

4. The Rapture and Day of the Lord Second Coming of Christ

We come today to one of the most controversial topics ever in the history of the church. I cannot think of anything that gets Christians more upset than this topic of the timing of the rapture of the saints. Why is that? We all believe that Jesus wants us to understand the scriptures, so why do people get so heated? Can we purpose in our hearts to lay aside all our preconceived ideas and our favorite Bible teachers thoughts and examine the scriptures with an open mind? Whatever your final conclusion, we all can all agree that Jesus is coming back for His church, and the main thing is that we are ready for His return whenever that may be.

Four Different Viewpoints as to the Timing

As I previously stated, there are varying viewpoints concerning the timing of the events leading up to the Day of the Lord and the coming of Christ. Some believe that the events written in the Book of Revelation happened in the first century A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70A.D., this is called a Preterist view. Those that believe the events are yet future, such as myself, are called Futurists. Among the futurists there are four different beliefs as to the timing, there is the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, the Mid-Tribulation, the Post-Tribulation and the Pre-Wrath Rapture. As we have said, the scriptures speak of a seven-year period called the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:27). Those that believe the rapture comes before the seven-year period, commonly called the tribulation, are pre-tribulationist in their view. Those that believe that it happens at the middle of the seven-year period, at the Abomination of Desolation, are called mid-tribulationist and obviously, post-tribulationist believers believe it will happen at the end of the seven-year period. The Pre-Wrath believers have the view that the rapture will take place at some time into the second half of the seven-year period, during the Great Tribulation, that Jesus mentions. The timing cannot be ascertained, but they believe that the rapture, and with it the wrath of God, takes place at some time during the tribulation. Jesus said that no man knows the day or the hour at which His coming takes place, but gives details of some of the preceding events such as the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:3-31).

What is the Tribulation?

The word *tribulation* (KJV) or *distress* (NIV) is the translation of the Greek word *thlipsis*. My Hebrew Greek Key Word Study Bible tells me that this Greek word means:

“To crush, press, squeeze. It means tribulation, trouble or affliction. *Thlipsis* conveys the picture of something being crushed, pressed or squeezed as from a great weight. It is used to denote grievous physical affliction or mental and spiritual distress.”¹

¹ Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN 37422, USA. Copyright 1996, Page 1632.

Not once has it been described as wrath from God. This Greek word occurs 22 times in the New Testament. Of those 22 times, the word is descriptive of trouble and difficulties that the believer variously goes through on his journey in life. For instance, when Jesus was teaching the parable of the sower, He said that we should expect tribulation or affliction as *thlipsis* is here translated:

²⁰"The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when **affliction** [*thlipsis*] or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away (Matthew 13:20-21).

⁴Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our **affliction** [*thlipsis*] (2 Corinthians 7:4).

It is correct to believe that God does not pour out His wrath out on His people. However, His people have always gone through tribulation and He has warned us about this, so that we do not become offended. People that believe in the Pre Tribulation theory need to rely heavily on interpretation and will always offer scriptures that talk about the wrath of God as if the seven-year period (the 70th Week of Daniel) was the wrath of God. God wants us to understand that we will not go through or have to suffer His wrath, but what does He tell us about tribulation? Historically speaking, this doctrine is pretty new to the Church. We do not see evidence of people teaching this particular doctrine the way it is being taught now prior to the 1830's. Many of the great men of God believed that the church will endure the Great Tribulation, men such as John Wesley, Charles Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Matthew Henry, John Knox, John Hus, William Carey, John Calvin, Isaac Newton, George Whitfield, A.B. Simpson, George Mueller, John Newton, Jonathan Edwards, John Wycliffe, John Bunyan and many others.²

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture

What are the roots of the Pre Tribulation Rapture doctrine? One of the earliest proponents of this doctrine was John Nelson Darby of the Plymouth Brethren who began to teach what he called "the secret rapture" in 1830. He would later produce his own translation of the Bible from which he removed entire verses, corrupted Biblical doctrines and tampered with key passages concerning the 2nd coming of Christ. John Darby has been called the "Father of Dispensationalism." He promoted his theory of this secret pre-tribulation rapture throughout the 19th century. Later, his theory gained wide acceptance when Oxford University Press published the Scofield Reference Bible, which contained marginal notes promoting the pre tribulation rapture theory promoting the concept of Darby's secret rapture. These notes caused many Christians to embrace this doctrine as though God had said it himself. Scofield's notes clearly point to a pre-tribulation rapture, even though the scriptures have no references at all to a pre-tribulation rapture. These

² As told by Marvin Rosenthal, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, Published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN. Page 54.

notes were used in many Bible colleges in the US responsible for training a whole generation of pastors and preachers.

