WHAT IS THE PRE-WRATH RAPTURE?

And can a Fundamentalist believe it?

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Brief biography of Pastor Vincent Sawyer

- I came to know the grace of God and Jesus Christ as my personal Savior at the age of 16 and attended a Fundamental Baptistic church, in Newington, CT.
- I am a 1984 graduate of Pillsbury Baptist Bible College of Owatonna, MN.
- I am a 1988 graduate of Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary of Lansdale, PA.
- Both schools were an excellent source of sound Bible teaching on all of the major doctrines, and remain so today. My pre-wrath view is by no means a reflection of the schools I attended. They are presently committed Pretribulational schools. However, as is evident by this National Leadership Conference and others, Calvary Baptist Seminary is committed to being a School of Bereans who are willing to search the Scriptures on every issue and graciously debate with fellow believers on minor differences of opinion and Bible interpretation. I commend the School and Church for not sticking it's head in the sand by refusing to deal with issues that differ among fundamental Baptists.

- I am a Fundamentalist. However, not a divisive Fundamentalist. I believe in the maxim:
  In essentials we must have unity,
  In nonessentials we must allow liberty,
  But in all things we must show charity – Augustine

- I am conservative in my standards of worship, music, & dress. I am committed to exegesis and by God's grace strive to be faithful to all that the Bible teaches on every subject. I welcome all responses to my conclusions regarding the timing of the rapture. If by this presentation, I am shown by sound exegesis to be in error, I would be willing to change back to my former position of Pretribulational rapture or to any position that sound exegesis would demand.

- I believe in a: 1) Literal (normal) interpretation (not allegorical), 2) Contextual interpretation, 3) Grammatical interpretation, 4) Comparing Scripture with Scripture.

- I am a Premillennialist, holding to a literal 1,000 year rule & reign of Christ on a renovated earth, during which time Satan will be bound according to Revelation 20:1-10.

- Therefore, I appeal to you to be patient with me. To at very least accurately understand my position without allowing heated emotions to sidestep any issue of honest Bible investigation. Our Christian maturity should allow us to hear and to tolerate our differences as we together patiently and anxiously await our Lord's return. I, like all of my Pretribulational brethren, believe in the Rapture before the Wrath of God. The difference lies in when that Wrath begins. When does the Day of the LORD begin.

A. <u>WHAT</u> is the Rapture?

The word "rapture" is a derivative of the Latin word "*rapere*" (meaning rapid). This word occurs in the Latin translation of I Thessalonians 4:7, which translates the Greek expression "caught up."

Although the Bible contains many references to the Rapture, there are four key passages which describe this momentous event.

Note the main emphases of the passages below:

1) **Matthew 24:22, 31, 40-42** - The Rapture is a time when Christ will **<u>REMOVE</u>** His Elect saints
*(The Rapture = **<u>Deliverance</u>** from divine wrath)*

2) **John 14:1-3** - The Rapture is a time when Christ will **<u>RECEIVE</u>** His Elect saints
*(The Rapture = **<u>Reception</u>** into Christ's arms)*

3) **I Corinthians 15:50-58** - The Rapture is a time when Christ will **<u>RENEW</u>** (resurrect) His elect saints
*(The Rapture = **<u>Transformation</u>** from corruptible mortality)*

4) **I Thessalonians 4:13-18** - The rapture is a time when Christ will **<u>REUNITE</u>** His Elect saints
*(The Rapture = **<u>Reunion</u>** with the dead in Christ)*



Scripture teaches that believers are to:

1. **Watch** for His coming
   Matthew 24:42 –" Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

2. **Wait** for His coming
   1 Cor. 1:7 – "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. **Look** for His coming
   Titus 2:13 – "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

4. **Hope** for His coming
   1 Peter 1:13 – "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

5. **Love** His coming
   2 Tim. 4:8 – "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

6. **Be faithful** until His coming
   1 Tim. 6:14 – "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."
   1 Peter 1:7 – "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

7. **Remain patient** until His coming
   James 5:7-8 – "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

B. WHEN is the Rapture?

The fact of the Rapture taking place is not a debated issue among conservative Bible believers (all fundamental and evangelical Christians believe that the Rapture will take place). However, the timing of that great event is debated among believers. When will that "blessed hope" take place?

*The various views about the timing of the Rapture:

1. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture View

a. The Position:

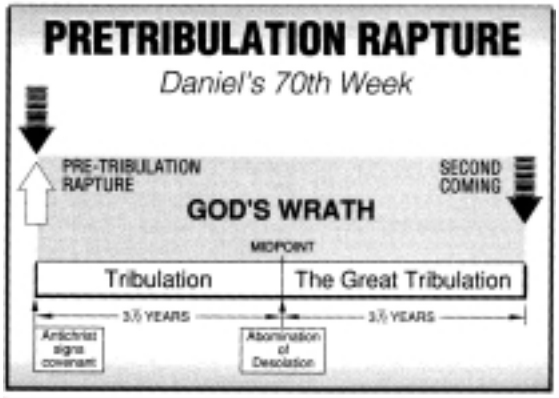


Chart by Marvin Rosenthal - "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church"

b. The Proponents:
This view was --
--originated by the preaching of John N. Darby (1830)[1]
--popularized by the footnotes in the Scofield Bible
--systematized by the faculty of Dallas Seminary
(Charles C. Ryrie, John F. Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost)

c. The Proofs:
1) Believers are exempt from God's wrath (i.e. The Day of the Lord), and His wrath will be poured out at the beginning of and throughout the 70th week of Daniel

a) Believers are exempt from God's wrath
--I Thess. 1:10 - *"delivered from the wrath to come"*
--I Thess. 5:9 - *"not appointed unto wrath. . . but salvation"*

(Prewrath response: As God delivered Noah & Lot, so He will remove His church before He pours out His wrath in the Day of the LORD (Luke 17:27, 29). No one can argue that God will deliver His people from His wrath. Certainly He will. But the wrath of God does not begin at the beginning of the 70th week, but after the opening of the 6th seal according to Revelation 6:17.)

[1] Dave MacPherson in "The Incredible Cover-up" and "Rapture?" strongly contends that the Pretribulational view actually started by a "revelation" in 1830 to a Scottish woman named Margaret Macdonald. He argues that prior to 1830 no one in church history held to a Pretribulational rapture.

A key proof text for the Pretribulational view is: *Rev. 3:10 "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will **keep thee from the hour of temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."*
(Prewrath Response to Rev.3:10: "Keep" does not mean removal from the hour of trial by means of rapture but protection through that hour[2])

b) --All of the seals (Rev. 6) describe the outpouring of God's wrath in the Day of the Lord.
(Prewrath Response: Would God pour out His wrath on His saints? [Rev. 6:9-11]? The wrath of God is said to <u>begin</u> in Rev. 6:17)

2) In Revelation chapters 4 - 18 no reference is made to the word "church," indicating that the church must have been removed from the earth prior (Prewrath Response: An argument from <u>silence</u> is not a substantial argument)[3]

[2] The Lord Jesus makes a deliberate point by using the same Greek word "Kept" two times in one verse. Therefore, the way in which one interprets the word "kept" in the first part of Revelation 3:10 must be the way in which God wanted that same word to be understood in the second part of that verse. The Lord Jesus said: "Because thou hast **kept** *(tereo)* the word of my patience, I also will **keep** *(tereo)* thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Jesus' deliberate point is this: "Because you guarded my word,… I will guard you" He certainly didn't intend to mean: "Because you removed my word, …I will remove you." J.H. Thayer (1828-1901) in commenting on Rev. 3:10 understood the word "Keep" to mean "by guarding" (A Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T., p. 622). Matthew Henry (1662-1714) observed that "those who keep the gospel in a time of peace shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation [Revelation 3:10]" *(Commentary*, VI, p. 1134). The only other time the Greek construction – *tereo …ek* ("Keep…from") occurs in the N.T. is John 17:15 in which Jesus said "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest **keep them from** the evil." (Here Jesus obviously did not have special removal in mind, but spiritual protection.

[3] The Prewrath position holds that the church age saints are raptured at the 6th seal (Compare Matthew 24:29-31 with Revelation 6:7-17). They are described as coming "out of the Great Tribulation" (Revelation 7:9-17, *v14), and are not mentioned again until the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev.19:7-9). Therefore one should not expect to find the Church mentioned in Revelation Chapters 7-18 which primarily focus on God's outpoured Wrath during the Trumpet & Vial Judgments.

3) The Bible teaches the doctrine of <u>imminency</u>.
(Imminent = the Rapture can occur at any moment with no forewarning or signs)

Pretribulationalism's proof: Passages that call upon believers to *"watch"* (Rom. 13:11-12; I Thes. 5:6-8; Lk. 12:35-40) and *"look"* (Titus 2:13) prove imminency.
The term "imminency" is a word used to convey the concept of an any moment rapture with no necessary preceding events or signs prior to the rapture.

