

The End-Times: The Seventy Weeks of Daniel



OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL.
Rev. viii. 1-6.

5. The Rapture

How and when will Christ receive his Church? Today this is hot topic of debate in many churches, causing divisions and vigorous debate. The issue is not new, the issue of return of Christ for his church date back to the early Church. One of the first churches faced with this question was the church of Thessalonica.

First and Second Thessalonians are written about 51 to 52 A.D., Paul is addressing a concern about the Lord's coming. Paul, in First

Thessalonians clarifies the order of events at the Resurrection of believers. In Second Thessalonians, he reassures some of the believers there were not "Left Behind" and certain events still needed to take place before the Lord returned.

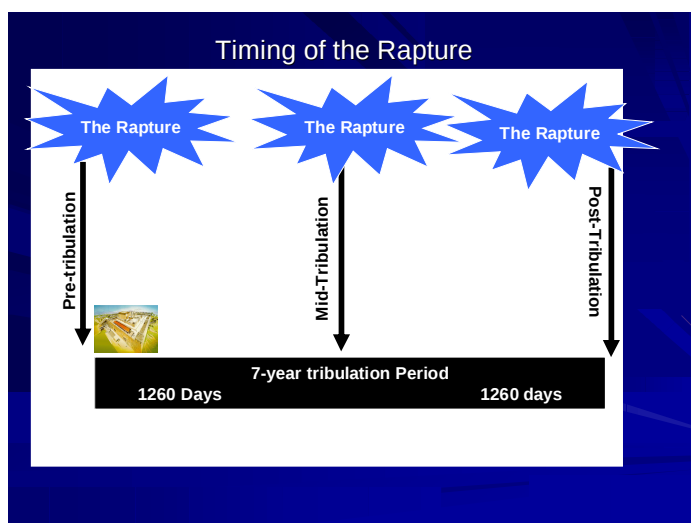
The Lord's coming, addressed in every generation of the church has always been a controversial subject avoided by some groups and emphatically stressed by others. In the 2nd century, Montanus taught the imminent coming of the New Jerusalem and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in preparation of the event. In the year 990's the world was absorbed with coming of the Lord as the year approached 1000. This was also repeated to a lesser degree in the year 2000.

The expectation of the second coming is greeted with skepticism by a world, which views Christianity and the Bible as pure mythology. Books published such as 88 reasons the Lord is coming 1988, only reinforce their skepticism. The "Left Behind series, by Tim La haye, a fictional account the pre-tribulation rapture and the events that follow, is viewed as just one more false alarm, in a long list of non-thinking Christian books.

Peter, in fact wrote about the skeptical view of the Lord's return,

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."

2 Peter 3:3-4



Those who trust the Bible as God's word, the 2nd coming of Christ is not in question, only the timing of the event and the circumstances surrounding it. Peter forewarned the future generation being skeptical regarding the promises of Christ. Jesus also warned the skeptics of his return, using the example of five foolish virgins who running out of oil, stopped waiting for the bridegroom left, while they were gone the bridegroom came and they were left.

"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, ¹³"Watch

'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹²"But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.
Matthew 25:10-13

What is the second coming?

The second coming is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He receives his church. At the time of his return, the resurrection of those who believed in Him will also take place. Paul addresses this event in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul writes,

4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

4:16 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.

4:17 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.

4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Paul writes to inform the Thessalonians of what will take place when the Lord returns, and how those alive at his coming, are resurrected in relation to those who have already died. From this scripture, we learn:

- Those who believe and died in Jesus, will descend with Jesus to the outer atmosphere (The clouds).
- Those who are alive when Jesus comes will not precede those who are dead.
- Those who are dead will rise first.
- Those who are alive at his coming, and believe in Jesus will be taken up to the clouds.
- From that point, believers both dead and alive will always be with the Lord

Rapture: The word rapture is from the Latin *Raptus* meaning the state or experience of being carried away. The Greek word, ἁρπάζω, *Harpazo*, means catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force) is found in I Thessalonians 4:17 in relation to those who are saved by believing in Jesus.

"17Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together" I Thes. 4:17

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians explains to them events surrounding the resurrection of the saints.

⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵²in 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.

I Corinthians 15:50-52

We can draw the following points regarding the rapture from Paul's comments about the Second coming and the resurrection:

- The resurrected, at the rapture will receive an incorruptible body.
- The event will be take place in a twinkling of an eye.
- At the God's last trumpet, both the dead and living saints (believers) will be changed.

