolute final trumpet blast with no more after it. It is commonly agreed that both 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 are speaking of the Rapture, and both passages mention a trumpet. Paul uses the term "last trumpet" in one passage and the "trumpet of God" in the other. We need to determine what Paul meant by the word "last." It apparently does not mean the final trumpet ever blown, but the final trumpet of its kind. Another issue is if Paul were speaking of the last trumpet of Revelation, the book of Revelation would not be written for another several decades, so how would the Corinthian church even know what he was talking about? It would not make sense for Paul to refer in his epistle to prophecies not yet uttered in a book not yet written. To provide an explanation for the Pre-Tribulation problem of the last trumpet, three possible answers will be presented.

The first possible answer can be found when analyzing 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 that speaks of the resurrection of the dead and the defeat of death. The chapter mentions three last things; the last enemy (v. 26), the last Adam (v. 45), and the last trumpet (v. 52). The chapter also is full of contrasts; perishable and imperishable body (v. 42 & 53), a natural body and a spiritual body (v. 44), image of the earthly and image of the heavenly (v. 49), and mortality putting on immortality (v. 53). The emphasis is that death came first and then, resurrection from the dead. The first Adam brought death, but the last Adam brought victory over death by resurrection of the dead. The scripture also says that death came by sin (see Romans 5:12-19) and the strength of sin is the Law (1 Cor. 15:56) that God gave on Mount Sinai. It is the Law that condemns us, being called in scripture the ministry of death (2 Corinthians 3:7-9). As the scripture says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The penalty for breaking the Law is death, but in contrast to that, eternal life is found in Jesus Christ.

In considering Paul's use of contrasts, we have to ask the question. If there is a last trumpet and it is called the trumpet of God, what was the first trumpet of God? The first use of the word trumpet in the Bible is found in Exodus Chapter 19 where God gave the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. God used the sounding of the trumpet to assemble His people together. The Bible says, "Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain" (Exodus 19:16-17). As we can see, the first trumpet of God was used **to call the people together** to give them the Mosaic Law. It had a relationship to human death since it was later termed the ministry of death in the New Testament.

What is the contrast of the ministry of death? At the “last trumpet,” another trumpet of God will be sounded that will **assemble the people to Christ** to begin a resurrected life of change. This mortal body will put on immortality. It will have an opposite effect of the first trumpet of God. It is the last trumpet of its kind, not the last trumpet that will ever be sounded. The last trumpet will herald the condemnation of death and the beginning of resurrection and life. This theme fits the message of 1 Corinthians 15.

The events on Mount Sinai are a type of what occurs at the last trumpet. The scripture says, “And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then **the LORD came down** upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and **Moses went up**” (Exodus 19:19-20, emphasis added). Notice it says, “the LORD came down” and “Moses went up.” This is a picture of what takes place at the Rapture. The Lord descends from Heaven and believers are caught up to meet Him in the air.

A second possible meaning of the term “last trumpet,” relates to the military use of trumpets. In ancient times, the Jews, Greeks, and the Romans all utilized trumpets for giving signals and commands. There were signals to assemble the troops, prepare for battle, to advance, and to return from battle. In the ancient world, they all consistently had a last trumpet. As they had a first battle trumpet that called the soldiers to go fight, in contrast, the last trumpet signaled the end of the battle, to reassemble and return home. The Jews even called their last warfare trumpet, “the Gathering of God.”

Paul used the analogy of warfare trumpet where he said, “For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle” (1 Corinthians 14:8)? It is very possible he was thinking of the battle trumpet when he used the term “last trumpet.” Scripture speaks of spiritual warfare. There are spiritual weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4) and spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-18). The church is engaged in a war with Satan and is to resist him in the faith (1 Peter 5:8-9). A number of other scriptures can be referenced that speak of warfare. Just as the trumpet of battle signals the soldiers to fight, the last battle trumpet signals the end of the believer’s warfare with Satan and to reassemble with Christ in the air and go to their heavenly home.

A third possible answer in explaining the “last trumpet” is how God fulfills elements of His plan of redemption through the Jewish Feasts or Festivals. There are seven feasts given by God to the Jewish people that they are to keep every year. They are Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Feast of Weeks/Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Booths. A description of them is given in Leviticus Chapter 23. They are sacred times that enable the people to focus on the different parts of God’s plan. They are *historic*, because they commemorate an event God had done for them in the past. The feasts are also *prophetic* because they look forward to an event God is going to perform in the future.

The Jewish feast days are also called “holy convocations.” The Bible says, “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, these *are* My feasts’” (Leviticus 23:1-2). Let’s look at the definition of the Hebrew words from where we get our English words “feast” and “holy convocations.”

- Feast (Mow’ed) – appointed time, a fixed time or season, an assembly.
- Holy Convocation (Miqra’) – something called out, a public meeting, also a rehearsal.

In looking at the prophetic meaning when joining these terms, the implication is that God has an APPOINTMENT to perform something with Israel on these dates. It is also implied that these festivals are times Israel REHEARSE various aspects of God's plan. For example, we know that Jesus was crucified on the preparation day of the Passover. As Jesus was dying on the cross, thousands of Jewish families were slaying their Passover lamb to be eaten at the Passover meal. In the slaying of the Passover lamb for the meal, they were rehearsing, or re-enacting the future prophetic event of Jesus dying as the Passover Lamb for their sins. This is beautiful! The first four of the feasts have been prophetically fulfilled at Christ's first coming. It can be expected that the last three feasts will be fulfilled at Christ's second coming. All this was said to get to the next point.

The Pre-Tribulation view believes that the Rapture may occur in connection with the Feast of Trumpets, also called by its Jewish name, Rosh Hashanah. It is the next feast out of the seven that is to find its fulfillment. The very fact that it is called the Feast of Trumpets and we are seeking to identify what is the "last trumpet" is significant. The Lord's command to Moses was, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation" (Leviticus 23:24).

A lot can be said about how Jewish people celebrate Rosh Hashanah, but we are going to focus on the blowing of the trumpets, or in this case, the blowing of the shofar, and the actual beginning of the feast day. One of the most important observances of the holiday is the sounding of the shofar in the synagogue.

The Feast of Trumpets, or Rosh Hashanah, is celebrated over the course of two days and is called "the long day." Since the time of the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD, the feast is celebrated over two days due to the difficulty of determining the date of the new moon. The Jewish day does not begin at midnight, it begins at sundown and the Jewish month begins on the day and hour that the new crescent moon is observed because they use a lunar calendar. On Rosh Hashanah, the shofar is blown each day and a total of 100 notes are sounded. Four different types of shofar notes are sounded:

- *Teki'ah* (long sound) Numbers 10:3;
- *Shevarim* (3 broken sounds) Numbers 10:5;
- *Teru'ah* (9 short sounds) Numbers 10:9;
- *Teki'ah Gedolah* (very long sound) Exodus 19:16,19; **the Last Trumpet**

The mystery aspect of Rosh Hashanah is represented by the uncertain timing of the appearance of the new moon. The new month, and Rosh Hashanah cannot begin until the priest sees the first sliver of the crescent moon in Jerusalem. If it is not seen, it has to be viewed the next evening to officially begin the feast. Another name for Rosh Hashanah is Yom HaKeseh, "The Day of the Hiding" or "the Hidden Day." It is the Jewish feast of "*not knowing the day and hour*" since it is not known the day or hour the new moon will be spotted immediately after sunset.

When Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36), it was a Jewish idiom for Rosh Hashanah. An "idiom" is an expression that cannot be understood from the meaning of its separate words, but that it has a meaning of its own (i.e., "kicked the bucket" means the person died). Since Rosh Hashanah was understood to be the hidden day, this statement by Jesus is actually an idiom for Rosh Hashanah.

In putting all this together, the possible explanation for what is the “last trumpet” is this. The “last trumpet” is the last blast of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets. No one knows the day or hour (of the Rapture) because the uncertainty of the observance of the crescent moon on Rosh Hashanah.

To summarize what has been said, three possible explanations for the meaning of the term “last trumpet” were given for the Pre-Tribulation view. Their argument is that the trumpet of God is not the last trumpet of Revelation. The last trumpet may refer to (1) the assembling of believers to resurrection life, in contrast to the first trumpet of God bringing in the ministry of death, (2) the last battle trumpet calling the troops home, or (3) the last shofar blast on Rosh Hashanah.

Post-Tribulation Rapture Explanation

According to the Post-Tribulation view, the last trumpet is the seventh trumpet judgment in the book of Revelation. The scripture says,

“¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, **“The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ*, and He shall reign forever and ever!”** ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. ¹⁸ The nations were angry, and **Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,** And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth. ¹⁹ Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail “(Revelation 11:15-19, emphasis added).

This passage is very explicit. The seventh trumpet sounded by the angel is the last trumpet judgment. Consider what takes place at this time. The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord. At the Second Coming, Jesus establishes His kingdom on earth, the Millennial Kingdom and the earthly kingdoms are now the Lord’s. Notice that the scripture also says that His wrath has come. The next set of plagues are called the Bowls of Wrath. The wrath of God, according to the Post-Tribulation view, comes immediately after the Tribulation. The church will be Raptured as He comes by meeting Him in the air and then returns with Him as He fights the Battle of Armageddon.

The Bowls of Wrath could begin near the end of the Great Tribulation with the seventh trumpet sounding just after the tribulation of those days. This would mean God’s wrath would begin while the church is still on the earth. If this is the case, believers would be shielded or guarded from God’s wrath as during the plagues of Egypt in the book of Exodus. The scripture says, “And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of *flies* shall be there, in order that you may know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the land. **I will make a difference between My people and your people.** Tomorrow this sign shall be” (Exodus 8:22-23, emphasis added). The Bible says God made a difference between His people and

the Egyptians. Some other Bible versions, instead of using the word “difference,” use words like “division” or “distinction.” The idea is God will protect them from the plague.

Paul reveals the *mystery* that we will be changed at the last trumpet. John confirms this where he writes, “but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:7). Notice what it says, at the seventh trumpet, also called the last trumpet, the *mystery* of God (the resurrection of the saints) will be finished. The use of the word *mystery* connects these two passages and confirms that the seventh trumpet of Revelation is the last trumpet as spoken of by Paul.