This theory was further reinforced by popular films in the 1970's such as Don Thompson's "Thief in the Night" and popular books to come later such as the *Left Behind* Series. They are dramatic presentations that have actually become a part of American Evangelical belief and culture and people now start with that viewpoint and accept it to be true. *Left Behind* went on to sell 63 million copies and spawn a series of 16 books and 3 movie adaptations. These films played a significant role in indoctrinating a generation of believers, especially in their teens.

I am not saying that these films and books cannot be used for good, since many have been awakened to their need for the Savior by considering that Jesus is coming back to this earth. However, we cannot allow popular culture, or extra-biblical sources to determine what we believe about scripture. We need to go to the scriptures themselves for the truth. In examining the scripture, the pre tribulation rapture theory, in my opinion, is built on too much conjecture and leaves many Bible students with too many questions. I have been in churches and have fellowshipped with believers that have held each one of these differing theories and have considered them all. However, there are many scriptures where tribulation is mentioned and even by Jesus Himself, when He mentions persecution and tribulation together.

Tribulation is something that the saints have always gone through. Jesus said: "**When you are persecuted, rejoice for your reward will be great**" (Matthew 5:12). There are only five verses in the whole of the New Testament where the Greek word *thlipsis* is specifically referring to the end times or the last seven years of human history. Each time it is used it is only spoken of as happening after the Abomination of Desolation at the mid point of the seven-year period, the 70th Week of Daniel. Let's read Matthew's account of the things that lead up to the coming of the Lord, also noticing especially how often words like "then" or "at that time" is used:

¹⁵“So **when** you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶**then** let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹For **then there will be great distress [Thlipsis]**, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ²²“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³**At that time** if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is

visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹“**Immediately after the distress [Thlipsis] of those days** “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”³⁰“**Then** will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And **then** all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather **his elect** from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:15-31).

What about Mark in his gospel account—what did he say? Surely if the rapture was coming before any difficulties, wouldn't he say so? Instead, we find that Mark's account is almost word for word the same as Matthew:

¹⁹because those will be days of distress [**Thlipsis**] unequaled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again (Mark 13:19).

²⁴“But in those days, following that distress [**Thlipsis**], “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ²⁶“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷And he will send his angels and gather **his elect** from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens (Mark 13:24-27).

Some will say that when Jesus was talking about gathering His elect, He wasn't talking to us believers; He was talking to the Jews. But at the very end of the gospel of Matthew he records Jesus as saying to His disciples to go to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to obey all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20). Also, right at the end of Mark's words about the tribulation/distress, the Lord adds the warning to stay awake and not to sleep spiritually, then He adds the words, “What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch! (Mark 13:36-37). It's almost like He knew that some would say that these words were not for believers.

The fifth time the Greek word *thlipsis* is used is very clearly spoken about as happening during the Great Tribulation.

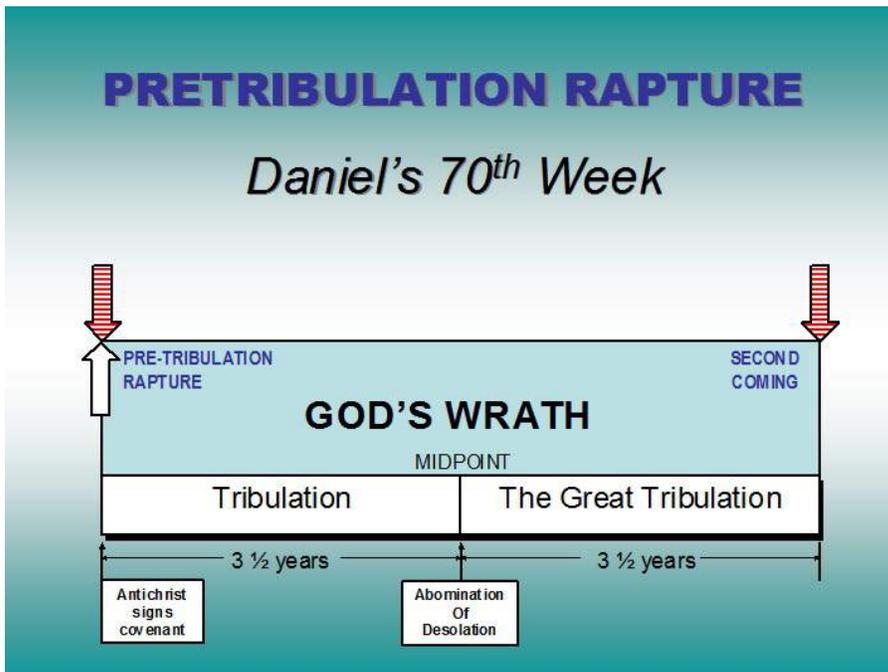
¹⁴I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