(Prewrath Response: Does the Bible teach imminency or does it teach expectancy? It is clear that the Apostles believed that the Rapture could occur during their lifetime, but an any-moment Rapture without any signs is not a valid doctrine in Scripture.)

Did the Apostles expect an imminent Rapture?
--The Rapture could not be imminent for Peter because he was told that he would die before the Rapture (John 21:18-19)

--The Rapture was not imminent for Paul because he taught that the apostasy and the revealing of the man of sin would have to precede the coming of Christ (2 Thess. 2:3)

--Paul also taught that believers would <u>NOT</u> be overtaken by the rapture/Day of the Lord as a "thief in the night" as would the rest of the unsaved world (1 Thess. 5:4).

--The term "imminency" never appears in the text of Scripture. It is a concept which the Pretribulational system has developed largely to feed its own belly.

--Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:36 "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" does not prove imminency. It is totally inconsistent for Pretribulationalists to use that text to support an any moment rapture when the context of Matthew 24 outlines just the opposite. It is very wrong to say that Matthew 24 has nothing to do with the church or rapture and then to use Matthew 24:36 to prove the imminency of the Rapture of the Church.
Note: while it is true that no man can pin point the exact "day and hour" this does not mean that people living during that time cannot discern the general time period approaching the Lord's return.

--Imminency cannot be a valid doctrine, if, according to Hebrews 10:25, the church can "see the day approaching." The phrase "the day" is a technical phrase describing the day of Christ or the day of the LORD. (Rom. 13:12; I Cor. 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 1:6,10; 2:6; 1 Thess. 5:2,5; 2 Thess. 2:2). In the context of Hebrews 10:25 it most evidently has reference to Christ's coming as the writer describes that event in Hebrews 10:37.

--Since the first coming of Christ was not imminent by any means (Dan. 9:25-26), it may follow that his second coming is not absolutely imminent. This concept must at least be considered. God was not against giving signs and events and a time frame regarding his first advent, and He seemed anxious to help the disciples in looking for His return at His second coming in Matthew 24.

-- Passages that call upon believers to *"watch"* (Rom. 13:11-12; I Thes. 5:6-8; Lk. 12:35-40) and *"look"* (Titus 2:13) do not prove imminency. One can look for something special like the rapture, while still waiting through events that must precede his coming. For example, my children, would anxiously await and look forward to summer vacation to Florida, while enduring the rigors of school in the months intervening.

--The Lord Jesus used terms of urgency which appear to describe imminency such as His statements that His coming was "Near, even at the doors" (Mt. 24:33); "Watch therefore: for ye know not what Hour your Lord doth come" (Mt. 24:42); and "be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Mt.24:44). But all of these references are in a context describing signs and events that He said must precede His coming.

4) Some Pretribulationalists say that the *"come up hither"* of Rev. 4:1 symbolizes the Rapture, and the "*24 elders"* of Rev. 4 & 5 represents the Church in Heaven before the Tribulation begins (6:1).
(Prewrath Response: Such interpretations are allegorizations of Scripture - a hermeneutic that must be rejected by a literalist interpreter.)

5) The *"falling away"* in II Thess. 2:3 refers to a "catching away" or "departure" by Rapture.
(Prewrath Response: The Greek term *apostacia* can only mean moral or doctrinal <u>apostasy</u>; Never does the term refer to a "catching away" in Biblical or secular literature.)

6) The *"Restrainer"* is the Holy Spirit (who lives in believers). He will be removed prior to the Tribulation (II Thess. 2:6-7). (Prewrath Response: Nothing in context conclusively proves that the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit. Question: If it is the Spirit, is He removed or is his restraint removed? The Holy Spirit is said to be at work in the Tribulation period (compare Joel 2:28; Ezek.39:28-29)[4]

7) The Distinction between Israel & the Church (the theological reasoning of Dispensationalism)

Pretribulationalism holds that:

a) The church was not in the first 69 weeks; how could she be in the 70th week? (Dan. 9:27)

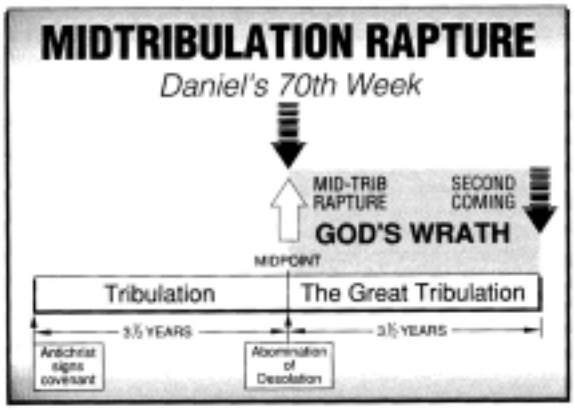
b) The nature of the Tribulation describes God's dealings with Israel, not the church

(Prewrath Response: It is wrong to assume that God is going to revert back to His Old Covenant as He deals with Israel in the Tribulation. Since He will not, there is no compelling dispensational reason to break the Church Age off from the 70th week. The Tribulation is not a new dispensation, but a transition from this age to the golden age of the Millennium. Beware of letting a theological system (like Dispensationalism) formulate your interpretation of Scripture. Exegesis always takes precedence over a Theological System. Beware of filtering Scripture through a presupposed grid.)

[4] Marvin Rosenthal in *The Prewrath Rapture of the Church* holds that the "Restrainer" in 2 Thess. 2:6-7 could be Michael the Archangel who fights Satan (Rev. 12:7-12; Dan.12:1) and restrains him until the midpoint of the 70th week, when he lets him go to pour out his fury against Israel and God's people (Rev. 12:13-17).

2. The <u>Mid-Tribulation</u> Rapture View

a. The <u>Position</u>:



b. The <u>Proponents</u>: J. Oliver Buswell Jr. (*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*); Gleason L. Archer

c. The <u>Proofs</u>:
   1) God's wrath begins at the <u>mid-point</u>; hence, the Church must be raptured prior
   2) The 7th trumpet of Rev. 10:7 is sounded at the mid-point. This trumpet is the same as the *"last trumpet"* of I Corinthians 15:52.
   3) Matthew 24:27 - describes Rapture which occurs during a time of "peace" like Noah's day (v. 36-39). This peace corresponds to the first 3 1/2 years
   4) The resurrection and rapture of the 2 witnesses pictures the resurrection and rapture of the church (Rev. 11:11-12)

d. The <u>Problems</u>; Prewrath Response:
   1) This view contradicts Jesus statement that no man can know the exact <u>day</u> and <u>hour</u> of His coming (Mt. 24:42; 25:13)
   2) This view falsely assumes that the trumpets occur during the first 3-1/2 years

2. The <u>Post-Tribulation</u> Rapture View

a. The <u>Position</u>:

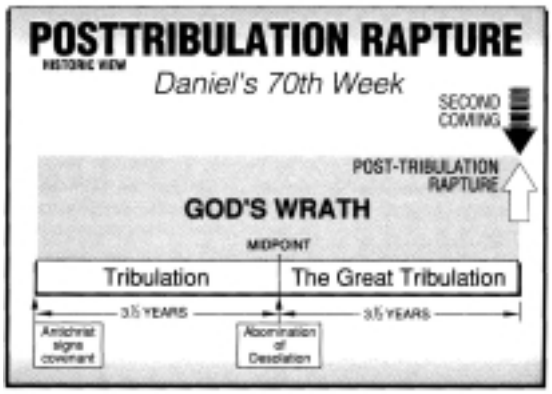


Chart by Marvin Rosenthal - "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church"

b. The <u>Proponents</u>:
*Dr. Robert Gundry – Author of *First, The Antichrist*
--W.E. Blackstone *Jesus Is Coming*
--George E. Ladd
--Alexander Reese
--Roland Rasmussen *The Post-trib, Pre-wrath Rapture*

c. The <u>Proofs</u>:

1) The Rapture and Second Coming are not distinguished in Scripture (the words "*parousia*" [coming or presence - I Th. 4:15; Mt. 24:27] and "*apokalupsis*" [revealing - I Cor. 1:7; I Pet. 1:7, 4:13] -- both are used to describe the same event.

2) Revelation 4 - 18 describes God's "saints" as living on earth, not in Heaven.

3) The connection between the Rapture (I Thes. 4) and the Day of the Lord (I Thes. 5) shows a Post-Tribulation Rapture.

d. The <u>Problems</u>; Prewrath Response:

1) This view would contradict Jesus' statement that no man can know the <u>exact</u> <u>day</u> and <u>hour</u> (Mt. 24:42, 25:13). This view would pinpoint the timing of Christ's Return.

2) If the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, the Trumpet & Bowl Judgments would extend past the 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation. The judgments would also extend beyond the 1,335 days of Daniel 12:11-13. The 1,335 days start their countdown at the middle of the 70 week.

3) This view does <u>not</u> allow for the days of the Tribulation to be "<u>cut short</u>" for the Elect as Jesus stated in Matthew 24.

