

A Summary of the Timing of the Rapture

A. A Case of Preceding Events and No Preceding Events

1. The passages which speak of the [Rapture](#) do not refer to events which must be fulfilled before the [Rapture](#) occurs.
 - a. John 14:1-3
 - b. 1 Cor. 15:50-53
 - c. 1 Thess. 4:13-18
2. By way of contrast, multiple signs precede the [Second Coming of Christ](#) in power and glory
 - a. Matthew 24:1-41
 - b. Revelation 6:1-19:21
3. Conclusion: The [Rapture](#) is separate from the [Second Coming of Christ](#) in Power and Glory

B. A [Pre-Tribulation Rapture](#) carefully separates God's clock for the [Church](#) from God's clock for [Israel](#)

1. The Seven-Year Treaty that the Ruler of a Revived Roman Empire makes is made with [Israel](#), not the [Church](#). (Dan. 9:24-27)
 - a. [Seventy weeks](#) (literally "sevens" - *shabu'a*, [7620](#), probably, sevens of years in context) have been determined for your (Daniel's) people and your holy city (Dan. 9:24).
 - b. There clearly is an ongoing gap between the 69 sevens of years and the 70th seven of years. This gap houses the [Church Age](#). God's "clock" ([The Seventy Sevens](#)) is not presently ticking for [Israel](#).
 - c. The "prince who is to come" will make a firm covenant with the many (probably [Israel](#)) for one week (probably seven years) (Dan. 9:27). This covenant signing will mark the beginning of the Seven-Year period we commonly call the [Tribulation](#) Period, though the breaking of the Covenant will really trigger some important events, including, among other things, intense persecution against [Israel](#).
 - d. In the middle of the week (seven-year period) he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering (Dan. 9:27). This event will commence a time of intense persecution for [Israel](#).

2. A [Mid-Tribulation Rapture](#) and a [Pre-Wrath Rapture](#) place the [Church](#) squarely in a time frame in which God's clock for [Israel](#) is ticking. In my view, this is mixing God's two programs.
 - a. It makes more sense to understand that a [Pre Tribulation Rapture](#) removes God's present method of evangelism and operation, the [Church](#), from the earth first. When the [Holy Spirit](#) in the [Church](#) (the One who is presently restraining the [Lawless One](#)) is removed from the earth in the [Pre-Trib Rapture](#), God replaces that vacuum through His working with and through regenerate [Israelis](#) (see the Sealing of 12,000 from the nation of [Israel](#) in Rev. 7:1-8).
 - b. The results of [Israel's](#) supernatural evangelistic activity is seen in Rev. 7:9-17, wherein an incalculable multitude who have been martyred during the [Tribulation](#) appear in heaven praising God. These are martyred [Tribulation](#) saints (they have come out of the [Great Tribulation](#), Rev. 7:13-14). They are not [Church](#) Saints.

C. God has promised to deliver the [Church](#) from Divine Wrath

1. Scriptures involved
 - a. 1 Thess. 1:9-10. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that they had turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven ... who delivers us from the wrath to come.
 - 1) I believe the wrath to come refers to the entire [Tribulation](#) period of seven years. This is true because, after discussing the [Rapture](#) in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, Paul immediately addresses the [Day of the LORD](#) in 1 Thess. 5:2.
 - 2) He calls that day one that arrives like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2), one that will bring sudden destruction from which there is no escape (1 Thess. 5:3).
 - b. 1 Thess. 5:9. "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"
 - 1) The wrath of which Paul is speaking is the wrath of the [Day of the LORD](#) (1 Thess. 5:2).
 - 2) Christians ("brothers") are not in darkness, that the day would overtake us like a thief (1 Thess. 5:4).
 - 3) We are sons of light and sons of day – we are not of the darkness (1 Thess. 5:5).
 - 4) Therefore, we ought to live as sons of the day (1 Thess. 5:6-8).
 - 5) We should live properly because God has not destined us for the wrath of the [Day of the Lord](#) – the [Tribulation](#) period (1 Thess. 5:9).