If it were true that God's saints would be raptured before the Great Tribulation takes place, don't you think that there would be some place where it would clearly state this? But Jesus did not say that He would deliver us before the tribulation, only that He would come for us before the wrath is poured out. His concern was that His people would be sleeping and not aware of what is going on. He wants us to know that when we see these things happen, “I have told you ahead of time” (Matthew 24:25).

The thing that concerns me about the view that the rapture will happen before the Antichrist appears, is that when he comes on the scene and believers are still here, will those believers feel misled? Will young believers doubt or question the Word of God because they feel that they were told something that was not true? Will they be dismayed that things are not happening as they expected? I would rather that we are all prepared to meet Him now and are ready for whatever may happen before that time. If you are a mid-tribulationist or a post-tribulationist I am not so worried for you, because you are anticipating hardship and difficulty to have that view. And if I *am* taken up before things get really ugly, let me tell you, I am not going to complain. I will be happy to go! But my heart is for us to be prepared and realize that we may have to go through some suffering. Not God's wrath, you understand, but suffering may come our way if we are the generation that enters that seven-year period.

If we truly understand that a period of worldwide persecution is coming to the church, then we can prepare ourselves spiritually for it and that is what I want you to take home from this study. We must learn to depend on God and draw close to Him while we still have daylight.

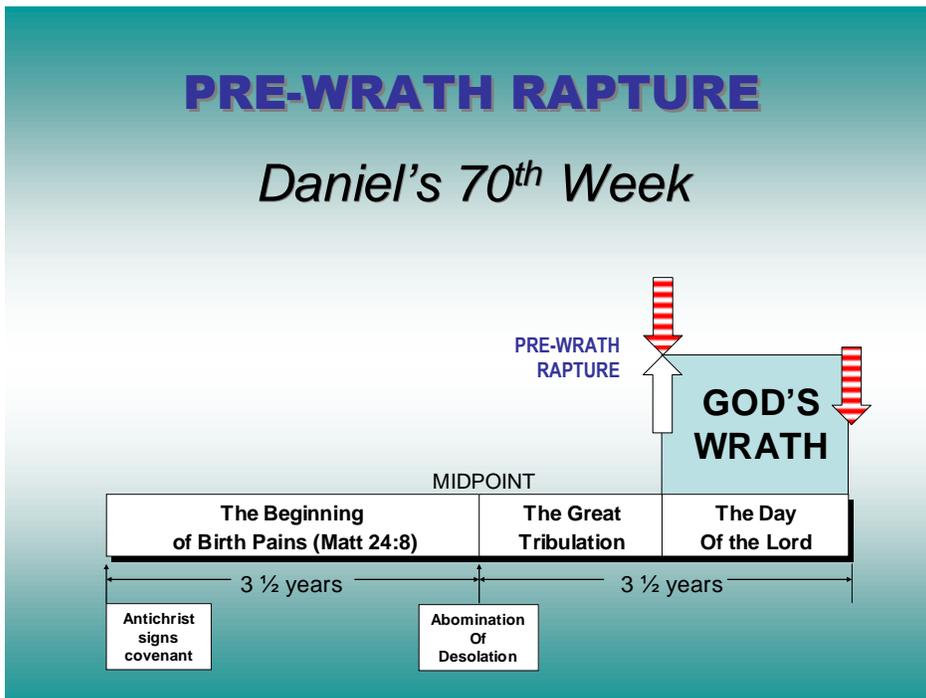
Here is a diagram of the Pre-Tribulation position and, further on down, the position, which many Bible teachers, including myself, believe to be biblically based, the Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church.