4. The <u>Pre-Wrath</u> (Pre-Day of the LORD) Rapture View

a. The <u>Position</u>:

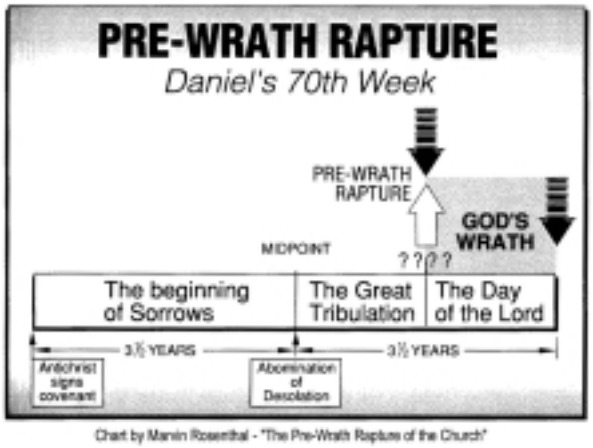


Chart by Marvin Rosenthal - "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church"

b. The <u>Proponents</u>

Although some minor details of this view were not spelled out, the basic arguments for the fact that the church would have to face the Antichrist in the Tribulation and the fact that the Rapture would take place before the Wrath of God was poured out was held by such men as:

J.C. Ryle
C.H. Spurgeon (A continuation of Spurgeon's viewpoints are being published by Banner Ministries Box 23, Belpur, Derbys DE561QR UK. They recently published an article titled: "A Fearless Look at the Rapture Debate," which shows that Spurgeon held to many tenants of the Pre-wrath view)

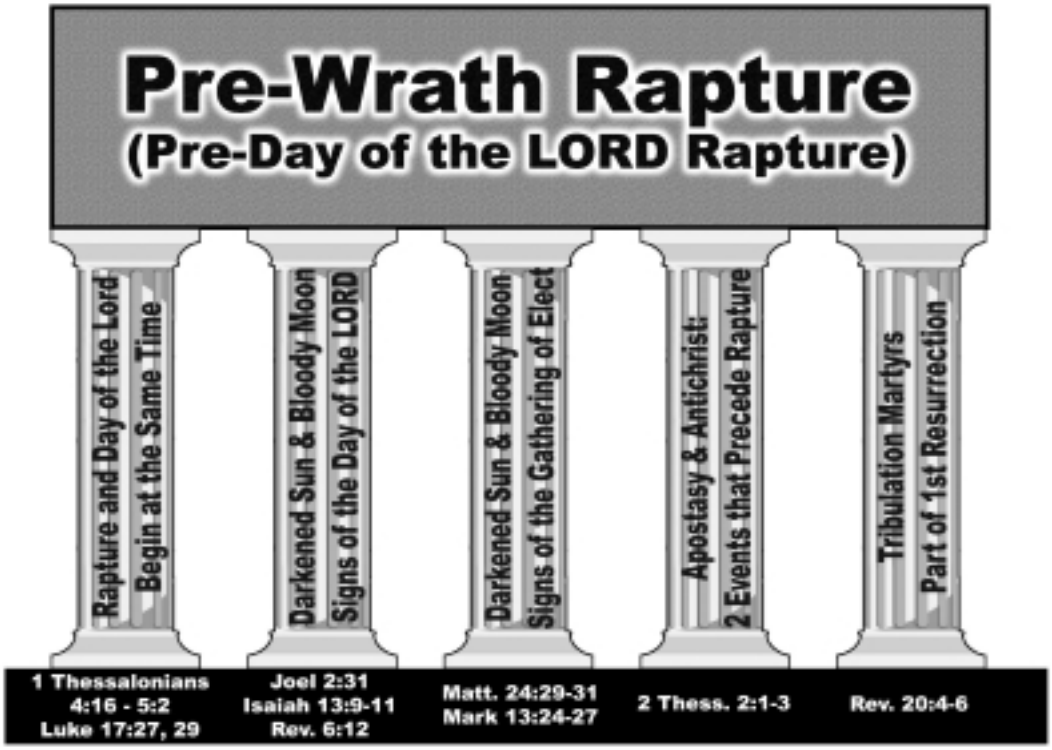
This view has been largely systematized by Marvin J. Rosenthal (Author of the Book - *The Pre-wrath Rapture of the Church* Nelson Pub.)
Other contemporary proponents of this view include:
Robert VanKampen – Author of *The Sign* and *The Prewrath Rapture Position Examined*
H. L. Nigro – Author of *Before God's Wrath*

c. The <u>Proofs</u>

A Brief Synopsis of the Pre-Wrath Rapture View

Six Scriptural indications that the Rapture will occur <u>during the Tribulation</u>, but <u>before</u> "The Day of the LORD":

I. The <u>TIMING</u> of "The Day of the LORD"
II. The <u>CHRONOLOGY</u> of Matthew 24
III. The <u>SHORTENING</u> of "The Great Tribulation" for the Elect (Mt. 24:22)
IV. The <u>CONDITIONS</u> that precede "The Day of Christ" (II Thes. 2:1-3)
V. The <u>HARVEST</u> of the Righteous before the Winepress of God's Wrath (Rev. 14:14-20)
VI. The <u>PEOPLE</u> included in "The First Resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-6)



INTRODUCTION: See: **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**

The Rapture is a:
1) Cheerful Hope (v. 13)
2) Certain Hope (v. 14)
3) Common Hope (v. 15-17)
4) Comforting Hope (v. 18)

Chapter 5 is a continuation of the flow of thought in chapter 4, hence tying the Rapture to the Day of the Lord. Unfortunately, the chapter division between I Thessalonians 4 & 5 has led many not to see the vital connection between these two chapters.

*I Thess. 4:17-5:2 "Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up (raptured)** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord…But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night."*



I Thess.5:1- **"But of"** ("*peri de*") is used here to introduce a new emphasis of that which was previously stated (compare this construction in the eschatological passages of Matthew 22:31, 24:36; The phrase is not disjunctive as some assume, but is transitional).



The phrase "the times and seasons"(5:1) is stated without an object; hence it is referring back in context to the Rapture in 4:17 (the antecedent to this phrase is the catching up and meeting the Lord in the air described in 4:17). Therefore the timing of the Rapture and the Day of the LORD are tied together chronologically.

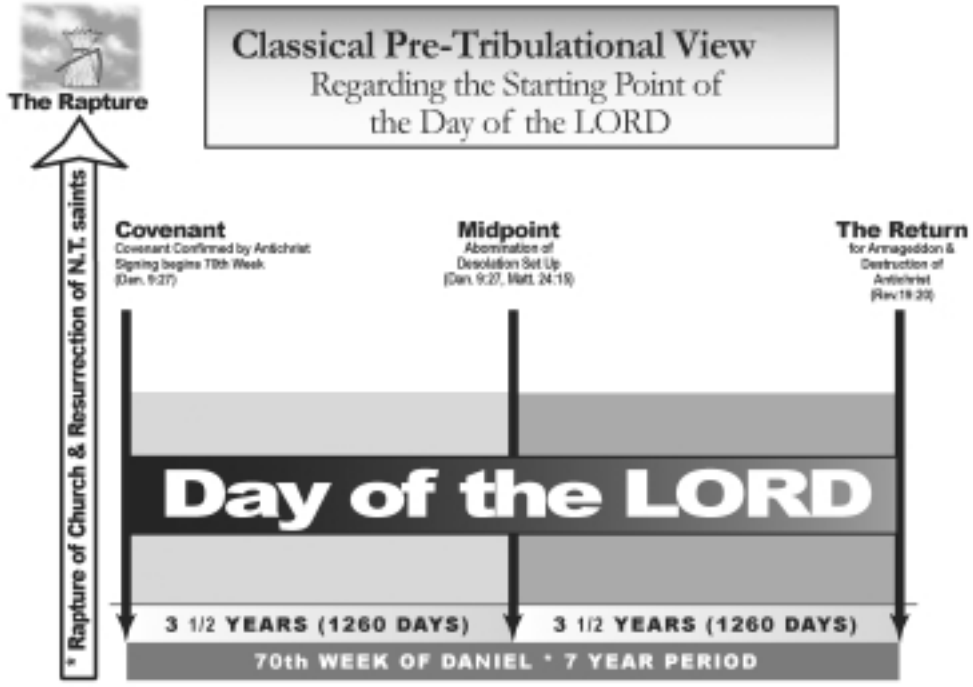
The Day of the Lord (I Thes. 4:1-11) will come during a time when:

1) The world will not <u>expect</u> it (v. 1-3a)
2) The world will not <u>escape</u> it (v. 3b)
3) True believers will <u>expect</u> it (v. 4-7)
4) True believers will <u>escape</u> it (v. 8-11)



Note contrast:

Unbelievers - "They...them...they"
(v. 3 - unsaved world to be judged in the Day of the Lord).
Believers - "Ye...you (v. 4) . . . ye (v. 5) . . . us (v. 6)
. . . us (v. 8) . . . us (v. 9). . . we (v. 10)
(believers to be delivered [raptured] from the Day of the Lord).
"Salvation" (v. 8, 10) = Delivered; rescued ("raptured")