Paul also goes on to say, “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54). This is quoting Isaiah 25:8 and is saying this prophecy is fulfilled with the Rapture, or in other words, the resurrection, and they will never die any more. What has been swallowed up at Christ’s coming is physical death. Spiritual death is swallowed up at one’s conversion when they are born again. The end result is that physical death, spiritual, death, or eternal death (the lake of fire), will have no power over God’s people.

In conclusion, the Post-Tribulation Rapture position states the “last trumpet” is the seventh trumpet blown in Revelation 11:15. They maintain that this is plainly stated in scripture.

CHAPTER 8 – Can Jesus come at any moment?

The next question every Christian needs to answer in formulating their belief on the timing of the Rapture is this. Can Jesus come at any moment? A very important teaching associated with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view is the Doctrine of Imminency, or the Doctrine of Imminent Return. The concept of an imminent return of Jesus Christ is a significant inference for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. “Imminent” can be defined as something about to happen, ready to take place, happening soon, or likely to occur at any moment. It can happen within a short period of time, but it does not have to happen at that time. There are truly no conditions attached to the event in order for it to take place.

When applying these definitions to the Rapture, it means that Jesus can come at any time and that there are no events or signs that have to take place before He comes. If something has to happen, or a certain amount of time must pass before He comes for the Rapture, then His coming is not imminent. When you consider the Second Coming of Christ, there are a number of signs that are to occur first before He returns. When Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3b), He gives them a number of signs that must take place first. This is Christ’s teaching that is called the Olivet Discourse. Since the Post-Tribulation view believes the Rapture and the Second Coming are one single event, they consider the Doctrine of Imminency as a false teaching.

Renald Showers wrote, “A number of early church leaders and other Christians between the time of the apostles and the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) believed in the imminent coming of Christ. The imminent return of Christ ceased to be of any influence from 325 A.D. until the time of the reformation. The Protestant Reformation of the 1500s revived the early church’s belief in the imminent coming of Christ and has continued up to the present.”

You may hear many Christians say that Jesus is *coming soon*. They base this comment on what they are seeing in the news. If they believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, they are actually contradicting the doctrine of imminency. If current events indicate that the Rapture has to happen soon, then it cannot be imminent, because it is assigning a time element to it. By using the word “soon,” it is implying that it has to take place in the near future and that would make the Rapture not imminent. Applying a time element to it takes away the concept of imminency because it could not happen at any moment. If the Rapture is truly imminent, then it could have happened in the first century as much as it could today. Of course, we are two thousand years down the road and we know it is nearer now than it was then.

As we weigh the scriptural evidence, we have to determine if the Bible does indeed teach Christ’s return is imminent. The following are some scriptures used in supporting the Doctrine of Imminent Return.

- “So that you come short in no gift, **eagerly waiting** for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:7, emphasis added).
- “For our citizenship is in heaven. From which we also **eagerly wait** for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20, emphasis added).

- “Let your gentleness be known to all men. **The Lord is at hand**” (Phil. 4:5, emphasis added).
- “**Looking for** the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ “(Titus 2:13, emphasis added).
- Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, **waiting patiently** for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for **the coming of the Lord is at hand**. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is **standing at the door**” (James 5:7-9, emphasis added)!

In the scriptures given, take notice of the expressions; eagerly and patiently waiting, looking for, the Lord is at hand, and standing at the door. They all carry the meaning of imminence. Many Bible scholars over the centuries have had an expectancy that the Lord could come at any moment. It may not be for a while, but it indeed can happen at any moment. Even Jesus makes this statement at the end of the Bible, “He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly” (Revelation 22:20). This statement is even made in the letter to the Philadelphia Church in Revelation 3:11. The implication that He is coming quickly sends the message that He can come at any moment. If His coming is “quick,” it means His coming will be speedily or without delay. Even though it has been two thousand years, the urgency of what Jesus said is still true.

What is quick for God will not always seem quick to us. The scripture says, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). We know God is eternal, He has no beginning or end, is always the same, His life is timeless. Even though God exists outside of time, He also works within time. We can see that in the precision in which He gave the feasts of the Lord and how they are to be celebrated on specific days during the year. He is an on-time God. He is never early or late; especially when it comes to the end-time events. There are very specific things that will happen and within an established timeframe. The Bible says, “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). The timing of God we see in the scriptures does not apply to the Doctrine of Imminent Return since there is nothing that must happen before Christ comes at the Rapture. The Pre-Tribulation view sees the timing of the end-time prophetic events as referring to the Second Coming and not the Rapture of the Church. That is considered a separate event.

One of the arguments of the Post-Tribulation view against imminency states; when you have a passage that speaks of Jesus’ coming being unexpected, and if there is any context of time given, it explicitly refers to Jesus’s coming at the end of the age. An example in scripture says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). Even though Jesus will come as a “thief in the night” (unexpectedly), it mentions the earth being burned up which definitely is not referring to a time before the Tribulation. They stand by their view that imminency is an unbiblical concept.

The Pre-Tribulation position is the only one that satisfies the claim that Jesus’ coming at the Rapture is imminent. The other Rapture views, Mid-Tribulation, Pre-Wrath, and Post-

Tribulation teach that Christ's return is dependent on certain events happening, and that a certain period of time must pass. This destroys the element of the imminent return of Christ for the church.

There are two other pieces of evidence that I want to share that support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. They are the Jewish Wedding Custom and the Days of Noah analogy which support the Doctrine of Imminence.

The Jewish Wedding Custom

The Jewish wedding custom provides a vivid picture of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture and Christ's imminent return. This can be classified as circumstantial evidence because the events that take place in a Jewish wedding mirror Christ's relationship with the Church and how He will come for His bride at the Rapture. This supports the claim that the Rapture is a separate event from the Second Coming.

Scripture calls the Church the Bride (Ephesians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3). The symbolism is used by God in showing Christ's relationship to the Church. In looking at the various steps of the ancient Jewish wedding custom, one can see this process is being carried out with the Church.

The first step in the Jewish marriage is the betrothal, or ketubah. This was the establishment of the marriage covenant. The bridegroom took the initiative by leaving his father's house and traveling to the prospective bride's home and negotiated a price (mohar) that he would pay for her. When this was paid, the marriage covenant was established and the two were regarded as husband and wife even though the marriage was not consummated at that point. Jesus established this marriage covenant with the Church by paying the price of shedding His own blood as payment (Luke 22:20; Hebrew 13:20) and guaranteed (promised) that He will come for her by sealing her with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). From this point on, the bride was set apart, or consecrated exclusively for the groom just as the Church is set apart for Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 10:10; 13:12). As a symbol of their covenant relationship, the couple would drink a cup of wine over which their betrothal had been pronounced. Jesus established the new covenant when He celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). When we take communion today, it serves as a symbol of our covenant relationship with Christ.

After the marriage covenant was established, the bridegroom would return home to his father to begin preparations of the bridal chamber (huppah). They would be separated for about 12 months and during this time the bride would be gathering together her trousseau and prepare for married life. The groom was busy with the preparations of where they will live in his father's house. Jesus followed this same blueprint as He left this world to go prepare a place for the Church (Bride) at His Father's house (John 14:2) after He established the new covenant and rose from the dead. Christ has been separated from His Bride for nearly 2,000 years as He has been preparing a place for us (John 6:62; 20:17).

No one knew the time when the groom would come for his bride. Only the father knew when it was time. This will also be the case when Jesus comes again (Matthew 24:36). When it was time for the groom to come, it would usually be at night where his best man and escorts would come in a torch-light procession to the bride's home. Even though the bride was preparing for his coming, she did not know when he was coming (Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 3:2-3). The groom's arrival was announced by a shout in the distance which forewarned her it was time. This is the

same course of events that is seen at the Rapture as Christ's arrival is preceded by the shout (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The bride and the groom, along with the rest of the wedding party returns to the groom's father's house just as the Church will return with Christ to His Father's house (1 Thessalonians 4:17; John 14:2-3). At their arrival, the bride and groom go to the bridal chamber (huppah) alone where the marriage is consummated. The bride at this point was wearing a veil so that no one could see her face. The groom would come out and announce that the wedding was consummated and he entered back into the chamber for seven days. The wedding guests who had already arrived, then celebrated the wedding feast for the next seven days. At the end of the seven days the groom would bring out his bride unveiled so everyone could see her. Jesus and His Bride will experience spiritual union in Heaven consummating their relationship that was covenanted earlier on the earth. When Jesus returns at the conclusion of the seven-year Tribulation, all who are alive on the earth will see who the true Bride/Church is (Colossians 3:4, Jude 14).

Each step of the Jewish marriage custom has definite parallels to Christ's relationship with the Church. The seven-day wedding feast is a type of the marriage supper of the Lamb which is taking place in Heaven while the seven-year Tribulation is occurring on the earth (Revelation 19:7-10). The wedding guests who are already at the marriage feast before the groom and the bride arrive are the Old Testament saints assembled in Heaven who will be resurrected later at Christ Second Coming (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:4).

After the bridegroom has departed to go and prepare a place for his bride, his return to get his bride is imminent. He could come at any time. The Jewish wedding custom goes along very well with the Doctrine of Imminence.

The Jewish marriage custom is a very strong inference for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

As the Days of Noah

Many think this verse from the Olivet Discourse is speaking of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36)." Jesus had been giving all the signs that will lead up to His Second Coming. We know from the book of Daniel, the exact number of days that will pass from the Abomination of Desolation to the coming of the Lord. Even though the timing of the Second Coming can be determined once the Abomination of Desolation takes place, yet Jesus says no one will know the day of His coming. If the day of the Second Coming can be known once a certain event takes place, then Jesus must be speaking of "another day" (the Rapture) of which no one knows the day. Is it possible that the Rapture is hidden in this statement? Could Jesus be referring to two events that are connected with His coming?

Jesus goes on to say that His coming will be like the days of Noah. He is giving us the blueprint for His coming. The Bible says, "³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two *women* will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would

come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:37-44).