Note that the Pre-Tribulation position is that the rapture happens before the 70th week of Daniel and the rise of the Antichrist starts. In this theory, you will see that the wrath of God is being poured out during the whole of the tribulation. This is not my personal view. I cannot see that Antichrist will be able to sit upon the throne of the world if the wrath of God was being poured out. When the time of God's wrath comes those who are outside

of Christ will be looking for hiding places. “People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth” (Isaiah 2:19).

The Pre-Wrath view sees the rapture happening at some point during the second half of the 70th Week of Daniel. It’s called the Pre-Wrath position because of the scripture saying that God has not appointed us, the people He has set apart for Himself, to suffer wrath but to receive salvation (deliverance) (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Note that the Pre-Wrath position is that Jesus calls the first half of the seven-year period in scripture, “the beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:8).



So the real question that should be asked is, “what are the things that must happen before we can expect the Rapture and the Day of the Lord?” I would like to point out, in understanding the time frame of these events, that scripture does not tell us that the Day of the Lord will last the whole seven years of Daniel 9:27, which is the assumption of those that teach a Pre-Tribulation rapture. As the diagram above shows, the Day of the Lord happens at the Seventh Seal (Revelation 6:12, 16-17; 8:1), which is at an unknown point sometime during the second half of the 7 years of Daniel’s 70th week. We will look at the opening of the seven seals in a later session.

Paul’s Three Things That Must Happen Before the Rapture

Paul is very helpful concerning what will happen just before the church is caught up. He writes a later letter to the Thessalonian church, 2 Thessalonians. Again, the topic is about the coming of Jesus for His people. Let's turn to chapter 2.

¹Concerning the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ and *our being gathered to him*, we ask you, brothers, ²not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, *report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come*. ³Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, *for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction*. ⁴He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that *he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God*. ⁵Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5).

Paul says that day (The Day of the Lord and with it our being gathered to Him) will not come *until* three things happen (Verse 3). What three things in the passage above does Paul say will take place before our being gathered to Him and the Day of the Lord?

- 1) The apostasy, falling away or rebellion, depending on your translation (Verse 3).
- 2) The man of lawlessness (The Antichrist) is revealed (Verse 3).
- 3) He will set himself up in God's Temple, proclaiming he is God (Verse 4).

Paul has received a letter back from the Thessalonians after his first letter. The church in Thessalonica had received some communication from some people that had them believing that the persecution that they were experiencing at the time was the prelude to the Day of the Lord and the gathering of the saints to Christ. In answer to their questions, he starts out with the word "concerning." In chapter one, Paul uses the same Greek word, *thlipsis*, (tribulation) to describe the persecution that the Thessalonians were enduring (2 Thessalonians 1:4). Paul writes his second letter to ease their fears that they were not experiencing the Great Tribulation. He reassures them that the time was not yet imminent by telling them that there are three things that must happen before that day, the Day of the Lord, comes (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

- 1) The Rebellion occurs (v.3). The definite article is in the Greek text, but is not explicit in the English translation. It is *the* rebellion, not just any worldwide rebellion but a worldwide event that facilitates many falling away from the faith. The Greek word used is *Apostasia*, which means to depart, defect, and revolt. The meaning of this word is always speaking of a religious defection, a departure from what is considered to be orthodox.³ What would cause a worldwide defection from the faith? It is possible that when Antichrist and the False Prophet demand that everyone should receive a mark on their forehead or hand, and worship the beast, many that have a half hearted faith will fall away from the Lord. The true saints, symbolized by the five wise virgins in Matthew

³ Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, 686 Apostasia, Page 693.

- 25, will hold to their faith and continue to believe, anticipating the return of their Lord.
- 2) The second thing Paul says must happen before the Day of the Lord is for the man of lawlessness (another name for the Antichrist) to be revealed (v.3). I believe that he will resolve the Palestinian problem and a peace treaty or covenant will be signed on the whole issue of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27). His bargaining position will be to allow the Jewish people to rebuild their Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in exchange for the Palestinians to have a state in east Jerusalem. This peace covenant or treaty is a sign that we can look for. Those who hold to a Pre-Tribulation viewpoint do not think that the Church will witness any of these things. However, even in Paul's day, the Holy Spirit warned the Thessalonians, and us, to be aware of these events as signs of His coming.
 - 3) Paul says the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist, will oppose everything that is called God; in fact he will exalt himself as God, sitting in the Temple of God, proclaiming himself as God (v.4). He will set himself up in the newly rebuilt Jewish Temple. As at this present time (September 2014) there is no Jewish Temple that lies at the heart of Jerusalem.