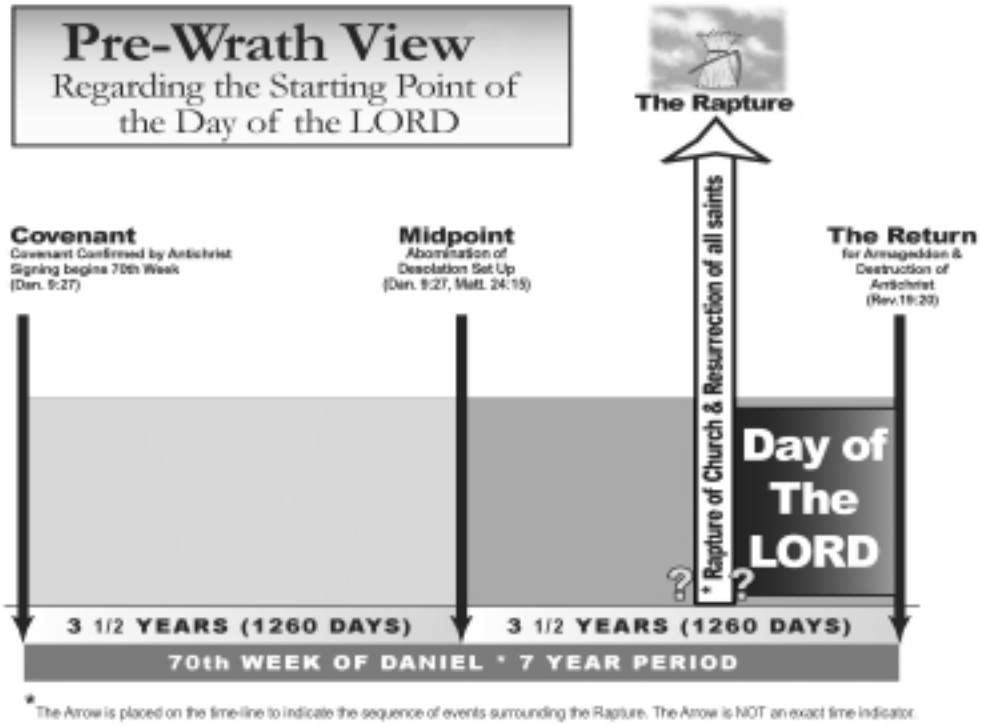
If the timing of the Rapture is so linked up with the timing of the Day of the Lord, as Paul reveals in I Thes. 4:13-5:11, the question that naturally follows is: ***When will the Day of the Lord take place?" To find the answer to that question is to find the answer to the timing of the Rapture.***

SEE: Isaiah 2:10-12, 17-21; 13:6-13; Amos 5:18-20.
Every reference to the Day of the Lord describes unparalleled terror and judgment, not congruous with a major portion of the early stages of the 7-year Tribulation.

The Day of the Lord will be:

1) A day when only the Lord will be exalted (not the Antichrist) (Is. 2:17)
2) A day of desperation (Is. 2:19)
3) A day when God shakes the earth (Is. 2:21)
4) A day of fainting hands and melting hearts (Is. 13:7)
5) A day of shocking pain (Is. 13:8)
6) A day of signs in the sky (Is. 13:10)
7) A day of no deliverance (Ezek. 7:19)
8) A day of destruction (Joel 1:15)
9) A day of torment (Joel 2:1-6)
10) A day of no escape (Amos 5:18-19)
11) A day of darkness (Amos 5:20)
12) A day of judgment on the heathen (Gentiles) (Obad. 15)
13) A day of wrath (Zeph. 1:15)
14) A day of no hope (Zeph. 1:17)
15) A day of cosmic disturbances (Zech. 14:6-7)



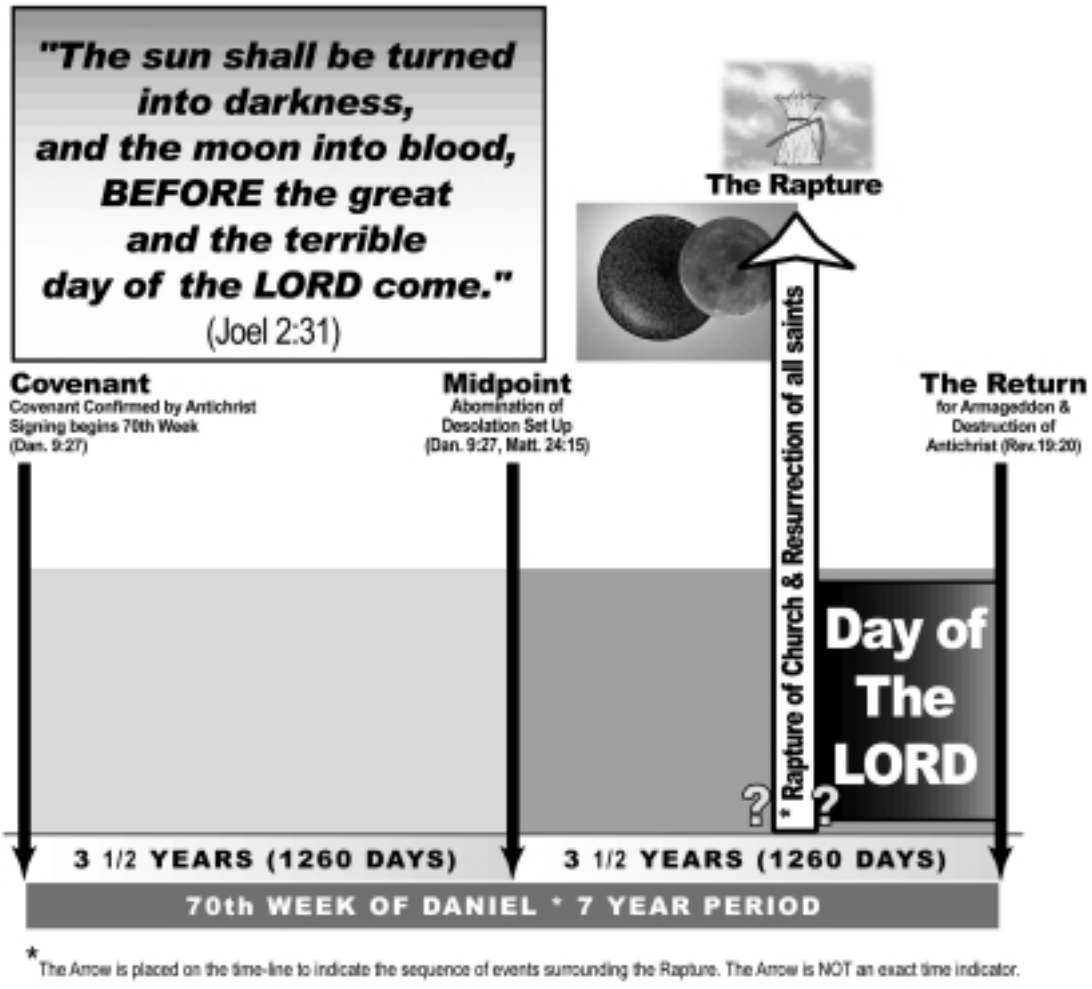


The Key SIGN of the Day of the LORD

Joel 2:31 - *"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, <u>BEFORE</u> the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."*

(Other Scriptures which speak of the same cosmic disturbances include: Isaiah 13:9-11; Isaiah 24:23; Isaiah 50:3; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; Joel 3:15; Amos 5:18, 20; Acts 2:20; Revelation 6:12)





*The Arrow is placed on the time-line to indicate the sequence of events surrounding the Rapture. The Arrow is NOT an exact time indicator.

***Believers will not face the wrath of God in "The Day of the LORD"** (I Thes. 5:9, 1:10).

Six Scriptural indications that the Rapture will occur during the Tribulation, but before "The Day of the LORD":

1) The TIMING of "The Day of the LORD"

a) Every Bible reference to "The Day of the LORD" points to a time period occurring in the latter half of the seven-year Tribulation.

[Is. 2:12, 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1; Jer. 46:10; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:20; II Pet. 3:10; cp. Zeph. 1:18, 2:2, 3]

b) The Bible teaches that Elijah (or someone like him) must appear before "The Day of the LORD" (Mal. 4:5).

c) The Bible teaches that signs in the sky will occur just before (prior to) the beginning of "The Day of the LORD" (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:17).

d) The Bible identifies the beginning signs of "The Day of the LORD" with the opening of the sixth seal (Rev 6:12-17).



Question: Does not the Day of God's wrath include the first five seals also?

Evidently not. Prewrath proofs:

(1) While Christ is sovereign over the events of the first five seals (since He opens each one), the nature of the events that transpire indicate the results of man's sin and wrath, not God's. The N.T. speaks of both the wrath of Satan (Rev. 12:12; Lk.21:23) and the wrath of God (Rev. 6:17). And the contexts of both clearly distinguish them in time and character.