- 6) The wrath of 1 Thess. 5:9 is the same as the wrath of 1 Thess. 1:10.
- c. Rev. 3:10. In his message to the [church](#) of Philadelphia, Jesus had John write, in part, “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”
 - 1) I believe Jesus preserved the [church](#) at Philadelphia from some sort of trial.
 - 2) But was there a world-wide testing that came upon the whole world? I know of no such event in [church](#) history.
 - 3) There is language in this promise that is universal. This time of testing is to come upon “the whole world.” That, in my view, can only refer to the yet future time of testing known as the [Tribulation](#) period.
 - a) Notice that the [Beast](#) will make war against the saints and conquer them. He will have authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation (Rev. 13:7).
 - b) Notice that the [Great Prostitute](#) will be drunk with the blood of saints and the witnesses of Jesus (Rev. 17:6). The [Prostitute](#) represents the great city of Babylon, which reigns over the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:18). In this [Prostitute](#) was found the blood of prophets and saints and of all who have been slain on the earth (Rev. 18:24).

- 4) Notice, moreover, that this hour of testing is to test “those who dwell on the earth.”¹ “Earth-dwellers” is code for unbelievers, whose whole existence is based on this life and this world. Notice the contrast, for example with “those who dwell in heaven” (Rev. 13:6).
 - 5) Moreover, at the end of each letter, Jesus concludes, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the [churches](#)” (Rev. 3:13). That means there are lessons to be drawn by all Christians of any age.
 - 6) I believe Rev. 3:10 promises that the [Church](#) will be preserved from the entire portion of Daniel’s 70th Seven, broadly, the [Tribulation](#) period.
- d. Rev. 4:1. “After these things” (i.e., the [Church Age](#) of Rev. 2-3 – see the inspired outline of Revelation in Rev. 1:19), John hears a voice calling him to come up to heaven, telling him he would show him what was to take place “after these things” (i.e., after the [Church Age](#) of Rev. 2-3).
- 1) Admittedly this is not the strongest argument, but I believe a literal hermeneutic (method of interpretation) favors the view that Rev. 4:1 is symbolic of God’s calling of the [Church](#) to heaven after the [Church Age](#) and before the start of the [Great Tribulation](#).
 - 2) In heaven, John sees a cadre of 24 elders (Rev. 4:4). I believe 12 of these elders represent the nation of [Israel](#), and 12 represent the [Church](#), now gathered up in heaven.

¹ Rev. 3:10 - “to test those who dwell on the earth”: [Constable](#) has some helpful comments on this phrase. In the quotation below, footnote **[289]** refers to “See Thomas D. Ice, “The Meaning of ‘Earth Dwellers’ in Revelation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166:663 (July-September 2009) 350-65”; moreover, footnote **[290]** refers to “See Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept from the Hour*. Fourth ed. Miami Springs, Fla.: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1991, pp. 46-50, 108-37; Paul D. Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Position,” in *Three Views of the Rapture*, pp. 63-72; Jeffrey Townsend, “The Rapture in Revelation 3:10,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137:547 (July-September 1980):252-66.

The Greek word translated “testing” ([peirasai](#)) means to test in order to demonstrate the quality of a thing, not to purify it. This hour of testing will involve the “whole world” (Gr. [oikoymenes](#), the inhabited earth), not just a local area. Its purpose is to demonstrate the quality of those who dwell upon the whole earth, that is, whether they are believers or unbelievers. The term “those who live on the earth” refers to earth-dwellers as contrasted with heaven-dwellers, the unsaved as contrasted with the saved. **[289]** As with the promises given to the other churches in chapters 2 and 3, this one is applicable to all Christians, not just the original recipients of this letter. **[290]**

2. Quoting from [Mike Vlach](#): “The whole seven year [Tribulation](#) period is a time of God’s divine wrath, so the protection promised must be for the whole seven years. Some have tried to say that divine wrath does not characterize the whole seven year [Tribulation](#) period. They say that the early judgments (the seals) of the [tribulation](#) are the wrath of man and Satan.” Such a distinction is not made in Scripture. Let us examine the evidence.

D. Arguments in Favor of the Understanding that the Entire [Tribulation](#) Period (Daniel’s 70th Seven) is a time of Divine Wrath.