Who is the one that is restraining Antichrist's appearance?

Paul then makes an assumption of the Thessalonians, that they know what is holding back the coming of the Antichrist:

⁶And now you know *what is holding him back*, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. ⁷For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the *one who now holds it back* will continue to do so till *he* is taken out of the way. ⁸And *then* the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8).

Paul goes on to say that the lawless one (another name for Antichrist, verse 8) is not on the scene. He says that **those three things can't happen until the one who now holds it back [the restrainer] is taken out of the way.** Here is where, in my opinion, those that hold to a pre-tribulation rapture have made a big assumption that is not correct. If the restrainer (the one who holds back the Antichrist) is the Church, as the Pre-Tribulationist reasoning goes, the church must depart the world before the 70th week of Daniel starts (Daniel 9:27) because we know that the Antichrist will confirm the covenant that will start off the 70th week.

²⁷He will confirm a covenant with many *for one 'seven.'* *In the middle of the 'seven'* he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an *abomination that causes desolation*, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him (Daniel 9:27).

I don't see how the restrainer (The one holding Antichrist back) can be the Church. First of all, the Greek noun *ekklēsia* ("Church") is feminine, and the restrainer (NIV "holds it back") is masculine. Furthermore, verse 7 says that **he** (masculine) is taken out of the way. Writer Robert Van Kampen in his book, *The Rapture Question Answered Plain and Simple*, writes:

"The context of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is his instruction about what must happen **before** Christ comes to rapture His saints at the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2) making the true church of Christ an impossible candidate for the restrainer. **You can't make the removal of the saints a condition that must be met before the saints are removed** and the Day of the Lord begins, can you? Somehow the logic of that circular reasoning escapes me."

Robert Van Kampen then goes on to say on this same topic:

"Other Pre-Tribulationists will assert that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, reasoning that because the Holy Spirit indwells the true believer, the removal of the restrainer is an indirect reference to the rapture of the saints. But again, the circular reasoning that makes the true church an impossible candidate for the restrainer also makes the Holy Spirit an impossible candidate. Furthermore, like the elect of God, the Holy Spirit will still be on the earth after antichrist begins his persecution of the elect" (Mark 13:11; Matthew 24:21-22, 31).⁴

If we look at key passages in Daniel and Revelation we see the Holy Spirit still at work in His saints even after the Antichrist comes to power and during the 70th week of Daniel:

²¹As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them (Daniel 7:21).

²⁵He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time (Daniel 7:25).

⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and the testimony they had maintained (Revelation 6:9).

¹¹Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed (Revelation 6:11).

¹³Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These

⁴ *The Rapture Question Answered Plain and Simple*, Robert Van Kampen, Revell Publishers, Page 124.

are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:13-14).

¹⁷Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17).

⁷He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them (Revelation 13:7).

⁶I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus (Revelation 17:6).

⁴I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been **beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the Word of God.** They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

Why do you think that God allows His people to suffer? What has history taught us about persecution of God's people?

Those who hold to a Pre-Tribulation rapture view say that those saints who are mentioned above are those who are being persecuted during the 70th week of Daniel, the seven-year period, are those left behind and that became Christians after the saints are caught up. I never have understood how people could get a second chance at salvation! Remember at the beginning of the last study (The Rapture of the Saints) we looked at two scriptures that state plainly that the door of salvation would be closed when the Lord came for His saints. You can't have the saints leaving before the 70th week starts and have others becoming Christians afterward—**The door has been shut!** (Matthew 25:10, Luke 13:25). If we believe that the above scriptures are people that are coming to Christ after a pre-tribulation rapture then that seems to me to be dangerous theology, because in essence we are teaching people that they can wait until the rapture happens and then they can become Christians afterwards and find the door still open for them. I see nothing in scripture that indicates a second chance after the door is shut! Why are we told that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth if there is still yet a chance? ²⁸"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out (Luke 13:28).