(2) During the five seals, God uses natural (earthly) causes to accomplish His purpose; whereas beginning with the sixth seal and continuing through the trumpet and bowl judgments, God uses supernatural causes to judge.

* (3) The fifth seal could not be God's wrath since it describes the martyrdom of God's faithful saints.

* (4) The question asked by the martyred "souls under the altar" (Rev. 6:10) indicates that God's judicial wrath on His enemies had not yet begun.
(God answers their prayer in 8:3).
Revelation 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

(5) The word "wrath" is not used in the first five seals.

(6) The sign of God's wrath is said to begin in Rev. 6:17, and the outpouring of God's wrath begins in 8:7.



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

Question: Does not the phrase "is come" ("*elthen*" - aorist indicative of "*erchomai*") indicate that the day of God's wrath began before the sixth seal?
No. In this dramatic context, God is using "*elthen*" as an **ingressive** aorist which speaks of an action about to occur. (i.e. the impending wrath of God.)

Note: the use of "*elthen*" in this sense in -
(1) Rev. 19:7 - speaking of the Church's impending (about to begin) marriage
(2) Mk. 14:41 - speaking of Christ's impending (about to begin) crucifixion

e) The Bible identifies the signs in the sky with Christ's coming and the in-gathering (Rapture) of His elect (Matthew 24:29-31).

2) The CHRONOLOGY of Matthew 24

The Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24 answers the disciple's question: *"…what shall be the **sign** of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (v.3)*

"The sign (singular) ***of Thy coming"*** **-** The sign of Christ's coming is given in vv. 29-30. This sign, which will occur when the sixth seal is loosed in Rev. 6:12, will fulfill Joel 2:31, which foretold that this "sign" of the sun being darkened and the moon turning blood-red will come immediately before the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord.

"Your coming" **-** Your *"parousias"* (speaks of His personal presence at his second advent) [This word is used to speak of the Rapture throughout the New Testament (v. 27, 37, 39; I Cor. 15:23; I Th. 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; II Th. 2:1, 8; Ja. 5:7, 8; II Pet. 1:16, 3:4; I Jn. 2:28).]

"The end of the world" **-** lit. "the completion of the age" *("aionos")*
Not speaking of the obliteration of the earth (as some Bible teachers suggest), but of the end of this Age, before the Millennial Age. The Lord Jesus Christ promised the Church that He would accompany her as she makes disciples *"even unto the end of the world (age)."* The church therefore will exist until the "end of the age" when Christ will return in Matthew 24:30-31. The end of this Age will end the age of "man" and will commence the Day of the Lord. How will we know when the end of this Age is to come? Jesus gives specific, detailed descriptions of life on earth prior to His coming.

a) The first half of the seven-year Tribulation is described in verses 4 - 14.

NOTE: Matthew 24:4-31 runs strikingly parallel to the six seals of Revelation 6.

THE HARMONY OF MATTHEW 24 & REVELATION 6	
Matthew 24	**Revelation 6**
v.4-5 **Deception**	Seal # 1 **Deception**
v.6-7a **War**	Seal # 2 **War**
v.7b **Famine**	Seal # 3 **Famine**
v.7-8 **Death & Destruction**	Seal # 4 **Death & Destruction**
v.9-22 **Persecution** (Innocent Bloodshed)	Seal # 5 **Persecution** (Innocent Bloodshed)
v.29-31 **Cosmic Signs (Sun & Moon Altered)**	Seal # 6 **Cosmic Signs (Sun & Moon altered)**

b) From the mid-point of the Tribulation up to the Rapture is described in verses 15-51.

V. 30
"They shall <u>see</u> the Son of man coming in the clouds" -

Pretribulational Rapturism generally believes that the Rapture will be in "secret" and that Christ will not be visible to the world at that time.

However, the words that are continually employed in describing the Rapture show that Christ <u>will be visible</u> both at the Rapture and at His return to earth.

Four words describe Christ's second coming at the Rapture and His return:
(1) "*Parousia"* - Emphasizing Christ's <u>presence</u>
(2) "*Erchomai"* - Emphasizing Christ's <u>coming</u>
* (3) "*Apokalypsis"*-Emphasizing Christ's <u>self-disclosure</u> (His visible revelation of Himself)
* (4) "*Epiphaneia"* -Emphasizing Christ's <u>appearing</u> (His visible manifestation)

Greek Terms	**RAPTURE**	**RETURN**
Parousia	I Thess. 4:15	II Thess. 2:8
Erchomai	John 14:3	Jude 14
Apokalypsis	I Cor. 1:7 I Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13 Luke 17:30	II Thess. 1:7
Epiphaneia	II Tim. 4:8 Titus 2:13 I Tim. 6:14	II Thess. 2:8 II Tim. 4:1

<u>Three Important Facts to Remember:</u>

1. I Thessalonians 4:16-5:2 teaches that the Rapture of the Church and the Day of the Lord are tied together (the Rapture and the Day of the Lord begin on the same day).

2. Joel 2:31 (cp. Acts 2:20) teaches that the alterations of the sun and moon will occur <u>before</u> the Day of the Lord begins.

3. Therefore, the darkening of the sun and moon, the Rapture of the Church, and the beginning of the Day of the Lord <u>all happen at the same time</u>.
(This is precisely what Matthew teaches in verses 29 - 31.)

Proofs that the "coming of Christ" described in v. 31-42 is the Rapture:

(1) The trumpet sounds (v. 31; cp. I Cor. 15:52; I Thes. 4:16)

(2) The elect are gathered (v. 31; cp. v. 22) [note: the term "elect" (chosen ones) is a term used exclusively of the Church in the N.T. The term "election" is used of redeemed Jews and Gentiles in this age. The term is never used of secular national Israel in the N.T. but only of the saved chosen people of God (whether Jew or Gentile)]

Angels are said to do the gathering of God's elect. Such a fact conforms to Paul's statement regarding the rapture when he said to the persecuted Thessalonians: *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven* ***with his mighty angels****"* (2 Thes. 1:7)

(3) The "elect" who are gathered are not Jews gathered from Earth to Jerusalem (as most Pretribulationalists assume) but as Jesus clarified in Mark's parallel passage*: "And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds,* ***from (apo) the uttermost part of the earth to (heos) the uttermost part of HEAVEN****."* (Mark 13:27) The elect are gathered to the extremities of Heaven not to Jerusalem on earth! This is indisputably the Rapture being described.

(4) The day and hour is unknown (v. 36, 42, 44)
(if the timing of those taken away referred to the end of the Tribulation [as pretribulationists suggest], the timing would be known)

(5) Certain individuals are seized away (v. 40-41)
("taken" = "*paralambano"* - to receive unto oneself, to take along with - This same word is used in John 14:3- "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you ("paralambano") unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

(6) Those gathered are taken to the wedding (context: Mt.25:10; cp. Rev. 19:7-9)

* (7) The "peaceful" conditions on the earth (v. 36-39) experienced by the unsaved prior to the *"coming of the Son of man"* unquestionably point to the Rapture.

Many Pretribulationalists in a desperate attempt to make verses 40 & 41 not refer to the Rapture explain it thus:

> "Those taken in verses 40 & 41 are not saints but sinners who are removed from the earth at the end of the Tribulation."

This view has a major problem explaining how the previous context (v. 36-37) relates to those seized away (i.e. v. 40-41).

Every Pretribulationalist knows that the end of the Tribulation will involve the most severe, terrifying judgments (bowls - Rev. 15-16) ever to fall on earth.

The world's conditions at the end of the Tribulation will not allow the relaxed, uninhibited, normal "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" scenario described in vv. 36-39.

Verses 40 and 41 and verse 31 must be describing the same event - The Rapture of the saints!

Note the phrases that link this context together, joining it to verses 30-31:

V. 33 - "It is near" (referring to the Lord's coming in v. 30-31)
V. 36 - "That day" (referring to the Lord's coming in v. 30-31)
V. 40 - "Then shall (referring immediately to the days like Noah's day [v. 36-39] and ultimately to the Lord's coming [v. 30-31])

OVERVIEW & COMPARISON OF THE SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE

MATTHEW 24	REVELATION 6	LUKE 17	LUKE 21
False Messiahs (v.4-5)	Antichrist's rise to power (v.2)		False Messiahs (v.8)
Wars & Rumors of Wars (v.6-7a)	Wars & Bloodshed (v.3-4)		Wars & Commotions (v.9-10)
Famine, disease, scattered earthquakes (v.7b-8)	Famine, Death (v.5-8)		Earthquakes, famines, pestilences (v.11)
Persecution of God's people & Deception (v.9-28) God's people - hated (v.9) God's people - betrayed (even by family) (v.10) **Abomination of Desolation by Antichrist** (v.15) Sever persecution (v.16-22) False signs & wonders to deceive (v.24)	Martyrdom of God's people	Trouble that will cause God's people to long for Christ's Return & Deception (v.22-23)	Persecution of God's people (v.12-24) God's people betrayed by family & friends (v.16) God's people hated (v.17) **Abomination of Desolation by Antichrist** (v.20)
Cosmic Disturbances (v.29-30)	Cosmic Disturbances (v.12-14)		Cosmic Disturbances (v.25-26)
The Second Coming of Christ (v.31-44) -some taken - Rapture -some left - Wrath	The Wrath of the Lamb (v.15-17)	The Second Coming of Christ (v.24-37) -some taken - Rapture -some left - Immediate Wrath	The Second Coming of Christ (v.27-36)

THE DAY OF THE LORD

- Trumpet Judgments (Rev. 8-9, 11:15-19)
- Bowl Judgments (Rev. 15-16)

The Pretribulationalist must not allow for the rapture in Matthew 24. To do so would be to annul the concept of imminency and would not allow for a Pretribulational rapture. To do so would be to allow for specific events to precede the Rapture (which is precisely Jesus' point in answer to the Disciple's question "what shall be the sign of your coming"). Therefore, the typical Pretribulational answer is that Jesus in not addressing the Church in Matthew 24, but is addressing Israel. This is only for the nation of Israel which will exist after the Rapture, during the tribulation.