In Noah’s time, the flood took the world by surprise. The coming of the flood was unexpected even though Noah had warned them it was coming. We have no explicit statement in scripture that says Noah warned the people in his day, but the Bible does say that God, “... did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5). We know at the time of Christ’s return many will be preaching to a lost world and warning them of the judgment to come. In turn, we can assume that Noah, called a preacher of righteousness, would have warned the world of the coming flood, but no one paid any attention.

In studying these verses, we can plainly see that the Second Coming, not the Rapture, is represented by the flood. The unbelievers were taken away by the flood and Noah and his family were left. This is opposite of what is taught about the Rapture where the believers are taken and the unbelievers are left. How can the Rapture be seen in this passage? Let me try and give an explanation.

In order to understand what happened during the days of Noah, we need to go back to Genesis chapters 6-9 to see the biblical account of the flood. When the time was right, God tells Noah to enter the ark (Genesis 7:1) and he begins the process of bringing the animals into the ark. God gives these instructions to Noah seven days before the rain came. The scripture says, “For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made” (Genesis 7:4). The Bible says, “And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth” (Genesis 7:10). At the time Noah began loading the animals onto the ark, it was a sign to the world that the flood was coming and was very close at hand. Seven days after God instructed Noah to enter the ark, the flood came. This follows the blueprint of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Jesus gives the signs of His coming. If these signs begin at the start of the seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy (Daniel 9:27), it will be seven years until the Second Coming. If one day represents one year, then you can see how the seven days it took Noah to load the ark is a type of the seven-year Tribulation. The ark was a place of safety just as Jesus is our place of safety.

There are no signs given that indicate it was time for Noah to enter the ark. This is representative of the imminent return of Christ. Noah did not know the day or hour in which God would tell him to enter the ark. Once God gave him the command, He knew the rain would begin in seven days just as God said. Once the sign of entering the ark occurred, the day that the flood would begin was known. It was known to Noah and his family, but not to the unbelieving world.

One observation I have to make is, even though Noah and his family entered the ark, they were not taken out of this world at that time. They may have first entered the ark seven days before the rain came, but nothing happened at that point. The ark was a place of safety so the symbolism may be that Jesus is our ark of safety. In order to be saved or born again, you must place your faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:9-10) and believe that He died for your sins and paid the penalty of sin for you that separated you from God. This is called “salvation” which is being delivered from sin and its penalty, resulting in the believer receiving eternal life. This is the ultimate place of safety. Entering the ark may symbolize those who are “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thess. 4:16-17) and have obtained salvation. The word “salvation” means safety or deliverance. In our day and age, we enter the ark, the place of safety, by entering into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 9 - One Event or Two?

We now arrive at the question that we have been building up to. By now, you may have some idea of which Rapture view is carrying the most weight of evidence. This final question provides the opportunity to address any final scriptural evidence that can make the case either way in the Rapture timing debate.

Is there one event or two? Is the Rapture of the church a separate event from the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, or are they the one and the same? The Pre-Tribulation view identifies the following eight differences between the Rapture and the Second Coming in making their case that these are two separate events. We will state the differences and make some comments regarding it. It is obvious that the Post-Tribulation view disagrees with these points and will say that the distinctions being made is splitting hairs with the text.

The first difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming is in the “place” where Christ will meet believers. At the Rapture, Jesus meets believers in the “air” while at the Second Coming Jesus comes all the way down to the earth with His feet actually coming down on the Mount of Olives. This is the same location where Jesus ascended into Heaven after His resurrection (see Acts 1:9-12). The scripture says the dead in Christ and those who are alive at His coming will be caught up (raptured) and “**meet the Lord in the air**” (1 Thess.4:17b, emphasis added). At the Second Coming the Bible says, “And in that day **His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,**” (Zech. 14:4a, emphasis added).

Those supporting the Pre-Tribulation position will cite this verse, “so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **with all His saints**” (1 Thess. 3:13, emphasis added). Notice that the scripture says He is coming WITH His saints and not FOR His saints. Another verse that confirms this says, “Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord **comes with** ten thousands of His saints” (Jude 14, emphasis added). The language used implies that His saints have been with Him in Heaven and are now returning to the earth WITH Him. Finally, one more verse says, “And the armies [*the saints*] in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, **followed Him** on white horses” (Revelation 19:14, emphasis added). The armies include the believers in Christ because they are clothed in white linen which is a reference to the righteousness of the saints, the bride of Christ (see Revelation 19:7-8).

The Post-Tribulation view says believers will meet the Lord in the air and then immediately return with Him to the earth. The scripture says, “Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to **meet** (Greek word *apantesis*) the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, emphasis added). Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words gives this definition of the Greek word *apantesis* - It is used in the papyri of a newly arriving magistrate; it seems that the special idea was the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary. This word is found in several other passages – Matthew 25:1, 6; and Acts 28:15. In these passages, those went out to meet them (the bridegroom, Paul) and *accompany* them back. They meet the one arriving and accompanied them back to the

one's destination. This word usage would point to the fact that we will meet Jesus in the air and immediately return with Him to the earth.

The second difference is in who removes people from the earth. At the Rapture, Christ removes believers and receives them to Himself. As the scripture says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, ... to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). At the Second Coming, the angels gather the wicked to judgment. This is evidenced where the Bible says, "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ... So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just" (Matthew 13: 41, 49).

The passages referenced show Christ removing believers and the angels gathering the wicked. Let me make a few observations. There will be angels accompanying the Lord when He returns. Is it possible that He raptures the believers and then sends out His angels to gather the wicked? In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus says the angels will gather His elect, "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will **gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31, emphasis added). We examined the identity of the "elect" in Chapter 4, so I will not address it again here. Notice in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus does not mention the angels gathering the wicked first. He does that in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares where He says, "Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "**First gather together the tares** and bind them in bundles to burn them, but **gather the wheat** into my barn" (Matthew 13:30, emphasis added). The angels gather the wicked first and then gather the righteous.

A question to ask. How is the "elect" the church if the angels gather the wicked first, but at the Rapture, the dead in Christ will rise first? This is why in Chapter 4 the point was made that the "elect" must be the Jews and not the Church. We can see distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming in who is being removed. Is there evidence that there are seven years separating these events? In order to conclude that there are seven years separating the events, it must be arrived at through reason or inference. The explicit scriptural evidence does not indicate a time period between the Rapture and Second Coming.

A third difference is between those who are taken from the earth and those who are left. I have touched upon this with the scriptures I have just referenced. The scripture says the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive. The Pre-Tribulation view is that the believers are taken first at the Rapture and the unbelievers are left. Then at the Second Coming the wicked, or unbelievers are taken first and the believers left. They also see in the Olivet Discourse where Jesus likened His coming to the Days of Noah. The ones taken are the believers and the unbelievers are left. The scripture says. "Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two *women* will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:40-41). The popular "Left Behind" novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins are based on the idea of the Rapture removing believers and the unbelieving world being left behind.

As I have stated earlier in this book, when you look closely to the context of the Days of Noah statement by Jesus, He is speaking of His Second Coming, represented by the flood. The flood took "them" (the unbelievers) all away and Noah and his family were left. We must be careful and not manipulate the scriptures into saying something that they do not actually say. If the believers are not taken from the earth as the Post-Tribulation view says, then the fact that the unbelievers are taken first and removed fits with the narrative. I just wanted to make this point in the attempt to properly understand the scripture. We always need to, "Be diligent to present

yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

The fourth difference concerns when Jesus comes in relationship to the Tribulation. Jesus comes to rescue Christians before the hour of trial, the Tribulation and the wrath to come. The scriptural support states, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10). Another verse says, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9). Jesus comes after the Tribulation to inflict final judgment and punishment on His enemies and to rule the world from Jerusalem. The scripture support for this timing says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:29-30).

The Rapture and the Second Coming are separated by a period of seven years according to the Pre-Tribulation view. They interpret the “hour of trial” as the Tribulation period where the wrath of God is poured out. This book addressed the question of the wrath of God in Chapter 5. The Post-Tribulation view will make the argument that a time interval between the two events is just not evident in scripture.

The fifth difference is a difference in the number of signs given for each event. There are no signs that are given which must take place before the Rapture can occur. This follows the doctrine of “immanency,” which means He could come at any moment. No events have to take place as a condition for the Rapture of the church. This is an important doctrine that must be understood and it was addressed in Chapter 8. The Second Coming has a number of detailed signs that must take place before Jesus comes back to the earth. In the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:3-28), Jesus gave various signs that must take place.

The question here rests with the validity of the Doctrine of Immanent Return. Do the scriptures give evidence that Jesus can come at any moment with absolutely no event required as a preceding event? The Pre-Tribulation Rapture places a lot of weight on this teaching.

A sixth difference concerns a distinction in the time judgment takes place. In relation to the Rapture, there is no mention made of God’s judgment or trial taking place. There are only promises connected with looking for His return. The scripture evidence for this is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and Revelation 3:10; which have been previously given. The promise of the Rapture is to be comforting because with it the church will be kept from the hour of trial that will test the whole world. At the Second Coming, Jesus comes to judge. The scripture says, “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and true, and in righteousness He judges and makes war” (Revelation 19:11). There is no punishment connected with the Rapture, but at the Second Coming, Jesus comes to judge and wage war. If the Rapture and Second Coming are a single event, can it be presented as both comforting and judgmental at the same time? Is a period of time needed to separate the events?

Let’s interject another fact concerning Christ coming. At the Rapture Jesus appears in the clouds and catches up believers, dead and living, up to Him. At the Second Coming, Jesus comes riding on a white horse. Is this a single event? The scripture also says, “And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses” (Revelation 19:14). The Bible also says, “and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14b). If the armies from Heaven who followed Him on white horses includes the saints

(believers who have been raptured), there must be a period of time between the two events. If not, then Jesus will need to bring horses with Him from Heaven for the Raptured saints to mount and return with Him to the earth as He judges and makes war. This seems to be very unlikely.

A seventh difference is in the timing of the resurrections which takes place. At the Rapture, a resurrection of the dead in Christ takes place during the descent of Jesus as stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. At the Second Coming, a resurrection of the righteous dead who died during the Tribulation takes place only after Christ has descended to the earth (see Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-5). A resurrection of the tribulation saints is recorded by saying, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the **first resurrection**” (Revelation 20:4-5, emphasis added).