Jesus said it would be a back-to-back event. The rapture takes place and judgment falls right after, no time delay at all.

²⁶"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage **up to the day** Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and

selling, planting and building. ²⁹But *the day* Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰*It will be just like this on the day* the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26-30 Emphasis mine).

The day Noah entered the ark; the flood came and destroyed those outside:

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. ¹²And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³**On that very day** Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. (Genesis 7:11-13).

The same day Lot left Sodom was the same day when destruction fell on Sodom. What is the clear lesson with the above words? The only interpretation can be that it will be just like this on the day that Jesus is revealed. The wrath of God is only poured out after the Church is caught up.

Who is the Restrainer?

So, who is holding back or restraining these three things from happening and with it the closing of the door of salvation with the Rapture of the saints? I put it to you that it is the Archangel Michael, the Prince of Israel. Let's look at three scriptures that may confirm this to you. The context of the first scripture is a conversation between an angel and Daniel found in Daniel chapter 10. The angel tells him that when Daniel first began to pray concerning the understanding of a revelation given to him, the angel had been sent in response, but a demonic prince, who oversaw the whole empire of the Persian kingdom where Daniel was living, withheld the angel from getting to Daniel. He was only able to come when Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help him.

But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, *one of the chief princes*, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia (Daniel 10:13).

Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; ²¹but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except *Michael, your prince* (Daniel 10:20-21).

First we are told that Michael is one of God's chief princes but in the second passage we are specifically told that Michael is the prince over the nation of Israel. The angel helps Daniel understand some things concerning the future before going on to tell Daniel that there will be a time when Michael's protection will be lifted for a while. Here's what he says:

¹"At that time *Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise.* There will be *a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.* ²Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. ⁴But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (Daniel 12:1-4).

Does it not seem that Michael is the restrainer? We are told that Michael, the Archangel that oversees the whole nation of Israel, the one that protects the people of Israel, will *arise*. The Hebrew word used is *amad*. Strong's concordance translates this word: "to stand, arise, cease." In the Book of Job the word *amad* is used to describe the actions of the three friends of Job after they had tried to accuse him of sin. An onlooker by the name of Elihu is moved to speak. He complains that the three now have nothing to say. Elihu says of them,

Must I wait, now that they are silent, now that they stand there with no reply? (Job 32:16).

The words **stand there** is the translation of the Hebrew word *amad*. It means to stand still and desist. This is important to us for this word *amad* reveals to us that Michael has been defending his nation, but now he stands still and does nothing. The next verse describes what happens when Michael arises or ceases doing whatever he has been doing, "*There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then*" (Verse 1). I believe that if it had not been for the work of the Archangel Michael, the great prince that protects Israel, the many wars that the nation of Israel have fought since 1948 would have destroyed them.

Several years ago, when I lived in Israel for about a year and a half of my life, I had the pleasure of being in a home Bible group led by Lance Lambert, the writer and conference speaker. Lance spoke of the attack on Israel in 1973 by the Egyptians and Syrians on the holiest day in Israel, Yom Kippur, and The Day of Atonement. One day a year, the Israeli's do not eat anything; they will not drive their cars, watch TV, listen to the radio, or do anything apart from seek God and repent of their sins. The Arab armies chose that day to launch a surprise attack on Israel. The Russians had armed the Arab armies to the hilt with the best that Russia could put together, while the Israeli's could not even muster their people. Lance in his book, *Battle for Israel*,⁵ stated that there were more tanks on the Syrian front than in the 1941 German offensive against Russia, which was 200 miles long and involved 1000 tanks. On the Syrian front, the Golan Heights, there were 1200 tanks on a 20-mile front. The Egyptians had 3000 tanks, 2000 heavy guns, 1000 aircraft and 600,000 men on the Sinai front. The regular Israeli garrison numbered only a few hundred men against Syria's massive tank attack. The Syrians advanced through Israeli lines easily with most of them at home for the holiday. Lance Lambert says:

⁵ *Battle For Israel*, Lance Lambert, Printed by Kingsway Publications, 1976, Page 11.