When does this event take place?

Jesus in Matthew 25:13 said, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming". He also spoke of specific signs which would precede his coming.

32 "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.

33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-at the doors!

Matthew 24:32-33

From these scriptures we can make the following points;

- As believers we are always to watch and be ready
- We do not know the day or hour
- Specific signs will occur before his return.

The latest point in time when the rapture can take place is the time known as the as the tribulation period. Scripture both Old and New Testaments refer to a unique, unequalled period of trouble. Following this period of trouble, we know the Messiah will come and the resurrection will take place. (See Daniel 12:2-3, Jeremiah 30:9-10, Matthew 24:29-30)

⁷Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it. **Jeremiah 30:7**

1"At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. **Daniel 12:1**

21"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be **Matthew 24:21**

Therefore, since we know the latest event will occur is at the end of the tribulation, the three main positions focus around this period of time; pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation and post-tribulation. Each position is based on arguments from scripture, the event of the rapture is not at question, only the timing.

Pre-tribulation believes that before the tribulation, *Daniel's 70th week* the church will be raptured into the presence of the Lord. Those who are left will suffer through a period of seven years of tribulation. During this period Israel, will come to know Jesus as Messiah at which time the Lord will return to judge the earth in his "Glorious appearing".

Mid-tribulation believes the church will endure the first 3 1/2 years of the *70th week of Daniel*. Before the great-tribulation when God pours out his wrath, He will catch-up his church at the middle of this seven year period. The church will return with Christ in his "Glorious appearing" following the "Great tribulation"

Post-Tribulation believes that before the "Glorious appearing" the church is raptured to be with the Lord and returns with him in the Glorious appearing. Post-tribulation holds the church will go thru the great tribulation period, preceding the Second Advent.

The Glorious appearing and the Rapture

The rapture is distinct from the "Glorious appearing",

Post-Tribulation Rapture Position

A. Historical argument

The historical doctrine has been the rapture is an event that would precede the glorious return of Christ immediately followed by the judgment seat of Christ. In which the all men would go before the throne of Christ. Most who hold the view of post-tribulation rapture view the 70th of Daniel as immediately following the 69th week with no gap.

B. Argument against "imminence"

Since Jesus clearly taught that, certain events will take place before he returned his return could not be imminent. Events such as the destruction of Jerusalem, and the preaching of the Gospel into the world need to take place first.

C. Promise of tribulation

Another argument is the promise of tribulation given to the church. Passages such as Luke 23:27-31, Matthew 24:9-11, Mark 13:9-13 are promises of tribulation to the church and not Israel.

D. Historical fulfillment of Daniel 9:24-27.

A forth argument is that Daniel has already been fulfilled in its entirety. There is no "Gap" between the 69 and 70th week of Daniel. Christ is the one who confirms the covenant with many in Daniel 9:27 and in his ministry the seven promises of Daniel 9:24 have been fulfilled.

E. The Resurrection

Since the resurrection of the holy dead is the "First resurrection (Rev 20:5-6). We find that the first resurrection is associated with the coming of the Lord (Isa. 26:19), The conversion of Israel (Rom 11:15), The inauguration of the Kingdom (Luke 14:14-15; Rev. 20:4-6).

Therefore, the rapture would have to occur at the end of the tribulation in which all the above need to take place. Hence the "First resurrection" must occur with all the "Church and Israel" at the same time at the end of the tribulation.

F. Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-45)

An interpretation of the Wheat and Tares places the "Saints" the Wheat and the "Unsaved" the tares side by side till the harvest. Jesus saying, "Let both grow together until the harvest". The harvest being the rapture of the believers at the end not prior to a tribulation period.

Mid-tribulation Rapture position

A. Denial of Imminence

The idea of a unexpected return of Christ is rejected by the Mid-tribulation. Paul taught that there would first be a time of apostasy (2 Thes. 2:3) and that perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:10) We are also told in the "Great Commission" that the gospel would be carried "into all the world" (Mark 16:15, Mark 13:10). Since the rapture will take place at the midpoint of the tribulation the time would be known beforehand but not the day or hour.