The Pre-Tribulation view says there is a resurrection of the church before the Tribulation and a resurrection of Tribulation saints/martyrs after the Tribulation. There are multiple phases of the first resurrection. It does not see the term “first” used in a numerical fashion, but that it is the first occurrence of its kind. The first resurrection is of the righteous dead and it can have several occurrences and still be called the first. The second resurrection is of the unrighteous which is of a different kind. The Post-Tribulation view says there is only one first resurrection. They see it numerically as it is number one in a series. There cannot be more than one resurrection that is called the “first.” This is one of the major proof texts of the Post-Tribulation Rapture view.

Finally, there is an eighth difference in the kind of bodies believers will have. At the Rapture believers will receive a glorified body. The scripture says, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory”” (1 Corinthians 15:53-54). The Bible also says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). At the Second Coming, believers surviving the Tribulation enter the Kingdom in their earthly mortal bodies. This is evidenced by the judgment of nations that takes place in Matthew 25:31-46.

Those supporting the Pre-Tribulation view see the two types of bodies believers will have as evidence that there must be two separate events. The Post-Tribulation position states that only the wicked are taken by the angels to eternal torment. Not every unbeliever can be called wicked. A person who is wicked is purely evil, who engages in evil practices, and departs from God’s law. Even though some may not believe in God at the time of Christ’s Second Coming, they are not wicked, and therefore enter into the Kingdom.

Conclusions from this Chapter

The differences noted in this chapter are real, but is there a seven-year time interval between what is perceived as two events? Interpretations of scripture can be manipulated to fit a particular teaching and verses can be taken out of context to promote a particular view. I do not think well minded Christians do this intentionally, but they just accept what they have been taught and never investigate it for themselves in the Bible. If you did not know of a time span between

the Rapture and the Second Coming, would you come away with that idea from reading the scriptures?

These differences were presented for your consideration in weighing the evidence in determining the timing of the Rapture. They can be very convincing, but upon further examination, they may not be giving that message at all. You will have to decide that for yourself in light of all the information that has been presented so far.

There are several more points that should be made before making any final determination on the Rapture's timing. The next few chapters will provide the final pieces of information we need in weighing the evidence.

CHAPTER 10 – Being on Alert

In this chapter, I want to examine what Jesus said about being ready for His coming. Jesus gave us several parables in the Olivet Discourse that emphasize our need to be on the alert because no one knows the day or hour of His coming. It is very important that we be watchful and have an understanding of the signs of the times in which we live.

Before we get into what Jesus said, I want to take a moment to share my perceptions from those who believe in each of the Rapture timing views we have been examining. This is not taken from any scientific poll, but are just my reflections of how people respond when talking about the subject of the Rapture.

The Pre-Tribulation believers always make the comment, “we are not appointed to wrath, so we will not be here.” Many have an attitude of “I don’t want to change the way I believe.” They are comfortable with what they know because they have been taught it for many years. Many do not keep up on the news because it makes them afraid. They truly feel they will not be here when the Tribulation begins so they are not concerned with what’s going on in the news that could have Biblical ramifications on the end-time events. Others are constantly looking for news events that point to the soon return of Jesus for the Church. The danger here is that of date setting. Many have tried to set dates in the past, and of course, every one of them was wrong. For the Pre-Tribulation believers, if the Rapture does not happen before the Tribulation, they very likely will be totally unprepared to face the impending persecutions and perilous times coming on the world.

The Post-Tribulation believers can have an attitude they are superior. Their perception of those believing in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is they are accepting a teaching that did not even come into existence until the 1830s and that there are no scriptures that teach it. It is this condescending attitude that can be disturbing. This belief tends to give people no hope. People do not want to hear that times are going to get so bad that they may suffer and die a terrible death. If the Rapture were to happen before the Tribulation, the danger is that many may not be ready, thinking there is more time to fulfill the calling that God has on their lives.

Now these are just my impressions of those with different Rapture timing beliefs. Many Christians are very respectful and I do not want to label or stereotype people with having these attitudes. When you talk about this subject with Christians, you may experience some of what I have been saying. People can be very zealous in what they believe. If we are going to honestly study the different Rapture timing beliefs, we need to take a serious approach in weighing the scriptural evidence.

The scriptures make a strong point that we are to be ready for His coming. We need to be watching because no one knows the day or hour of His coming. Many have tried to set dates for His coming, but the Bible is very explicit in saying no one will know the day.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gave some warnings in connection with His coming. They speak of signs of His coming, the unexpected and suddenness of His coming, being ready, accountability, and judgment. These teachings from Matthew 24 are listed below for your reference and I will be addressing several of them.

Teaching	Subject
1. Parable of the Fig Tree (24:32-35)	Signs of His Coming
2. Days of Noah (24:36-39)	Signs of His Coming
3. Master of the House (24:43-44)	Unexpected & Suddenness
4. Faithful & Evil Servant (24:45-51)	Readiness
5. Parable of the Ten Virgins (25:1-13)	Readiness
6. Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)	Accountability
7. Parable of the Sheep & Goats (25:31-46)	Judgment

We definitely see the message of being ready for His coming. Jesus compared His coming to the days of Noah when God sent a global flood as recorded in Genesis 6-9. The flood is symbolic of His Second Coming where the unrighteous are carried away. The world was unaware of the approaching flood and it caught them totally by surprise. This is a warning for the world at the time of Christ's Second Coming. The scripture says, ⁴²**Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.** ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also **be ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:42-44, emphasis added). The NASB version translates verse 42 this way, **"Therefore be on the alert ..."** I like the use of the word "alert," because it gives a greater sense of urgency to what Jesus is saying. The English word "watch" or "alert" comes from the Greek word *"gregoreuo"* meaning, to watch, or to give strict attention to. The word "alert" means, a state of awareness where the person should be ready to quickly respond to a situation. Do you believe the church is on alert concerning the return of the Lord? Based on my experience, many Christians seem to be busy just living their daily lives and are not paying very much attention to Bible prophecy. Jesus did say we are to be watchful and that command is just as important as other things He said.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He received much opposition from the religious leaders concerning Him being the Messiah. The Jews have always been looking for the coming of their Messiah and when He came, many missed it. The Bible says, "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, '*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red*'; and in the morning, '*It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.*' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:1-3). Jesus rebuked them for not being able to understand the signs of the times. The signs He was talking about were the fulfillments of prophecy and the working of miracles that confirmed He was the Messiah. Is it possible that many in the Church will be unprepared for the Second Coming of Christ because they cannot read the *signs of the times* in our day? This emphasizes the need for being able to understand the signs that Jesus spoke of in the Olivet Discourse.

Another parable that speaks about being ready for His coming is the Parable of the Faithful and Evil Servant. The Bible says, ⁴⁵ "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?" ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, '**My master is delaying his coming,**' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when **he is not looking for him** and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There

shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45-51, emphasis added). There will be people who do not think Jesus is coming any time soon. The Bible even says people will not take it seriously. The scripture says, “³knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.” ⁵For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,” (2 Peter 3:3-5). People will say that Christians have said for a long time that Jesus is coming, but He never has. They point out that life is going on normally as it always has since the very beginning of time. They scoff at the thought of Christ’s Second Coming. Many believers can even think this way because they have heard predictions in the past that the Rapture will happen on a certain day, but it never does.

Let me mention another parable from Matthew 25. Many have looked to the Parable of the Ten Virgins as a proof of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. It uses a number of terms that are associated with the Rapture and this parable has been interpreted in a number of ways. The parable will be given below and we will make some observations after it.

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. ³Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵But while the **bridegroom was delayed**, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶“And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and **those who were ready went** in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. ¹¹“Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹²But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³“**Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming**” (Matthew 25:1-13, emphasis added).

There is much that could be said about this parable. The New Testament teaches that the Church is called the Bride of Christ. The Rapture has also been compared to the Jewish wedding custom as we have analyzed in Chapter 8. So, you can see why there is much interest in this parable. I will not go into a detailed analysis of this parable, but will focus on the aspect of being ready. The parable is talking about the readiness of ten virgins (or bridesmaids) in looking for the coming of the Bridegroom which is a type of Christ. The Bible identifies the Church as the Bride, but this parable is speaking about the ten virgins, so how are believers compared to the bridesmaids when they are the bride? Some may be over-analyzing this parable and missing the simple truth that it communicates. The simple message of the parable is to be ready for His coming because we do not know the day. The five virgins who did not take oil with them for their lamps were unprepared. That is the message I want to highlight.

The Apostle Paul writes the following when speaking of the Day of the Lord, “⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as

others *do*, but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:4-6). The sixth verse is the instruction we must understand. Some are able to sleep having made no preparations for the coming of the Lord. It is not a part of their thoughts. We are to “watch,” Paul using the Greek word *gregoreuo* that was defined earlier that means to give strict attention to, and to be “sober,” which means to be calm and collected in the spirit. The importance of being ready for Christ’s coming is to be taken seriously by all Christians.

Another statement made in some of these passages is that His coming will be like a “thief in the night.” A thief will break in at a time when you would least expect it, or at a time when you are not prepared. If you are watching, the thief will not be able to take you by surprise. This is the same state of preparedness Christians should have regarding the coming of the Lord. I have always wondered, how can Jesus’ coming at the Rapture be unexpected if it occurs after the Tribulation? Wouldn’t the world be expecting it because of all the terrible plagues that are happening? It would seem that this would support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, but there is a verse in the book of Revelation that says, “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is he who stays awake and who keeps his clothes [that is, stays spiritually ready for the Lord’s return], so that he will not be naked—spiritually unprepared—and men will not see his shame” (Revelation 16:15, *Amplified Bible*). The setting for this verse is in the Tribulation leading up to the Battle of Armageddon. So, the truth that Jesus’ coming will be as a thief in the night also fits for His coming at the end of the Tribulation. This is showing that the world will be unprepared, even though they have heard of the coming of the Lord and did not take it seriously.

In conclusion for this chapter, Christians should be ready and watching for His coming. It does not matter whether you are Pre-trib. or Post-trib. In fact, we should be on “alert,” by giving strict attention to the urgency of His Coming.