However, a normal, straightforward reading of the text would not require that Matthew 24 is only addressed to Israel with no bearing on the Church. The text has to be skewed to limit the events only to Israel without the church present. Certainly our Lord is describing end time events as they relate to the Nation of Israel. All of prophesy is described as it relates to Israel. But this in no way necessitates the absence of the church during this time period. The absence of the church is an assumption. And we should never build doctrines on assumptions. When God deals with Israel during the Great Tribulation, He will deal with her under the New Testament or New Covenant Dispensation. He will never revert back to the Old Covenant or the Law. Therefore, there is absolutely no theological reason to brake off the Church from the time period when He will again deal with Israel.

Is there any compelling reason why Matthew 24 cannot apply to the Church as well as to Israel?

No, for the following reasons:

There is no grammatical reason in the passage to disassociate the words of Jesus from the men who are standing immediately in front of him (the Church's disciples). While it is true that the disciples did represent Israel, it is also true that they fully represented the church as well [These same disciples were taught church doctrine by Jesus (Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:17) and would lay the foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20).

The fact that this Olivet speech occurs in Matthew—a book dedicated to Jews and their future King—is inconsequential considering that the very same speech is recorded in Luke 21 and Mark 13.

If Jesus is describing the events leading to the "end of the age" (Mt. 24:3) and if the church is said to exist and make disciples until the "end of the age" (Mt. 28:20), then it stands to reason that the church cannot be removed prior to the end of the age.

The Lord Jesus will not return until the end of the age, just prior to the new age of the Millennial Kingdom. As Peter preached regarding Christ's return: *"Whom the heaven must receive* ***until the times of restitution of all things,*** *which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:21).*

3) The SHORTENING of "The Great Tribulation" for the Elect (Mt. 24:22)

Jesus is not teaching that the Great Tribulation will be shortened (it will last the full second half of the Tribulation). What He is teaching us is that it will be shortened (lit. "cut short" or "limited") for the elect.

Why is this time period limited only for the elect's sake? Is it because they are raptured previous to the very end?

Such a view does fit the context since verses 31, 40, 41 do describe a "catching away" of God's "elect" (v. 31).

4) The CONDITIONS that precede "The Day of Christ" (II Thes. 2:1-3)

The phrase "The Day of Christ" refers to the Rapture every time it is used (Ex: Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; I Cor. 1:8).

a) Condition # 1 - The Apostasy

"Falling away" *="apostasia"* - this word never (in Biblical or secular literature) refers to a "catching away" as some have suggested, but rather to an apostasy, rebellion, spiritual abandonment, or forsaking of one's "faith" (Acts 21:21). [SEE: Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon, p. 98]

"*Apostasia*" means to no longer stand where you once stood; to rebel against and abandon what you once held to. To forsake truth you once professed.

In classical Greek the word "*apostasia*" was used to "denote a political or military rebellion; in the Septuagint it was used of rebellion against God (Josh. 22:22)" (D. Edmond Hiebert)

Many attempt to interpret falling away as "departure" (meaning Rapture).
Paul has just referred to the Rapture (v. 1). Why would he say that the Rapture will not occur (v. 1-2) until the Rapture [departure] takes place??

"A falling away first" - lit. the falling away. The definite article points to a specific apostasy. Throughout church history, there are always been apostasy. It is on the up rise today. However, God is speaking about a particular apostasy; a great apostasy; an enormous apostasy; whereby professing Christians abandon Christianity by the droves! God warned about such a departure to occur in the Last Days. SEE: I Tim. 4:1-3

Mt. 24:9-10 - *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."*

This particular reference to "the apostasy" is not being fulfilled today, but will be fulfilled in the future. When will it occur? Most likely at the same time as the Mark of the Beast is enforced upon every man, woman, boy and girl. Such intense pressure to give in or die (Rev. 13) will cause the false professors to manifest their true colors. Not all of professing Christianity possesses Christ and salvation.

b) Condition # 2 - The revealing of the Antichrist

"Revealed" **-** unveiled; disclosed; uncovered; clearly manifested.

The timing of this "revealing" from the believers' standpoint is when he signs (Dan. 9:27) a 7 year peace treaty with Israel. However, from Israel's viewpoint, his true identity will not be revealed until the mid-point of the 70th week of Daniel 9:27, when he breaks the covenant, abominates the Jewish temple (Mt. 24:15), and sets himself up in it to be worshipped as God (II Th. 2:4).

Question: Is the "revealing" referring to the Antichrist's manifestation of his true person and character to discerning believers in the beginning of the Tribulation or to Israel at the mid-point of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:15)?

In either case, His revealing must occur before the "Day of Christ."

5) The HARVEST of the Righteous before the Winepress of God's Wrath (Rev. 14:14-20)

Verses 14-20 describe two distinct ingatherings.
[NOTE: Henry Alford, The Greek New Testament IV, p. 690, holds that verses 14-16 describe the harvest of the saints, while verses 17-20, the harvest of the wicked].



a) The Son of man reaps a harvest (v. 14-16)
(A harvest of the righteous)

Evidences of "Rapture":

(1) "*White cloud*" - corresponds to the Rapture (Mt. 24:30; I Th. 4:17)

NOTE: The Rapture of the saints pictures Christ's coming in white clouds. The return for judgment pictures Christ's coming on a white horse (Rev. 19:11).

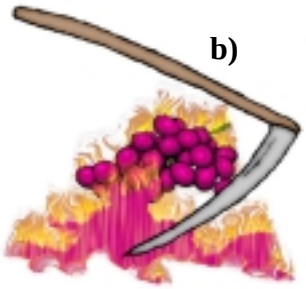
(2) "*Son of man*" = Jesus Christ (cp. Rev. 1:13)

[NOTE: The phrase "Son of man" is a frequently-used phrase in reference to the second coming and the resurrection of the dead (Jn. 5:26-28; Mt. 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44].

(3) "*A golden crown*" (Greek *"stephanon"* - singular)

When Christ returns for Armageddon, He is pictured as having "many crowns" (Greek "diademata" - plural) (Rev. 19;12).

(4) "*Angel...loud voice*" = Evidently the "*shout...the voice of the archangel*" of the Rapture (I Th. 4:16)



b) The angel reaps a harvest (v. 17-20)
(A harvest of the wicked)

(1) This gathering is not describing a removal of people from the earth.

(2) Rather, this gathering is describing a gathering of the world's armies to Israel for the Battle of Armageddon (Zech. 14:1ff; Joel 3:1-3, 13; Is. 63:1-6; Rev. 19:11-16).

*God always removes His people immediately prior to His wrath (Ex: Noah & Lot - Luke 17:27-30).

6) The PEOPLE included in "The First Resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-6)

a) The Resurrection of the Just (v. 4, 6)
In addition to the "*dead in* Christ" from past generations (I Thes. 4:16), also included in the "first" resurrection are saints who had to endure opposition during the Tribulation (v. 4).

b) The Resurrection of the Unjust (v. 5a)

(1) "The rest of the dead" - Evidently refers to the unbelieving dead who will be resurrected for the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11) and be condemned to a "second death" (20:6, 14).
(2) Hence, the blessing is only on those involved in the "first resurrection" (v. 6).

c) Concluding observation:

Fact #1 - The Bible clearly teaches two distinguishable, major, general resurrections (Jn. 5:29; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 14:14; Acts 24:15).

Fact #2 - The resurrection and the Rapture occur precisely at the same time period ("give or take a few seconds") (I Cor. 15:51-54; I Th. 4:15-17).

Fact #3 - The resurrection described in Rev. 20:4 includes those people who had to take a stand against the Antichrist, his mark, and his image.

***Assertion - Therefore, if the "first resurrection" is indeed "first" and if this resurrection will include Tribulation martyrs (v. 4), then the Rapture cannot be Pretribulational.**

At this point, the Pretribulationist reply could be: "But the 'first' resurrection will occur in stages - The first stage being the Pretribulational Rapture, the second stage being before the Millennium."