1. Jesus is the One who breaks each of the Seals of Divine Judgment on the Scroll of Judgments
 - a. Jesus broke the first seal (Rev. 6:1-2). (Diplomatic conquest)
 - b. Jesus broke the second seal (Rev. 6:3-4). (War)
 - c. Jesus broke the third seal (Rev. 6:5-6). (Famine)
 - d. Jesus broke the fourth seal (Rev. 6:7-8). (Death)
 - e. Jesus broke the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9-11). (Martyrs)
 - f. Jesus broke the sixth seal (Rev. 6:10-17). (Earthquake; Celestial Upheavals; Human Terror).
 - g. Jesus broke the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1-2), from which issued in the Seven Trumpet Judgments (starting at Rev. 8:6-7).
2. The position that God’s wrath begins only with the Sixth Seal (Rev. 6:17) is, in my opinion, a misinterpretation of what is happening.
 - a. The breaking of the sixth seal issues in a great earthquake, visible alterations in the appearance of the sun and the moon, falling of stars, the splitting apart of the sky, and the displacement of every mountain and island (Rev. 6:12-14).
 - b. Upon observing all of these things all classes of people will hide themselves in the caves and among the boulders of the mountains. They seek to be hidden (killed?) from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. They say, “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15-17).
 - c. This is not the Apostle John stating that the Sixth Seal begins the Wrath of God and of the Lamb. Rather, this is people on earth finally acknowledging that the terrible judgments they have witnessed are caused by God and the Lamb.
 - 1) I suspect that the splitting apart of the sky will enable mankind to peer into heaven and actually see God on His throne and the Lamb. Otherwise, how would they know about them? After viewing this heavenly scene, mankind finally will acknowledge that these

judgments, and in particular, the Sixth Seal Judgments are God's doing, not man's doing or random acts of nature.

- 2) Even today, we see mankind attributing the apparent gradual warming of the earth and the seas to the agency of man. They give no credence to the fact that God controls weather. Similarly, it may well be that in the future day of the breaking of the first few seals, men may attribute the atrocities to man, not God. Finally, however, they will be forced to acknowledge that God, not man, is doing this! And still, they will not repent (see Rev. 9:20-21).
- d. My experience shows me that people who want to make a great deal of the mention of the wrath of God and of the Lamb first being mentioned only in connection with the sixth seal are inconsistent in their word studies. They correctly observe that the noun for "wrath," *orgé* (3709), appears for the first time in Revelation in Rev. 6:16, 17. However, they completely gloss over the fact that the noun for "church," *ekklēsia* (1577), appears 19 times in Rev. 1-3, and then is never mentioned again during the whole Tribulation period. (It is mentioned for the final time in Rev. 22:16.) I believe that the absence of *ekklēsia* after chapter 3 is vociferous testimony to the fact that the Church is absent from the earth the entire Tribulation period.

E. There is Absolutely No Mention of a Rapture between the breaking of the 6th and 7th Seals.

1. The Sixth Seal consists of consists of an earthquake, celestial disturbances, the falling of stars to the earth, and the heavens being split apart like a scroll being wound up. There are terrified earth dwellers (Rev. 6:12-17).
2. There is a description of 144,000 Israelis who are sealed for protection and, by inference, for evangelism (Rev. 7:1-8).
3. There is a great multitude up in heaven from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue. They are praising God (Rev. 7:9-12) Nowhere are these redeemed individuals identified as being part of the Church, which is never mentioned in Rev. 4-19.
4. Rather, these are people who became believers during the Tribulation period, lived through a portion of the Tribulation, were executed, and who now are in heaven. They are not Church Saints, but Tribulation Saints.
5. In Rev. 8:1-2 seven angels prepare to blast seven trumpets announcing God's judgments (Rev. 8:3-7)
6. Nowhere is there a mention of a Rapture. To me this is the weakest point for the Pre-Wrath Rapture. Exactly at the point at which Pre-Wrath Rapturists insist there is a Rapture, ***there is nothing there!***

F. A Pre-Tribulation Rapture Best Fits in with the Inspired Outline of the Book of Revelation.

1. In the first chapter of Revelation we notice the following entities
 - a. Rev. 1:1-3 serves as an introduction to the book.
 - b. In Rev. 1:4-8, John addresses the seven [churches](#) who are to receive his written document. He identifies that he himself is the author, but also identifies the sources of his revelation – from God Himself (Rev. 1:4); from the seven spirits before his throne (Rev. 1:4); and from Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:5-7), who died for us, who rose from the dead, who made us a kingdom of priests, who is coming with the clouds, and all will see him and mourn. The Lord God is the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8).
 - c. In Rev. 1:9-11, John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day and he heard a loud voice behind him telling to write to the 7 [churches](#).
 - d. In Rev. 1:12-16, John turned around to see the risen Lord Jesus in all His glory.
 - e. In Rev. 1:17-18, John fell down before Christ as if dead. Christ reassured him (Rev. 1:17). Christ spoke His own authority (Rev. 1:18).
 - f. Then Christ commanded John to write. Here is the inspired outline. He was to write down
 - 1) “The things which he had seen” – i.e., his vision of the risen Christ (Rev. 1)
 - 2) “The things which are” – the [Church Age](#) (Rev. 2-3)
 - 3) The things which will take place after these things” – (Rev. 4-5) – John’s call to heaven, symbolizing the [Rapture](#) of the [Church](#), and the heavenly scene glorifying God and the Lamb’s worthiness to open the 7-sealed scroll of judgment – the [Tribulation](#) period (Rev. 6-19); followed by the Millennium and judgment of the rebels and the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20); followed by the New Heavens and Earth featuring New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22).
 - g. So it makes good sense to me to understand that the [Church Age](#) is revealed in Rev. 2-3, and John’s call to heaven marks the [Rapture](#) of the [Church](#) to heaven (Rev. 4-5), followed by the [Tribulation](#) (Rev. 6-19). The [Church](#) does not appear in the [Tribulation](#) chapters.