“The Syrians should have been in Tiberias (A large city on the Sea of Galilee) on the evening of the first day of the war but just like the Egyptians on the Sinai front, they stopped for some reason. The commanding officer of Israel’s Golani Brigade said later in my presence that when the Syrians were first advancing, the Israelis had only two tanks and ten men at their NAFAQ headquarters. This man held no religious belief, but he referred to this as a miracle. Although he had been involved in the four previous wars of Israel’s history he had never seen anything like it. Wave after wave of tanks bore down on them. Then when they came to within one mile of the NAFAQ headquarters, they halted. ‘They saw the Lake of Galilee,’ he said, ‘they liked the view, and they stopped.’ As a result of these delays in the Egyptian and Syrian advance Israel had time to regroup and reorganize. Many think that it was this period of time that made all the difference to the outcome of the Yom Kippur War. Another Israeli captain without any religious beliefs said that at the height of the fighting on the Golan, he looked up into the sky and saw a great grey hand pressing downward as if it were holding something back. In my opinion that describes exactly what happened; without the intervention of God, Israel would have been doomed.”⁶

In a conflict in August, 2014 between Israel and Gaza that erupted when Hamas fighters in Gaza began a rocket attack on next-door Israel, World News Daily reported that an operator of Israel’s Iron Dome missile-defense system said he personally witnessed the “hand of God” diverting an incoming rocket. Here below is the article:

Israel Today translated a report from a [Hebrew-language news site](#), which noted the Iron Dome battery failed three times to intercept an incoming rocket headed toward Tel Aviv.

The commander recalled: “A missile was fired from Gaza. Iron Dome precisely calculated [its trajectory]. We know where these missiles are going to land down to a radius of 200 meters. This particular missile was going to hit either the Azrieli Towers, the Kirya (Israel’s equivalent of the Pentagon) or [a central Tel Aviv railway station]. Hundreds could have died.

“We fired the first [interceptor]. It missed. Second [interceptor]. It missed. This is very rare. I was in shock. At this point we had just four seconds until the missile lands. We had already notified emergency services to converge on the target location and had warned of a mass-casualty incident.

“Suddenly, Iron Dome (which calculates wind speeds, among other things) shows a major wind coming from the east, a strong wind that ... sends the missile into the sea. We were all stunned. I stood up and shouted, ‘There is a God!’ “I witnessed this miracle with my own eyes. It was not told or reported to me. I saw the hand of God send that missile

⁶ Ibid, Page 13.

into the sea.”⁷

It is my opinion that Satan cannot do anything against the Jewish people (or the Church) without the permission of God. Michael the angel is restraining every enemy that would seek to destroy the nation of Israel. God is bringing His purposes to pass.

So, what are we to conclude from our study on the rapture? I believe, based on our study of the scriptures, there will be a time of persecution against Christians and it is erroneous for us to believe that the Church will be caught up to heaven before the 70th week starts. We are to prepare ourselves spiritually. We should be growing in our dependence on the Spirit, learning to hear His voice, so that He can direct our paths in the days ahead. I believe it is important that we find a small group of like-minded believers that we can grow close together with and support one another in the spiritual darkness of our time. The days ahead will be glorious days for the Church for wherever there will be great darkness the light will begin to shine in our hearts.

¹"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

²See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you (Isaiah 60:1-2).

Yes, darkness may be over the earth, even thick darkness, but God has promised that His glory will be seen over His church. He will never leave us nor forsake us, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). He will snatch us up and out of Satan's hand.

The scriptures tell us that all of creation groans and waits for the coming of Christ. If the resurrection is the Christian's greatest hope, then the return of Christ will be our ultimate triumph. We know that when He comes, He will bring perfect justice and we will reign with Him forever. Whatever happens before He comes will be worth all the suffering that has ever occurred in God's eternal family. It is important that we remember that we have brothers and sisters in Christ in other nations that are already going through incredible persecution and suffering for the sake of Christ. For all of these reasons, in this present day more than ever, it is important that we remember often to lift up our heads and say; "Come Lord Jesus!"

Prayer: Father, help me not to fear, but to believe that You are my total sufficiency for every situation, every day. I pray that my faith will grow strong as you reveal Yourself to me in the small things as well as the big challenges in life. Help me to enjoy my journey with you step by step and prepare me for whatever lies ahead. My times are in Your hands, Amen.

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⁷ <http://www.wnd.com/2014/08/israeli-soldier-testifies-to-miracle-in-gaza/#WvzV451L5cbSQGRI.99>