CHAPTER 11 – Another Mystery of the Rapture

We have spent a considerable amount of time weighing the evidence concerning the timing of the Rapture. There have been some good arguments for both the Pre-Tribulation and Post-Tribulation Rapture views. At this point, have you decided which way the scales are tipped in weighing the scriptural evidence?

Some may still hold to the Rapture timing view that they had prior to reading this book. It could be that the scriptural evidence presented was not enough to get them to change their view. As I mentioned in Chapter 1 of this book, one needs to set aside their previous beliefs concerning when the Rapture will take place in order to make this a fair exercise in search for the answer to the timing question of the Rapture. If the evidence given solidifies what you currently believe, then this book has served its purpose in helping you affirm what you believe.

Maybe this book has opened your eyes to other possibilities concerning when the Rapture may take place. If you find yourself still uncertain which view carries the most scriptural weight, I do not think that is unusual. There are times in a trial when the jury is unable to come up with a final verdict. This is called a “hung jury.” It is when the jury members cannot agree on what the verdict should be. In a trial, all the jury members must come to a unanimous decision. If a trial ends up with a hung jury, then in the eyes of the law, the trial never took place. A hung jury is not very common and can occur in unusual cases. If you are still undecided about which Rapture timing view the scriptures really teach, it does not mean that our review of the biblical evidence was for not. We are not putting the Bible on trial, but are using some jury fundamentals in reviewing the case of the timing of the Rapture. If you cannot come up with which view the evidence supports, what does that mean? Why wouldn’t the Bible be clear in speaking of this important event? That is what we are going to explore next.

One of the main Rapture passages says, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Notice Paul, who wrote 1 Corinthians, says he is telling a mystery. The word “mystery” here means, a hidden thing, secret, or knowledge withheld. It is knowledge that can only be made known by Divine revelation. God is revealing through Paul that we will be changed and receive a resurrected body. This mortal body will be changed and become an immortal body that cannot die. This was the hidden knowledge that was being revealed.

As I have pointed out in this book, there are spiritual truths that are plainly, or explicitly stated in scripture. Teachings concerning Jesus Christ are plainly expressed. There are also spiritual truths that can be arrived at through inference, when analyzing various scriptures that reveal a spiritual truth, such as the doctrine of the Trinity. We have been weighing the evidence for the timing of the Rapture with these ways of interpreting scripture in mind. The question now has to be asked, do we have a clear-cut answer to the timing of the Rapture? If you are still unsure even after we have examined various scriptures used by both the Pre-Tribulation and Post-Tribulation views of the Rapture, why is that the case? Surely God will give us the answer in His Word. The fact that we have such differences of opinion as evidenced by the LifeWay Research survey referenced earlier in the book, makes it apparent that many do not get the same understanding from the study of the scriptures concerning the Rapture.

Why is the question of the timing of the Rapture still a mystery? The Bible tells us what is going to happen when we are changed and the dead raised, but it does not give us a firm explanation of the timing of the Rapture. The fact that it does not plainly identify the Rapture as a separate event from the Second Coming speaks volumes in itself. This would imply that there are not two events, but one. The Bible's silence to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture points to the probability that it is not biblical, but what about all the good evidence that implies a Pre-Tribulation Rapture?

Why would God allow this uncertainty regarding the Rapture's timing to exist? I have a possible answer to this mystery. The mystery concerning the timing of the Rapture is "**intentional.**" Why would God desire to keep this hidden? There are things God will not reveal and there are things that God will only reveal at a certain time. For example, the Bible says, "Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them'" (Revelation 10:4). These thunderous voices were uttered between the sixth and seventh trumpet plagues. John was told not to write what these voices said and the Bible does not say why. It may be possible that these judgments were just too terrifying to be recorded. The fact that their messages were to remain hidden was intentional. In the Old Testament we read, "Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, 'My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?' And he said, 'Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end'" (Daniel 12:8-9). Daniel was not told the meaning of the prophetic events he was writing about because they were not to be revealed until the time of the end. Again, God reveals the meaning of things when the time is right.

Another very big example of knowledge that God desires to remain hidden is the time of His coming. Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:36 NASB). God does not want us to be able to calculate the date in history of Christ's coming. In our examination of the timing of the Rapture, we are not looking for a date in time, but where to place the Rapture on the timeline of the end-time events. The timeline illustrated in the Introduction of this book shows where the Rapture is positioned for the four different views.

I would like to make another comment regarding that fact that no one will know the day of His coming. Since Jesus is coming when people will not expect Him, could it be that He is coming on a day that is not a feast day, sabbath, or in connection with the Jubilee? Could the Second Coming be that one event that is not tied to a feast day? That way, no one can even speculate as to what day it will be. It is a day in total obscurity, hidden from the world, angels, and even the Son (Matthew 24:36), just as in the Jewish wedding custom, the groom does not know when the father will say it is time for him to get his bride. It is a unique day, one of a kind, and there is none other like it. The scripture says, "In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light" (Zechariah 14:6-7 NASB). Now I strongly believe that Christ's Second Coming will fulfill the fall Jewish feast days, but I was just considering if there could be another explanation as to why God's keeps the timing of Christ's return a mystery.

Why does scripture keep the timing of the Rapture a mystery? Is there a reason why God would allow there to be this uncertainty? I believe the answer could be expressed as follows. Many people procrastinate in doing important things in their life. If we knew exactly when the Lord was coming, many would put off, or grow lazy in doing the work of the Lord and honoring their

obligations in this life (see the Parable of the Faithful and Evil Servant in Matthew 24:45-51). Scripture instructs us to be ready and on the alert for His coming. Do not live with an escapist mentality, but live with an endurance mentality. This implies that we should be living in a constant state of readiness and expectation of His coming. The mystery in the timing of His coming may be intentional by God so that believers will keep diligent in living for Christ and doing the work He has called us to do up to the very end.

As Christians, we should be ready to face tribulation and times of extreme persecution and not depend on God to rescue us from it. On the other hand, God has promised to deliver us from evil. There will be times when our faith will be tested and there will be times when our faith will be rewarded. Blessed be the Lord!

CHAPTER 12 – Signs of the Times

You probably have heard someone say that Jesus is coming soon. No doubt they are basing it on what they see happening in our world today. Is this true? Are we really living in the time that Jesus will actually come again? A recent survey of 1,000 evangelical pastors in 2020 by LifeWay Research found that 56% of those surveyed believe that Jesus will return in their lifetime. The survey also found that 89% of the respondents say that communicating the urgency of Christ's return is important.

This book has dealt with the question of when Jesus will Rapture the Church in relation to the end time events of the Tribulation. If the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is at hand, how can we know for sure that it is near? This book has addressed the signs Jesus gave in His Olivet Discourse that will lead up to His coming. We have also considered the plagues given in the book of Revelation that are events leading up to Christ's return. Not all Christians are knowledgeable of end time Bible prophecy, but even those who are not informed are saying that Jesus must be coming soon. From a layman's point of view, why are people saying that?

I have been a student of end time Bible prophecy for many years. Based on what I have learned, I would like to reflect on events that are happening in our time that point to the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The subject of the Rapture is very much on people's minds because there is a sense of nearness of His coming. I am not giving an exhaustive list of things that point to the nearness of His coming, but some of the major signs that are unique to the days in which we live that allows us to anticipate Christ's soon return.

The greatest sign that we are living in the time of the Second Coming of Christ is the restoration of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948. This is one of the greatest miracles of Bible prophecy. When you consider that this small nation of people had been without a homeland for nearly 2,000 years, with its people scattered to the ends of the earth, and in recent history has been restored to the land God gave them, it is truly remarkable. Three nations that bordered Israel in ancient times, Ammon, Moab, and Edom are not in existence today and very little proof of their existence has been discovered by archaeologists. However, Israel has survived through all the years up to our modern times.

God gives a list of blessings (Deut. 28:1-14) for Israel when they obey His commandments and a list of curses (Deut. 28:15-48) if they disobey and go to serve other gods. We know from history that Israel has disobeyed God and has been scattered throughout all the earth. The scripture says, "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, ² and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your

fathers” (Deut. 30:1-5). In 70 A.D., God’s judgment came upon the Jewish people when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the Romans and the people scattered throughout the nations just as the prophecies said. Even though God’s wrath was executed on Israel because of their disobedience, God promised to restore them and gather them back to their own land in the last days.

Another prophecy of the restoration of Israel is found in Ezekiel 37 in the prophet’s vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. In summary, God had taken Ezekiel into a valley that was full of dry bones. The LORD told him to prophesy over the bones by saying, ”O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:4b-6). The vision was explained to him, “Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ Therefore, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the LORD’ ” (Ezekiel 37:11-14). This vision reveals that the nation of Israel will be resurrected from the dead. Israel as a nation was dead, but God said that He will resurrect them and restore them into their own land.

Another important point of Ezekiel’s prophecy is that Israel will be restored as one nation and not two. After the reign of King Solomon, the kingdom split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom was called Israel with its capital Samaria. The southern kingdom was called Judah with its capital at Jerusalem. In the last days, Israel will again be united as one nation. The scripture says, “Then say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again” (Ezekiel 37:21-22). Israel came back into existence as one nation on May 14, 1948 in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy.

In Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, He teaches the Parable of the Fig Tree in giving His disciples a major sign of His coming. The scripture says, “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:32-35). Some Bible scholars have stated that the fig tree is representative of national Israel (see Hosea 9:10). Jesus’ reference to the fig tree blooming and putting forth its leaves is prophetic of Israel becoming a nation again in the last days.

In the parable, Jesus says that all the signs given will occur within a generation of time. The question becomes, how long is a generation? The time of a generation in the Bible can be said to be 40, 70-80, or even 120 years. Some have tried to set dates for Jesus’ coming by adding a set number of years to the time Israel was restored as a nation in 1948. No matter the actual number of years in a generation, we have to be close to the end of that generation of time. The fig tree

example given by Jesus may be His way of saying that the restoration of Israel is the key sign leading up to His return.

Some deny that the fig tree has any relation to Israel whatsoever. They argue that all the parable means is that just as the blooming of the fig tree is a signal that summer is near, so also, the coming together of all the signs Jesus mentioned will be an indication that He is soon to return. Any way you want to interpret this parable, the message is clear that the appearance of the signs given by Jesus is a signal of His soon return.