B. The Promise of Tribulation

Since the church was promised tribulation we can expect to experience the first half of the tribulation. (Matthew 24:1-9)

C. Church & Israel

Since the Church and Israel operated together for the first 40 years. From 30 AD to 70 AD, until the destruction of Jerusalem, it can expected, that during the first 3.5 years of the tribulation they would again have overlapping programs.

D. Nature of Seals and Trumpets

The seal and trumpet judgments of Revelation in the first 3.5 years are not manifestations of divine wrath. God is merely withdrawing his restraints and man is reaping what he is sowing.

E. Duration of Tribulation

The length of the tribulation is 3.5 years not 7 years. Jesus refers to the Abomination of Desolation as the beginning of the "Great tribulation" (Matthew 24:15,21) Daniel 7:25 tells us the period in which the saints are handed over to the Anti-Christ is 3.5 years.

F. Argument from Revelation 11

Revelation 11 occurs during the time of the rapture. The two witnesses, "Caught up", raptured, into heaven are accompanied by the rest of the church. The great voice is the shout of I Thessalonians 4:16.

G. Identity of Last Trump

The sounding of the seventh trump in Rev 11:15 is seen as the last trumpet of I Corinthians 15:52 and the trumpet of I Thessalonians 4:16. The time location of Revelation 11:15 and the I Thessalonians 4:16 place them both at the midpoint of the tribulation period.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture Position

A. Literal Method

The position of a literal nation Israel places it chief amongst the nations. The Messiah ruling for a 1000-year period after the "Glorious appearing" is the Messianic era in the Old Testament. Revelation is therefore interpreted as a literal book and not a symbolic book of future events. Israel and the church are distinct groups in the scripture, with two different plans.

B. Nature of the 70th Week

The nature of the 70th week is in both the Old and New Testament. Several words describe this period.

- Wrath (Rev 6:16-17, 11:18, 14:19, 15:1, 7; Thes 1:9-10)
- Judgment (Rev. 14:7, 15:4; 16:5-7, 19:2)
- Indignation (Isa 26:20-21, 34:1-3)
- Punishment (Isa. 24:20-21)
- Hour of Trial (Rev 3:10)
- Hour of Trouble (Jer 30:7)
- Destruction (Joel 1:15)
- Darkness (Joel 2:2, Zeph. 1:14-18, Amos 5:18)

These verses describe the entire period of the 70th week not just a portion of the week.

C. Scope of the 70th Week

God's wrath is poured on the whole Earth but distinction is made between Israel and the rest of the nations. Jeremiah 30:7 calls this "A time of Jacob's trouble". Daniel 9:24 tells us 70 weeks are determined upon "Thy people and Thy holy city". This period is peculiar for Israel.

The Church however is a mystery. Eph 3:1-6, Col. 1:25-27. The Church is grafted into the covenant blessing of Israel. (Romans 11:15) The tribulation of Matthew 24:14-30, Daniel 12:1, Jeremiah 30:7 refers to Israel.

D. Purpose of the 70th Week

There are two purposes in the 70th week of Daniel.

1. The first purpose is stated in Rev 3:10 "Try them that dwell on the earth" but the church in Rev. 3:10 will be. "Kept from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world".
2. The second purpose is in relation to Israel and is stated in Mal. 4:5-6. Elijah turns the hearts of the fathers to the children before the Lord comes. Israel is made ready to meet her King. Both of these purposes have no relation to the church.

E. Nature of the Church

The church is viewed as the body in which Christ is the head (Eph 1:22, 5:23, Col 1:18), the bride of which He is the Bridegroom (I Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23), the object of His love (Eph. 5:25), the building of which He is the Foundation and Cornerstone.

Wrath poured out on the world in the 70th week would also be poured out on the body of Christ if the Church is in the world.

F. Church is Mystery

The fact that God was going to form Jews and Gentiles into one body was not revealed in the Old

Testament and is a mystery in which Paul writes (Eph 3:1-7, Romans 16:25-27, Col 1:26-29). The Church was formed as a result of Israel's rejection of Messiah. Therefore, the church was a temporary program which must be concluded before God again resumes his program with Israel.

G. Doctrine of Imminence

Many signs were given to Israel, which would precede the 2nd Advent. The church however, is told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them into his presence (John 14:2-3, Acts 1:11, I Cor 15:51-52, Phil 3:20, Col 3:4).