Question: Can the idea that two general resurrections of the just (one before the Tribulation and one after the Tribulation) be honestly proven exegetically from Scripture?

*It is true that the first Resurrection will occur in stages. But these stages ("order" of resurrections) are specifically outlined by Paul in I Cor. 15:22-24.

Stage # 1 - "Christ, the first fruits"

Stage # 2 - "Afterward ("*epeita*") they that are Christ's at His coming" [The Rapture]

Stage # 3 - "Then ("*eita*") . . . the end ("*telos*")
[The final Resurrection of the just at the end of the Millennium. This resurrection will evidently involve those who died between the Rapture and return of Christ, and those who died during the Millennium.

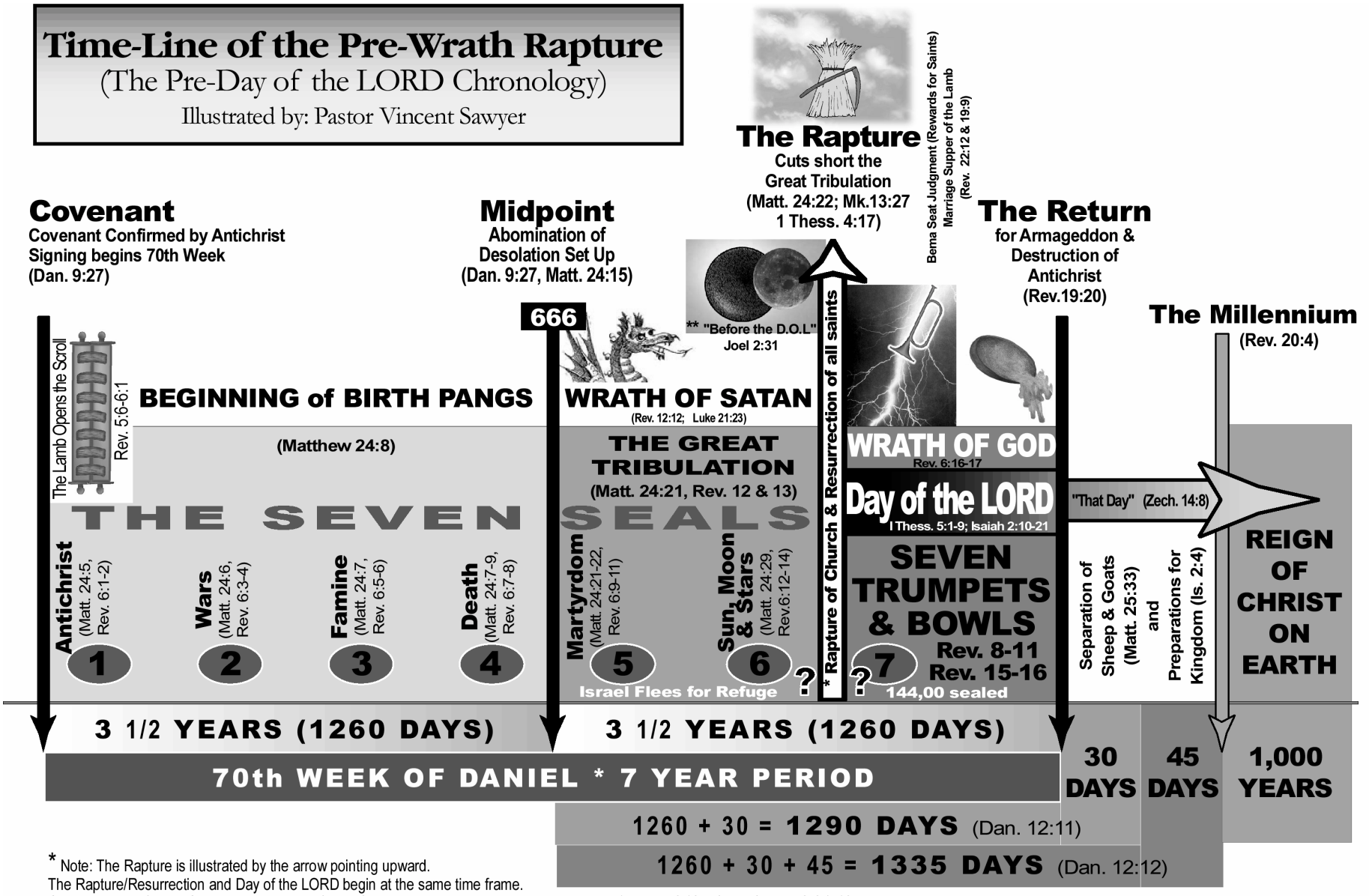
Ryrie's observation is correct: "The order of resurrections is as follows: first, Christ's; then that of believers at His coming (I Thes. 4:13-18); and finally, the resurrection at the end of the Millennial kingdom." ((Ryrie's KJV Study Bible, p. 1641).

*To force the Scripture to allow for any other general "resurrection of the just" is to go beyond the clearly stated and detailed text of Paul. I Corinthians 15 would have been the most convenient and obvious place to state <u>two</u> Resurrections <u>prior</u> to the beginning of the Millennium, if indeed such two did exist.

Time-Line of the Pre-Wrath Rapture

(The Pre-Day of the LORD Chronology)

Illustrated by: Pastor Vincent Sawyer



* Note: The Rapture is illustrated by the arrow pointing upward.
The Rapture/Resurrection and Day of the LORD begin at the same time frame.
Christ's coming for the Church and the Day of the LORD are chronologically linked together in 1 Thess. 4:13-5:2 and 2 Peter 3:4 & 10.
As in the days of Noah & Lot, God's outpouring of His wrath begins immediately on the "same day" He removes His elect Church (Luke 17:26-30, 34-36).
The Arrow is placed on the time-line to indicate the sequence of events surrounding the Rapture. The Arrow is NOT a time indicator.
The exact "Day & Hour" of the Rapture / D.O.L. is unknown (Mt.24:36) and will catch the unsaved world as "a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:10).
True believers will not be overtaken as by a "thief" (1 Thess. 5:4). God's Church will "see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

** The Day of the LORD is indicated by D.O.L. *"The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood BEFORE the great and the terrible day of the LORD come"* (Joel 2:31; cp. with Mt.24:29-31 & Rev. 6:12-17).

Can a Fundamentalist believe in the Prewrath view and remain a Fundamentalist?

1. It is not unreasonable to hold to a Rapture position which allows for persecution and suffering prior to that great event, due to the fact that God never promised to keep the church from tribulation. Just the opposite is true.

- *John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*
- *Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*
- *1 Thessalonians 3:4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.*
- *2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*
- *1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*
- *Revelation 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*
- *Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

Church history abounds with persecutions and martyrdoms of God's people. (Read Fox's Book of Martyrs) When the church undergoes persecution, we enter the ranks of men like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Jeremiah, Michaiah (I Ki. 22:8, 14, 24, 26-27), Paul, Stephen, James, Thomas, John, as well as other Bible heroes (SEE: Heb. 11:36-38), including men like John Chrysostom, Polycarp, Savanarola, John Hus, & Michael Satler.

It is very important to point out that in many passages describing the rapture, reference is made to the church as she was undergoing persecution & suffering by the hands of God's enemies. It is in the context of such tribulation and persecution that many references to Christ's coming for his church are made. For example observe the following passages:

> *2 Thes. 1:7 - And to you who are **troubled** rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be **revealed** from heaven with his mighty angels,*
>
> *1 Peter 1:7 - That the **trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at **the appearing of Jesus Christ**:*
>
> *1 Peter 1:13 - Wherefore **gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end** for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the **revelation of Jesus Christ**;*
>
> *1 Peter 4:13 - But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are **partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when **his glory shall be revealed**, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

God never promised to keep his church from Tribulation or the wrath of man or Satan, but He did promise to keep us from His wrath. And the two sources of wrath are not the same! We must never confuse God's wrath with Man's.

2. Great men of Church History believed that the Church would enter the Great Tribulation and face the Antichrist before the Rapture:

Justin Martyr (100-168)
"The man of apostasy [Antichrist], who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians. . ." (Dialogue With Trypho, 110)

Irenaeus (140-202)
"And they [the ten kings who shall arise] shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the church to flight" (Against Heresies, V, 26)

Tertullian (150-220)
"The souls of the martyrs are taught to wait [Rev. 6]. . . that the beast Antichrist with his false prophets may wage war on the Church of God. . ." (On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 25)

Hippolytus (160-240)
". . .the one thousand two hundred and three score days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church, which flees from city to city, and seeks concealment in he wilderness among the mountains" (Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 61)

Cyprian (200-258)
"The day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and the time of the Antichrist to draw near, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle. . ." (Epistle 55, 1)

Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386)
"The Church declares to thee the things concerning the Antichrist before they arrive. . . it is well that, knowing these things, thou shouldest make thyself ready beforehand" (Catechetical Lectures, 15, 9).