A significant event occurred in June 1967 as a result of the Six Day War between Israel and the Arab states Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Even though Israel became a nation again in 1948, it did not control half of the city of Jerusalem that included the Temple Mount. Israel's victory reunified Jerusalem under Jewish control and for the first time in nearly 2,000 years the Temple Mount was in Jewish hands. This was a major prophetic event because in order for the Antichrist to commit the Abomination of Desolation, there has to be a Jewish Temple. As I mentioned earlier, the 2nd Jewish Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and there has been no temple since. After Israel regained the Temple Mount, they gave administration of the site back to the Muslim Waqf (a religious endowment for the control and managing holy sites) under Jordanian custodianship, while maintaining Israeli security control. At the moment of victory, they conceded sovereignty over the Temple Mount, returning it to the Waqf to prevent a holy war. Since that time, entering the Temple Mount was forbidden to the Jews.

Even though the Jews have not had access to the Temple Mount, there has been much speculation about the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple. Since 1987 there has been a movement to make preparations for the rebuilding of the Temple. There has been the creation of the Temple vessels and the training of Levites who are appointed by scripture for Temple service. When the time is right, the Temple will eventually be rebuilt. This is probably the next great event to occur that will definitely show the nearness of Christ's coming.

The re-establishment of the nation of Israel, by itself, is enough evidence to prove that we are living in the days of the Second Coming of Christ. When you think of all Israel has gone through over the course of history, such as almost being annihilated during the Holocaust of World War II when six million were killed in the German death camps, we can stand and marvel at the precise accuracy of God's Word.

Another major sign that gives us reason to believe that the coming of Christ is near is the advancement of human computer technology to the point where the mark of the beast can become a reality. The scripture says, "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666" (Rev, 13:16-18). The Bible says that "he," which is a reference to the Antichrist, will cause everyone to receive a mark and that nobody will be able to buy or sell without it. Many think that this "mark" will be a microchip that can be embedded under the skin. A person's whole identity (medical and financial information) can be programmed into this "chip" or "mark." It can also serve as a way to track a person's movements so the government will have total control over a person's life. The cell phone has taken over our lives and has become a necessity. It is just a matter of converting the information contained in the phone onto a microchip that can be placed in a person.

The fulfillment of people receiving the mark of the beast was an impossibility over the course of modern history until very recent times. The technology had not grown to the point where the mark could be administered. The Antichrist will use this technology to force everyone to receive the mark which will become mandatory for a person to function in society. We have heard for years about the coming cashless society and it is now upon us. People will be eager to receive the mark not knowing what it means. It is the ultimate act of giving one's allegiance to Satan. That is why the Bible gives this dire warning, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:9b-10). We are living in the times where the mark of the beast can be close at hand.

Additionally, a sign that we can be near to the coming of Christ is that it is possible today that an army of 200 million men could be comprised from a combination of nations. The book of Revelation says that an army of 200 million will kill a third of all mankind (Rev. 9:16). This is a truly remarkable prophecy when considering that the world population was around 150 million when the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation. This is evidence that John had to be speaking of events in the distant future of his day. Some prophecy teachers have said that China alone could field an army of this size, but that is unlikely. When John refers to "kings of the east" (Rev. 16:12), it will most likely be a confederacy of several Eastern or Asian nations. China and Russia are the regional giants that may lead this force. With the world population reaching 8 billion, it is now possible that any army of this size can be assembled. This is further evidence that we are living in the times of Christ's return.

Another sign that I want to mention is that Bible scholars have said that the Antichrist will come from the nations that formally made up the Roman Empire. Since World War II, we have seen Europe come together to form what is called the European Union (EU). Some have called this the revival of the Roman Empire. The EU will lead the movement to a one world government. The United Nations (UN) has even divided the world into ten regions; Africa, Asia, Central America, Eastern Europe, European Union, Middle East, North America, Oceania, South America, and the Caribbean. Bible prophecy speaks of the Antichrist rising out of a group of 10 horns.

The Bible says, "Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority" (Rev. 13:1-2). The beast rising out of the sea is the one world system headed by the Antichrist. The seven heads could represent the world's seven continents and the ten UN world regions. The reference to the leopard, bear, and lion agrees with Daniel's vision of four world beasts (Daniel 7:1-8). The beasts represent world empires that would rise during history. These empires were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire. What is interesting about the beast in Revelation 13, is that it is a combination of all the beasts mentioned by Daniel. This shows that all the nations of the world will form a global government in the last days. The movement toward globalism even includes America and this is a major sign of the times that Jesus is coming soon.

Ezekiel Chapters 38-39 speaks of a war in the last days where Russia (Gog and Magog), Iran (Persia), and other Arab nations will invade Israel. God will miraculously defeat this army in defending His people. Some have placed this war near the beginning of the Tribulation and others see this as being part of the Battle of Armageddon. Today, we see Russia gaining more influence

in the middle east. Iran is close to having nuclear strike capability and has openly stated they want to destroy Israel. A powerful Iran is also a sign that times are ripe for Christ's return.

Bible prophecy says that all nations in the last days will come against Jerusalem and the nation of Israel (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:2-3). God will defend His people. The United States has been the one true ally of Israel, but now, with the new administration coming into power, our support of Israel is now questionable. The times are upon us that all the nations are against Israel.

The various signs that I have just shared could not possibly have occurred in past history. The nation of Israel was not in existence. The technology for the mark of the beast had not been invented yet. There was no nation or nations on the face of the earth that could field an army of 200 million men. We see a powerful Russia and Iran, along with other Arab nations that are poised to strike Israel as described in Bible prophecy. These are the things that lead people to believe that the coming of Christ is close at hand.

Because of the signs that we see as I have indicated, it is important for Christians to discuss the Rapture. This is not the time to hide our heads in the sand and ignore the signs that are occurring around us. Do not let it be said of us that we are the generation that could not read the signs of the times.

My hope is that this chapter will increase your awareness of the Second Coming of Christ and help you realize the seriousness of the situation for those who are not ready for His coming. No matter what Rapture timing view that you hold, we need to be ready for His coming. We all have unsaved family and friends, and know of other believers who have lost their focus in living for Christ. More than ever before, we need to be reaching out to people to help them "be ready." How would it change your life if we really believed that His coming was very near?

CHAPTER 13 - False Teachers and Prophets

In this book we have weighed the evidence for the two main Rapture timing views in order to determine which is supported by scripture. As I have mentioned, there are four predominant views for the Rapture: Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Pre-Wrath, and Post-Tribulation. In looking at these four different Rapture views, it's obvious that only one can be correct. With that said, the following questions need to be asked. Are those who are teaching the three Rapture timing views that are not correct considered false teachers? Doesn't the Bible condemn false teachers and false prophets? This chapter will address these concerns.

Whatever Rapture timing view you believe, it will have an influence on your preparedness for the coming of Christ. As I mentioned in Chapter 11, it may have been "intentional" by God to allow the timing of the Rapture to remain a mystery for the reasons I gave in that chapter. It might appear that God is allowing people to believe false teachings about the Rapture. It may be that when some Christians see all the disagreement on the teaching about the Rapture, they don't take it seriously feeling it is not that important.

The Rapture is not the only subject in the Bible that has differences of opinions among believers. For example, a big difference of opinion exists between those who support Calvinism and those who accept Arminianism. These are two systems of theology that attempt to explain the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in the area of salvation. These represent two schools of thought. In fact, there are some who believe in the mixture of both views. Does that make one side or the other false teachers?

There are different ways people interpret the book of Revelation. There are Preterist, Historicist, Idealist, and Futurist. I'm not going to take the time to expound on each of these views, but to make the point that there are different opinions of how some interpret scripture. There are very scholarly, intelligent, and spiritual people who just have different views. Again, all of these views cannot be correct. Does that mean you can label the incorrect beliefs in the interpretation of the book of Revelation as false beliefs or false teachings?

One more example regards the age of the universe. Some Bible scholars believe in a Young Earth Creation while others hold to an Old Earth interpretation of Creation. Neither side is labeled as false doctrine because their views are based on biblical evidence. As we have seen with the beliefs concerning the Rapture, people have well founded reasons to believe the way they do.

There are teachings in the Bible that cannot be compromised that affect one's salvation. Even though there are a number of Christian denominations that have some variation of beliefs between them, there are certain teachings that are essential to the Christian faith. These commonly accepted traditions date back to the early church fathers. In Christianity, the term "orthodox" means conforming to the Christian faith as represented in the creeds of the early Church. When one goes against the accepted teachings of Christianity, they are identified as "heretical." To be heretical is to have a religious opinion contrary to church dogma (set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true).

When we get into the topic of Bible prophecy, there is room for people to have beliefs based on how they understand scripture. There are theologians, people we can respect, that

interpret Bible passages differently. So, when do we get into dangerous territory in teaching Bible doctrines where they are considered false teachers and those who promote them as false prophets? People can be very sincere in preaching God's Word, but they can be sincerely wrong. Where do you draw the line in exposing false doctrine?

False teachers are those who claim to preach the gospel but do not. False doctrine is any idea that adds, takes away, contradicts, or nullifies what is given in God's Word. There is a difference between false doctrines and differences in honestly interpreting scripture.

False teachers and/or prophets deviate from the accepted teachings of the Church in the following ways:

- Promoting other gods/self (leading people away from God)
- False doctrine (heresy – denial of revealed truth)
- Teaching or speaking falsely against God (blasphemy)
- Misrepresenting God (deception)
- Taking God's glory

When honest well-minded Christians have differences of opinion of how to interpret prophetic passages of scripture, it does not fall into the category of false teaching if it does not violate the areas I just mentioned. God desires that we search out things in His Word. We will never know all things in this life. There will be a day when we will all be one and have complete understanding as the scripture says, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). This is the time when all Christians reach spiritual maturity and come into a proper knowledge of Christ. Until we reach that time, believers will have differences in how they understand God's Word.