G. 4 Comes Before 5. 1 Thessalonians 4 precedes 1 Thessalonians 5

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 gives, perhaps, the most complete description of the [Rapture](#) that exists in Scripture. It is not surprising that the Old Testament does not predict the [Rapture](#). After all, Paul called it a “Mystery” (1 Cor. 15:51), a truth that was not revealed in the OT and is only revealed by New Testament prophets or apostles under the direction of the [Holy Spirit](#).
2. Here is what the passage shows us:
 - a. Paul does not want his readers to be uninformed about Christians who have already died (1 Thess. 4:13).
 - b. Though Christians grieve, they do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13).
 - c. Jesus died and rose again. This gives us the assurance that when He returns to retrieve His bride from the earth, He will bring along with Him the souls / spirits of deceased [Church-Age](#) believers (1 Thess. 4:14).
 - d. We are alive, and remain until the coming of our Lord will not take precedence over those who have already died (1 Thess. 4:15)
 - e. The Lord will descend from heaven (1 Thess. 4:16)
 - 1) With a shout
 - 2) With the voice of the archangel
 - 3) And with the trumpet of God
 - f. The dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thess. 4:16)
 - g. Those of us who are alive and remain until the coming of our Lord will be caught up together with them (1 Thess. 4:17)
 - 1) in the clouds
 - 2) to meet the Lord in the air.
 - h. We will always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17)
 - i. We are, consequently, to comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:18)!
3. Immediately following on the heels of his discussion of the [Rapture](#) (1 Thess. 4:13-18), Paul discusses “the [Day of the Lord](#)” (1 Thess. 5:1-11). Some observations about “the [Day of the Lord](#)” in this passage.
 - a. The Thessalonians know that the [Day of the Lord](#) will come like a thief in the night. This is a message of foreboding and danger. So the [Day of the Lord](#) is not the [return of Christ](#). It is the time of [Tribulation](#) for an unsuspecting world (1 Thess. 5:2).

- b. The watchword in the world will be “peace and safety” (1 Thess. 5:3)!
- c. But destruction will come upon the world suddenly, like the sudden pains of childbirth (1 Thess. 5:3).
- d. The people of the world will not escape (1 Thess. 5:3)!
- e. Christians (those of the [Church](#)) are not in darkness; consequently that day will not overtake them like a thief (because they will not be there) (1 Thess. 5:4).
- f. Rather they are sons of light and sons of day (1 Thess. 5:5).
- g. Since they are not of the darkness night or darkness, they should not fall asleep, but should be alert and sober (1 Thess. 5:6).
- h. Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night (1 Thess. 5:7).
- i. Since they are of the day they need to be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and, as a helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:8).
- j. This hope of salvation includes the hope of exemption from the [Tribulation](#) period. For God has not destined them for the wrath of the [Tribulation](#), but for obtaining salvation from the [Tribulation](#) as well as eternal salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Thess. 5:9).
- k. Jesus died for us so that, whether we continue living or meet death, we will live together with Him (1 Thess. 5:10).
- l. The Thessalonians are to continue to encourage one another and build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11).

4. Conclusion:

- a. 1 Thess. 4:13-18 discusses the [Rapture](#).
- b. 1 Thess. 5:1-11 discusses the [Tribulation](#) period and the [Church](#)'s exemption from it.
- c. It could not be any clearer. Paul is working in a chronological progression. The [Rapture](#) comes first, and it is followed by the [Tribulation](#). Chapter 4 comes before Chapter 5.
- d. The [Tribulation](#) is a time of darkness and wrath for unbelievers, the “Earth-Dwellers” – code for unbelievers (Rev. 3:10). It is not a time for testing believers.
- e. Christians are exempt from the wrath of the entire [Tribulation](#) period.
- f. The Thessalonians (and we) need to live like children of the day in the present time.