Jerome (340-420)
"I told you that Christ would not come unless Antichrist had come before" (Epistle 21)

Chrysostom (345-407)
". . . the time of Antichrist. . . will be a sign of the coming of Christ. . ." (Homilies on First Thessalonians, 9)

Augustine (354-430)
"But he who reads this passage [Daniel 12], even half asleep, cannot fail to see that the kingdom of antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time, assail the Church. . ."" (The City of God, XX, 23)

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)
There remains only one thing – that the demon of noonday [Antichrist] should appear, to seduce those who remain still in Christ. . ." (Sermons on the Song of Songs, 33, 16).

Martin Luther (1483-1546)
"[The book of Revelation] is intended as a revelation of things that are to happen in the future, and especially of tribulations and disasters for the Church. . ." (Works of Martin Luther, VI, p. 481).

Menno Simons (1496-1561)
". . .He will appear as a triumphant prince and a victorious king to bring judgment. Then will those who persecute us look upon Him. . ." (Complete Writings. . ., p. 622).

John Calvin (1509-1564)
". . .we ought to follow in our inquiries after Antichrist, especially where such pride proceeds to a public desolation of the church" (Institutes, Vol. 2, p. 411).

John Knox (1515-1572)
". . . the great love of God towards his Church, whom he pleased to forewarne of dangers to come, so many years before they come to passe. . . to wit, The man of sin, The antichrist, The Whore of Babilon" (The Historie of the Reformatioun. . ., I, p. 76).

John Foxe (1516-1587)
". . . that second beast prophesied to come in the later time of the Church. . . to disturb the whole Church of Christ. . ." (Acts and Monuments, I).

Roger Williams (1603-1683)
"Antichrist . . . hath his prisons, to keep Christ Jesus and his members fast. . ." (The Bloody Tenent, of Persecution, p. 153).

Daniel Whitby (1638-1726)
". . .after the Fall of Antichrist, there shall be such a glorious State of the Church. . . so shall this be the Church of Martyrs, and of those who had not received the Mark of the Beast. . ." (A Paraphrase and Commentary, p. 696).

John Wesley (1703-1791)
" 'The stars shall . . . fall from heaven,' (Revelation, vi 13). . . And then shall be heard the universal shout. . . followed by the 'voice of the archangel,' . . . 'and the trumpet of God'. . . (I Thessalonians iv. 16). (The Works of the rev. John Wesley, A.M., Vol. V, p. 173).

Charles Hodge (1797-1878)
". . . the fate of his Church here on earth. . . is the burden of the Apocalypse" (Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 827).

George Mueller (1805-1898)
"The Scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus will <u>not</u> come until the Apostasy shall have taken place, and the man of sin. . . shall have been revealed. . ." (Mrs. Mueller's Missionary Tours and Labours, p. 148).

Carl F. Keil (1807-1888)
". . . the persecution of the last enemy Antichrist against the church of the Lord. . ." (Biblical Commentary, Vol. XXXIV, p. 503).

John Lillie (1812-1867)
"In his [Antichrist's] days was to be the great – and last – tribulation of the Church" (Second Thessalonians, pp. 537-538).

Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1842)
"Christians must have 'great tribulation'; but they come out of it" (Bonar's Memoirs of McCheyne, p. 26).

S.P. Tregelles (1813-1875)
"The Scripture teaches the Church to wait for the manifestation of Christ. The secret theory bids us to expect a coming before any such manifestation" (The Hope of Christ's Second Coming, p. 71).

G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945)
"I think the view that makes [the book of] Matthew Jewish is utterly false. The phrase 'secret Rapture' has to me for a long time been a very objectionable one. . ." (George Ladd's The Blessed Hope, p. 55).

T.T. Shields (1873-1955)
"I do not believe there is any Scriptural warrant for the teaching that the Church may suddenly, secretly, be raptured and taken out of the world. . . I believe it is a delusion. . ." (The Gospel Witness, March 21, 1974).

George E. Ladd
"[Pretribulationism] may be guilty of the positive danger of leaving the Church unprepared for tribulation when Antichrist appears . . ." (The Blessed Hope, p. 164).

(The above quotations are taken from ***Rapture?*** By Dave MacPherson)
[For further research, see: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* by Alexander Robertson and James Donaldson, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.]

3. A differing view regarding the timing of the Rapture:

1) Does not necessarily mean that the one who holds such a view is going to eventually "slip" in other doctrinal beliefs (EX: It is not a move toward Amillennialism, which is supported by a different hermeneutic – allegorization).

2) Does not mean that one's hermeneutic has changed.

A literal (normal) interpretation of Scripture must always be upheld. Beware of allegorical or "spiritual" interpretations of prophecy.

Examples of allegorical interpretation even by Pretribulationists:

1. "Come up hither" stated to John – assumed to be symbolic of the Rapture. [Note: The mid-Tribulationalists attempt to use the "come up hither" stated to the two witnesses (Rev. 11:12) as support of their view.]

2. "24 Elders" – assumed to be the Church (Rev. 4:4). Why can't this refer to 24 specifically, specially chosen saints of God who are given this position of honor? (rev. 7:9-17 [*v. 14] better describes the whole Church of God in Heaven).

3) Does not mean that the person is trying to be novel or divisive.

4) Does not make one a "heretic."

5) Should not be a justifiable reason for ecclesiastical separation.

The timing of the "Rapture" should not be an issue over which brethren divide (the fact of the Rapture should be, since this doctrine is undeniably clear in Scripture; however, the timing of it should not be, since many respectable Godly men of the past and present have differing opinions).

One should not divide over some minor views of Eschatology (EX: identification of the Two Witnesses, the 24 Elders; timing of the Rapture, etc.), anymore than we should not divide over some minor differing views of:

1)	Ecclesiology	(EX: some believe the Church began with John the Baptist)
2)	Bibliology	(EX: Dictational Inspiration)
3)	Anthropology	(EX: Dichotomy/Trichotomy)
4)	Divorce	(grounds/no grounds)

In essentials we must have unity,
In nonessentials we must allow liberty,
But in all things we must show charity - Augustine

A BIBLICIST'S VIEW TOWARD THE BIBLE

*A Biblicist's only rule for faith and practice is the Bible.

(Every believer in Christ has the "soul liberty" to interpret the Bible as the Holy Spirit leads; no man or institution is a sole authority when it comes to rightly dividing the Word of Truth.)

1. A Biblicist will not be close-minded to the Scripture and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

2. A Biblicist will not defend a system at the expense of clear Biblical truth.

3. A Biblicist will not force his theological presuppositions into the text, but will seek to exegete the text and allow God's Word to formulate, modify, or even change a previously-held doctrinal presupposition.
   [Such a view of handling the Scripture will promote spiritual growth. None of us should let pride keep us from maturing in our knowledge of God, His will, His plan.]

4. A Biblicist will not resort to allegorization, side-step an issue, or abandon a consistent hermeneutic in order to re-explain a given text to make it unnaturally "fit" a formulated doctrinal scheme.

   A Biblicist will be consistent in his hermeneutic.

   Four basic rules of hermeneutics:
   1) Read the Bible literally (normally)
   2) Understand the context
   3) Observe the grammar and syntax
   4) Compare Scripture with Scripture

   Three Steps to Formulating a Doctrine:

   1. Proper hermeneutics

      2. Unbiased exegesis

         3. Formulation of a doctrine
            (a systematic theology)

   An interpreter must never reverse the process by starting with a presupposed doctrine or theological presupposition and then altering his hermeneutic or "forcing" his exegesis to match what he has already determined to be true (examples of those who do this: Covenant Theology and infant baptism; Hyperdispensationalism and the denial of water baptism).

5. A Biblicist will realize that if his doctrinal beliefs are Biblically correct, they can go through the acid text of scrutiny, evaluation, debate, etc., and will pass the test and come through with shining brilliancy.

Hence, there is nothing wrong with examining a differing view so long as we search the Scriptures to see whether these things are true (Acts 17:11).

Personal Stand on Biblical Issues

Personal testimony of Vincent Sawyer, Pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Corona, Queens, New York, after altering his understanding of the timing of the Rapture in 1989 (from "pre-tribulational" to "pre-wrath" or "pre-Day of the Lord"):

1. My loyalty to Christ and His Word has not changed.

2. My hermeneutic has not changed.

   I believe in a:

   1) Literal (normal) interpretation
   2) Contextual interpretation
   3) Grammatical interpretation
   4) Comparing Scripture with Scripture

3. My Dispensationalism has not changed.

   1) God's dealing with Old Testament Israel and the Church are clearly distinct.

   2) God, however, is never going to return to Old Testament Law or the Old Testament economy, as many seem to imply by their view of the Tribulation and God's return to dealing with Israel.

   3) The Tribulation is a time of transition from this age to the next.

4. My belief that the Church will be raptured before the "Day of the Lord" has not changed.

5. My Pre-millennialism has not changed.

6. My belief in a literal seven-year end-time period has not changed.

7. My belief in the fact of the Rapture in the clouds and Christ's return to earth has not changed.

   *However, I do have a different understanding of the timing of the Rapture and "Day of the Lord."

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