The fact that Jesus Christ is coming again is a fundamental doctrine of the Church. All Christians should be in agreement of this truth. The early creeds of the Church include that He will come again in glory. The timing of when believers will receive their glorified body is not stated specifically in these creeds. What they say is that Christ will come again to judge so there is no real distinction made regarding two possible phases of the Second Coming. As we have explored in this book, a separate Rapture event is determined through the inference of scripture.

We can say with confidence that the different views about the timing of the Rapture cannot be labeled as false teaching. However, there are those who have taught things concerning the timing of the Rapture that can be called false prophets. There have been a number of individuals in history who have set dates for the Rapture even though scripture specifically says, "But of that day and hour, no one knows..." (Matt. 24:36a). If we are not to know the day of His Second Coming, there is no way that anyone can know the day of the Rapture. Those who make these claims are false prophets.

Allow me to provide some scriptures that speak of false prophets and how we should consider them:

- "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:22).

- “And the LORD said to me, “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart” (Jer. 14:14).
- “Thus says the Lord GOD: “Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing” (Ezek. 13:3).
- “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15).
- “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1).

One of the main warnings from the passage that I have just presented says that when a prophet gives a word from the Lord and it does not come to pass, then he is a false prophet. If the word was truly from God, it would have come to pass. The scripture tells us there are prophets who speak from their own heart and give a false message and have seen nothing. Jesus even warned us of false prophets who look the part, but are like ravenous wolves (extreme hunger to gratify themselves). This is a perfect description of those who have denied or distorted the truth of the gospel. True prophets are generally in the minority and face a lot of opposition. As Peter said, there will be false teachers in the Church who will bring in heresies. This proves the point that we must test what is being said to us with scripture. That is why it is important for a Christian to read the Bible regularly so they will have a knowledge of scripture for themselves and not expect someone else to tell them what it means.

We are to share God’s Word with the world and at the same time use it to call out those who are mishandling it. The Apostle Paul put it this way, “Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:2-4). We should not reject a prophetic word that a man or woman of God may proclaim, but be cautious and not blindly accept what we hear. The Bible tells us, “do not utterly reject prophecies, but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:20-21).

In concluding this chapter, I want to provide an example of a false prophecy concerning the Rapture that occurred a number of years ago. It is an example of how people can get caught up in what these false prophets say by not verifying what they are saying with scripture.

When I was a young Christian, my wife and I attended a small church where end time Bible prophecy was often taught. I had never heard of the Rapture until we starting going to this church. During our time there, I gained a great love for studying end time Bible prophecy.

In early 1988, a small book was published by a former NASA engineer named Edgar C. Whisenant. The book was entitled “88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be in 1988,” published by the World Bible Society in Nashville, Tennessee. The booklet was bound together with another essay entitled “On Borrowed Time.” In this book, Mr. Whisenant made a number of calculations by counting the numbers between certain dates to prove that the Rapture would occur on Rosh Hashanah (the Feast of Trumpets) between the dates of September 11-13 in 1988. He gave 88

reasons why the Rapture had to occur during this time. Whisenant had been quoted as saying, "Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong; and I say that to every preacher in town" (Field Guide to the World of Religion by Pamela Starr Dewey). He even said that if he could gamble his life, that he would bet his life on the Rapture happening during the dates he predicted.

The booklet was sold for \$2.00 and rose rapidly on the Christian best seller lists. The World Bible Society mailed out 300,000 free copies of this booklet to ministers and churches. A major Christian television network, over the course of the three days, ran spots on what to do if you missed the Rapture. Needless to say, this caused quite a stir in evangelical circles.

The church where my wife and I were attending was greatly caught up in all the hysteria, as was many others. I even remember people staying at home from work during the days the Rapture was supposed to happen anticipating Christ's return. Over the course of my Christian life, I have never seen anything like this. There have been other predictions of the Rapture, but Whisenant's 88 reasons had attracted major attention.

This was just another on a long list of failed prophecies. Once the dates passed, Mr. Whisenant corrected his calculations and moved the date to 1989. He published several more books, but none sold at near the same quantity and gained little attention. When people make false prophecies like this, many times they correct their original prediction or come up with later dates. It is always a moving target.

I found on Wikipedia a list of dates for apocalyptic events over the course of Church history. The list was quite long, showing that predicting the end of the world or the coming of Christ is not new or unique for our times. In the dates listed under the 20th century, I counted 60 different predictions, even by some notable names that many would recognize. One of these was the well-known 16th century prophet Nostradamus who predicted that a "king of terror" would come from the sky in July 1999. His writings were written in such a way that they could be very broadly interpreted. Out of all the numerous individuals that have made these apocalyptic predictions, none of them obviously came true. Using the biblical standards of scripture in testing these individuals, they are all false prophets. Some Christians may easily get caught up with these kinds of prophecies, including setting dates for the Rapture. The Bible is clear that no one knows the day of Christ's coming.

Tragically, those who set dates for the coming of the Lord are working contrary to the Word of God. When the prophecies do not come to pass, it gives the unsaved world another opportunity to ridicule Christians and the whole concept that the Bible foretells what is going to happen in the future. As Christians, it is important for us to have an awareness of world events and end time Bible prophecy so we can properly understand the signs of the times. Many people have an interest in what the Bible says about the future and this can open a door for us to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Bible prophecy can serve as a tool to help us reach an unsaved world.

This chapter did not provide biblical evidence for either the Pre or Post-Tribulation Raptures. The purpose was to warn believers of false teachers in our times so that they will not be deceived by their false claims. There are times when Christians can disagree and it not be offensive to God. However, there will be some who come against the accepted teachings of the Church. This is another sign of the times with the rise of false teachers that every believer needs to be aware of. The Bible warns us of a great apostasy in the time leading up to Christ's return, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

CHAPTER 14 - Final Comments

The table below summarizes the six questions presented in this book. A simplistic answer to each of these questions is given for both the Pre-trib. and Post-trib. positions. Through the course of this book various pieces of scriptural evidence was given for each of the views to help you to validate your belief in the timing of the Rapture.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Pre-Trib. Rapture</u>	<u>Post-Trib. Rapture</u>
1. Who are the “elect?”	The Jewish people	The Church/Israel
2. When does the wrath of God begin?	Begins with the opening of the 1 st seal.	Begins with the 1 st Bowl of Wrath.
3. How do you define the Day of the Lord?	It is a period of time as well as the point in time when Christ appears in glory.	The day Christ comes again.
4. What is the “last trumpet?”	Possibly the last trumpeted blast on Rosh Hashana	The 7 th trumpet judgment in Revelation
5. Can Jesus come at any moment?	Jesus’ coming is imminent, it can occur at any moment.	The Doctrine of Imminency is not biblical.
6. One event or two?	Two separate events separated by 7 years.	One event that occurs when Christ comes again.

At this point I will give what I believe are the three best arguments for both the Pre-Tribulation and Post-Tribulation Rapture views. These are my opinions and you may have some of your own, but this will provide the closing statements for each of the views. Also refer back to Chapter 3 where I gave three passages of scripture as an opening statement that best supports each of these views.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture Best Arguments:

The best argument is the following verses. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that **where I am, there you may be also**” (John 14:1-3, emphasis added). Jesus plainly says that He is going to prepare a place for us in Heaven at His Father’s house and that where He is, we will be also. This is saying we will be in Heaven with Him. If the Rapture were not a separate event from the Second Coming, when Jesus comes, He would catch us up with Him in the clouds and then we would come right back down to the earth with Him. The Church would not be with Him in Heaven. There is no span of time that we would be with Jesus in Heaven. At the Second Coming, Jesus will rule on earth for one thousand years

and after that, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. Then the New Jerusalem will descend down from Heaven to the earth and that will be our habitation for eternity. Jesus' statement in John 14 is a strong inference for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. In addition, the Jewish wedding custom is pictured in this passage as was spoken about in Chapter 8. The bridegroom takes his bride to the place he has prepared for her at his father's house.

The next best argument is at the Second Coming, Jesus is coming WITH the saints and not FOR the saints. This argument was presented in Chapter 9 as part of the first difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming. Again, this is a strong inference in support of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

The third best argument for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is that all the 21 plagues (7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, and 7 Bowls of Wrath) represent the wrath of God. Considerable information was given in Chapter 5 showing that the severity of these plagues is unparalleled over the course of history. It is true that Christians have suffered terrible persecution during the church age, but that originated from man with Satan's influence. The Revelation plagues are God's wrath and His people have always been delivered from His wrath. Since these plagues are global in nature, the church will be taken out of this world.

Post-Tribulation Rapture Best Arguments:

The best argument for the Post-Tribulation Rapture is that the Bible gives no explicit statement that believers in Christ will be raptured/resurrected before the Second Coming. The Bible's silence in identifying the Rapture as a separate event from the Second Coming speaks volumes that it is one event. Jesus never taught that there are two phases to His coming. The Olivet Discourse plainly states that His coming is immediately after the Tribulation.

The next best argument is the explicit scriptural reference that the 7th Trumpet judgment is the "last trumpet" Paul identified in I Corinthians 15:52. Chapter 7 gives the detail explanation why this is a very good argument for the Post-Tribulation Rapture. What takes place after the 7th trumpet is sounded is noteworthy, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ" and "The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged" (Revelation 11:15b, 18a). After the 7th trumpet, it says His wrath has come. As stated before, these are plain statements of scripture.

The third best argument is the statement made in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4. It clearly says that the Antichrist will be revealed BEFORE the Rapture. The scripture says, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). There will be a great apostasy, a falling away from the faith, and the Antichrist will be revealed before "that Day," also known as the Day of the Lord.

Summary of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Since we have established the Post-Tribulation Rapture as the default position, the burden of proof falls on the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view to provide evidence that would prove it is biblically correct. The following is a list of points that summarize the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position:

1. In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 24, Jesus is speaking to Israel, the Jewish people. We cannot insert the Rapture into these texts. In these passages, the "elect" is Israel.