The believer is warned to watch for the Lord's coming; (I Thes 5:6, Titus 2:13, Rev. 3:3) Since the signs are given to Israel and the church is told to watch, this prevents the church's participation in the 70th Week.

H. Necessity of an Interval

Certain events follow the Rapture of the church, requiring time.

- The Judgment seat of Christ
- The Presentation of the Church
- The Marriage of the Lamb

Passages such as 2 Cor 5:9;1, I Cor 3:11-16, Rev 4:4, 19:8,14 show the church has been examined and has received her rewards at the time of the 2nd advent. The Marriage of the Lamb precedes the 2nd Advent. Rev. 19:7-9

I. Distinction between Rapture and Second Advent

Rapture	Second Advent
Removal of believers	Manifestation of the Son
Saints caught into Heaven	Son returns to Earth
Removal of Church	Establishment of kingdom
Imminent event	Preceded by signs
Message of Comfort	Message of judgment
Program for Church	Program for Israel & world
Rapture is mystery	Second advent in both Old and New
Creation unchanged	Change in creation
Gentiles unaffected	Gentiles judged
Israel covenants unfulfilled	Israel's covenants fulfilled
For believers only	For all men

J. Message of 2 Witnesses

Their ministry is in Israel and for Israel, one of the 2 Witnesses is Elijah. From the city of Jerusalem they testify against the earth, bringing God's judgments on the earth. They are killed in Jerusalem by the Antichrist and the world celebrates their death.

K. 144,000 are from the tribes of Israel. Those sealed in the book of Rev 7:1-8 are 144,000 from the tribes of Israel. If the church is present, there would be no need for the 144,000 of "Israel".

L. God's program in the past

- Noah & his family: Noah and his family were preserved out of God's wrath in the arc. The arc carried them above God's judgment.
- Sodom and Abraham: God told Abraham if he found 10 righteous in the city, for the sake of the righteous He would not destroy the city.
- Sodom & Lott & his family: The angels intervened when Lot and his family lingered and removed them from the city before God's wrath fell.
- Passover: In the Passover, whoever had the blood of the Lamb was spared from the death of the first-born, whether Egyptian or Israeli.
- Rahab & her family: Rahab and her family were preserved from the wrath of God falling on Jericho.
- Jonah & Nineveh: The people of Nineveh, who repented were spared God's judgment, demonstrating God preserves his people from his wrath.
- Jerusalem & Babylon: The inhabitants of Jerusalem were preserved from God's wrath which fell on the sinful residents of Jerusalem. (Ezekiel 9:6)

5 Points to Consider regarding the Pre-tribulation rapture

1. Israel and the Church are distinct.

²⁴For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who *are* natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree? ²⁵For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Romans 11:24-25

There is a distinct program for Israel and the Church.

The rapture removes the Church which completes the period known as the fullness of the Gentiles

2. The Church is not appointed to wrath

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. **I Thessalonians 1:9-10**

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him

I Thessalonians 5:9-10

10“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. 11“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Revelation 3:10

The tribulation period is the time of God's wrath where He deals with the sins of the world. He would be pouring out his wrath on his own people if the saints go through the tribulation. Those who go through the tribulation become believers after the rapture. Christ returns when Israel accepts him as their Messiah

3. We do not know the day or Hour of Christ return.

¹³“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. **Matthew 25:13**

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. **Matthew 24:29-30**

The message to the church and to Israel are distinct, the church does not know the day or the hour of his return and we are told to keep watch. While, Israel is told his return immediately follows the tribulation period. So his return to Israel is preceded by specific signs.

4. Who enters the Millennium to repopulate the Earth?

If the rapture occurred at the end of the tribulation, all the saints would be resurrected and transformed into glorified bodies. Who therefore would enter the Millennium, to repopulate the earth? After Christ returns the nations are judged, only the “Sheep” enter the millennium. The sheep who know Christ and were not

killed in the tribulation period.

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³²“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. ³³“And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴“Then the King will say to those right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

on His ⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

5. The rapture and the Gathering are two separate events

The event of Matthew 25:31-46, is not Christ returning for his church, his church was “Caught-up” and met him in the Clouds and will always be with him. The Sheep and the Goats are those how are the earth when *“every eye sees Him, even those who pierced him”*. This judgment determines who enters the Millennium of those who survive the tribulation period.

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 24:30

Here the angels gather the elect from the earth to appear before the throne. When Christ comes for his church, the church is “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air.