2. There are two peoples of God. Israel and the Church. Israel is God's earthly (natural) people while the Church (supernatural) is His spiritual people made up of both Jews and Gentiles.
3. When these texts and others speak of "that Day," it is speaking of the Day of the Lord which is a period of time (broad sense) as well as a specific point in time (narrow sense) that Christ is revealed at His Second Coming. We cannot only think in terms of a single day.
4. The Rapture is a mystery that was not revealed to Israel or taught by Jesus during His earthly ministry. Paul was given the revelation of the Rapture and his epistles provide us with the information concerning it.
5. Paul confirms what Jesus said concerning the day of the Lord coming as a "thief in the night," but he reveals that when it arrives, people will think they have "peace and safety." The Day of the Lord begins unexpectedly during a period of peace. This evidence strongly supports a Pre-Tribulation Rapture and reveals that the Day of the Lord represents a period of time and not just a moment in time.
6. Peter reveals the truth that the Day of the Lord is a period of time that comes as a "thief in the night," but it includes the time when God creates the new heavens and new earth.
7. The Day of the Lord will come as a "thief in the night." (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10). It is a time of judgment and God's wrath. In the broad sense, it includes the Tribulation and the entire Millennium. By coming unexpectedly, it implies that God's wrath begins with the 1st seal judgment when the world thinks it has peace. If the Day of the Lord was just one literal day when Jesus returns, there would definitely be no peace and safety preceding his coming because of the various plagues occurring in the earth.
8. The Bowl judgments are a continuation of God's wrath. Revelation 15:1 calls them the seven "last plagues" and that "in them, the wrath of God is complete." If this third grouping of plagues is called the seven last plagues, then the Seal and Trumpet plagues are also part of the wrath of God.
9. The Seal judgments are being unleashed from Heaven meaning they are from God and are not a manifestation of man's or Satan's wrath. God can use man as an instrument of His wrath.
10. The church is not mentioned in the book of Revelation from chapters 4 – 19:7. When John is called up to the throne room in Revelation 4:1, it represents the Rapture and that the Church is now in Heaven.
11. In comparing the scriptures speaking of the Rapture and the Second Coming, it can be plainly seen that they are describing two separate events.
12. The timing of the Rapture is not specifically given in scripture. One must study various texts in order to arrive at a scriptural conclusion for the timing of the Rapture.
13. The "First Resurrection" can be in phases and not just a one-time event. Paul states in 1 Cor. 15:23 that believers are resurrected "each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."
14. Some believe the "last trumpet" in 1 Cor. 15:52 is the last trumpet judgment mentioned in Rev. 11:15-18 and that the Rapture occurs at that time (Mid-Tribulation) before God's wrath is poured out with the Bowl Judgments. The last trumpet mentioned by Paul is the trumpet of God where the 7th trumpet in Revelation is a trumpet of judgment blown by an angel.

Summary of the Post-Tribulation Rapture

The following are some of the points that describe the Post-Tribulation Rapture. They only see one event, not a Rapture of the Church followed by a period of time when Christ returns to the earth. When the term “Rapture” is mentioned, it is synonymous with the “Second Coming.”

1. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus plainly states that He is coming immediately after the tribulation of those days (Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24). Jesus makes no mention of a separate event where believers are rescued and taken out of the world before the Tribulation begins.
2. The “elect” that will be gathered by the angels at His Second Coming is the Church. Every time the term “elect” is used in the New Testament, it is speaking of the Church (Romans 11:7).
3. Scripture clearly says that the Antichrist will be revealed before the Rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4). “The *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ and our *gathering together* to Him” are not two events, but are describing what happens when Jesus returns. We will be gathered together to meet Him.
4. The Bible speaks of two resurrections of the dead in the last days (Daniel 12:2; John 5:25-29; Revelation 20:4-6). The first resurrection is of the righteous dead and the second resurrection is of the unrighteous dead. There cannot be more than one “first” resurrection, otherwise, you would have more than two resurrections. There cannot be multiple first resurrections. The living who receive their glorified body in 1 Thess. 4:15 cannot receive it before the dead who are resurrected in Revelation 20:4.
5. The “last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:52) is the seventh trumpet judgment mentioned in the book of Revelation. The scripture plainly states that after the seventh trumpet the wrath of God comes, the dead are judged, and that it is time to destroy those who destroy the earth (Revelation 11:15, 18).
6. When Christ comes, the Church will be Raptured and meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:17) and then accompany (Matthew 25:1-13) Him back to the earth where He fights the Battle of Armageddon.
7. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares in Matthew 13 describes the harvest of the wicked and the righteous as a simultaneous event. There is only one event and not two.
8. It is understood that at the Rapture, the Lord will come as a “thief in the night” (Matthew 24:42-43; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10) and some believe this is in reference to Christ’s coming to rescue them before the Tribulation. However, Revelation 16:15 says He will come as a “thief” before the Battle of Armageddon. This shows that the Rapture/Second Coming is one event. The Church will not be taken by surprise, the unsaved will be taken by surprise.
9. The wrath of God is not poured out during the Great Tribulation, but after it. God’s wrath is characterized by the sun, moon, and stars being darkened (Matthew 24:29). This is called the “Day of the Lord” (Isaiah 13:10-11; Joel 2:30-31) when God’s wrath is unleashed to punish the world.
10. The Great Tribulation is a time of Satan’s wrath (Revelation 12:7-17). God does not persecute His own people, but Satan does.

11. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory assumes the plagues (Seals, Trumpets, & Bowls) in Revelation occur in sequential order. A comparison of the 6th Seal, 7th Trumpet, and the 7th Bowl reveal that they are the same event. This means the plagues are overlapping and not in chronological sequence which refutes the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory.
12. Just as God protected Noah during the flood and Lot during the destruction of Sodom, God will deliver believers from His wrath. They were shielded while in this world and not taken out of this world (John 17:15).
13. There is no scripture that says the Tribulation lasts for seven years. This misunderstanding comes from Daniel 9:27 that speaks of the final seven-year period in Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy. The scriptures teach that the Great Tribulation lasts for the last 3 ½ of the final seven years. (Daniel 7:25; 12:1-7; Rev. 11:3-12; 12:6-17; & 13:5-7).
14. The Bowls of God's Wrath occur near the end of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 16). God will protect and provide for His children on earth as His wrath is poured out just as He protected Israel as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years (John 17:15; 2 Thess. 3:3)

I do not want to be redundant in going over the beliefs of each of the Rapture views one more time, but I thought it would be beneficial to recap them before you decide which view carries the greater weight of evidence. The case has now been made in revealing the Rapture timing mystery.

That brings us to this question. Do the scriptures support a secret Rapture to rescue the Church before the tribulation of the last days, or do believers need to prepare to face a time of persecution that will test their faith? If we through the preponderance of the evidence conclude that the Rapture and Second Coming are either one event or two, then we can have confidence that we have biblical grounds for basing our belief. This does not imply that this is the correct conclusion. Only God knows for certain if there is one event or two. It may be intentional by God that we cannot arrive at a conclusion that is beyond a reasonable doubt. I have presented a considerable amount of evidence for each view. It is now up to you to render your verdict. Does the biblical evidence support two separate events separated by a period of time from 3 ½ to 7 years? Which direction do the scales tip? I have provided an evaluation sheet at the back of the book to serve as a guide in helping you rate the evidence.

We are living in serious times because of the growing resistance to the Christian faith. The purpose of this book is to focus people's attention on the Rapture, to provide scriptural support concerning this event, and to ensure believers have a biblical foundation in preparing them for Christ's coming.

No matter which Rapture timing view you hold, we still need to watch and be ready for Christ's coming. Every Christian should be prepared to stand up for their faith in Christ by planning ahead what they would do if faced with a serious test of their faith. We should be looking for His coming at any moment, but at the same time, be ready to stand strong in the faith and persevere through tribulation. Whether we meet the Lord when we die and go to Heaven, or when He comes back to Rapture the Church, the question remains. When Jesus comes, is He coming for you?

This book has been an exercise in how to weigh the evidence of scripture to determine the timing of the Rapture. This same process should be used when studying any topic in the Bible. Our doctrines and beliefs must be founded upon sound biblical evidence. Paul solemnly charged Timothy with the following, "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince,

rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:2-4). This is great admonition for us in our times.

I pray that this book has challenged you to know more and get deeper into God’s Word.

Thank you for reading this book and God bless!

Rating the Evidence Evaluation Sheet

Rating the Evidence Evaluation Sheet

The following items are given as a checklist for you to score, or rate, each piece of evidence. This will help in weighing the evidence to determine which Rapture timing view is supported best by scripture. Two statements are given for each point, the first one (a) is from the Pre-tribulation position, and the second statement (b) supports the Posttribulation view. Assign a score of 0-10 for each, giving a higher score to the one you determine carries the most weight. Use the left column to place the value for the Pre-Trib. view and the right column for the Post-trib. view. This allows you to assign a value to each view since they both can have credible arguments.

Items associated with the Six Major Questions:	Pre-Trib. (Rate 0-10)	Post-Trib. (Rate 0-10)
1a. The "elect" is the Jewish people.		
1b. The "elect" is the Church.		
2a. The wrath of God begins with the 1 st Seal judgment.		
2b. The wrath of God begins after the 7 th Trumpet.		
3a. The Last Trumpet is God blowing the trumpet or the last trumpet of Rosh Hashanah.		
3b. The Last Trumpet is the 7 th Trumpet judgment in Revelation.		
4a. The Day of the Lord is both a moment in time and a period of time.		
4b. The Day of the Lord is when Christ returns at His Second Coming.		
5a. The evidence reveals the Rapture is a separate event from the Second Coming.		
5b. The evidence reveals the Rapture and the Second Coming are the same event.		
6a. Jesus can come at any moment for the Rapture.		
6b. Jesus cannot come at any moment because certain signs must occur first.		
7a. The early church believed in a Pretribulation Rapture.		
7b. The Pretribulation Rapture is an invention of the 1830s by John Nelson Darby and promoted by the Scofield Reference Bible.		
8a. How convincing is the circumstantial evidence for the Pretribulation Rapture?		
8b. How convincing is the direct evidence for the Post- tribulation Rapture?		
9a. Jesus first comes FOR the Church and later comes WITH the Church at the Second Coming.		
9b. Believers meet Jesus in the air at the Second Coming and accompany Him to the earth		
10a. Christ will rescue believers from God's wrath by taking them out of the world.		
10b. Believers will be in the world and shielded/guarded from God's wrath.		

Total Score for Each

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