

Christians must guard against assigning interpretations based on fallen human reason, or confidently assuming that 'Y' is impossible because 'X' has not happened yet."

The Day of the Lord comes after celestial disasters that follow a time of human oppression and tribulation against the believers. Biblically the events transpire like this:

1. Tribulation and persecution of the church
2. Celestial disturbances and disasters caused by the Lord's appearing or the "Sign of the Son of Man"
3. The Day of the Lord which is the Lord's judgment of sinful mankind after the Lord has delivered the church out of the Tribulation
  - Joel 2:30-31 says, "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes." (ESV)
  - Joel 2:10-11 says, "The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?"
  - Isaiah 13:9-10, "Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless. I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger."

The believers that suffer the persecution of the antichrist in the Tribulation will not have the bowls of God's wrath poured out on them:

Ryrie says, "Though I believe that the rapture precedes the beginning of the Tribulation-, actually nothing is said in the Scriptures as to whether or not some time (or how much time) may elapse between the rapture and the opening of the Tribulation." (Charles C. Ryrie, *The Final Countdown*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1982, pages 90-91)

In Luke 21:34-36 and Matthew 24:42-51 the disciples are warned to be sober and alert so that they may be aware of the signs and "when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:28). Likewise, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8 seems to be saying similar things:

- "you are not in darkness",
- that day will not "surprise you like a thief",
- "let us not sleep,"
- "let us keep awake",
- "let us be sober"

Jesus says:

"it will come upon ALL who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:35-36, ESV)

Jesus appears to be saying "ALL", not "all, except the church" will experience these times. He also warns them to "stay awake" in order to be aware of the signs and the times. Jesus commands them to pray that they will "have strength to escape all these things", which is not a reference to escaping the tribulation by means of the rapture, but escaping the evil of those days so that when Jesus does appear they will not have fallen asleep with the philosophies of the world, but would instead be awake and alert waiting for Jesus to return so they might meet him in the air and stand before him instead of being left in the world to endure the trumpets and the bowl judgments.

## SIGNS: Warned to Watch for These Signs

### **JESUS** (Mt. 24)

"They will deliver you up to tribulation and **put you to death**...hated by all nations for my name's sake... then **many will fall away**...betray one another...hate one another...the love of many will grow cold... when you see **the abomination of desolation** ... standing in the holy place... then there will be **great tribulation**..." (Mt. 24:9-21)

### **PAUL** (1 Th. 5:3)

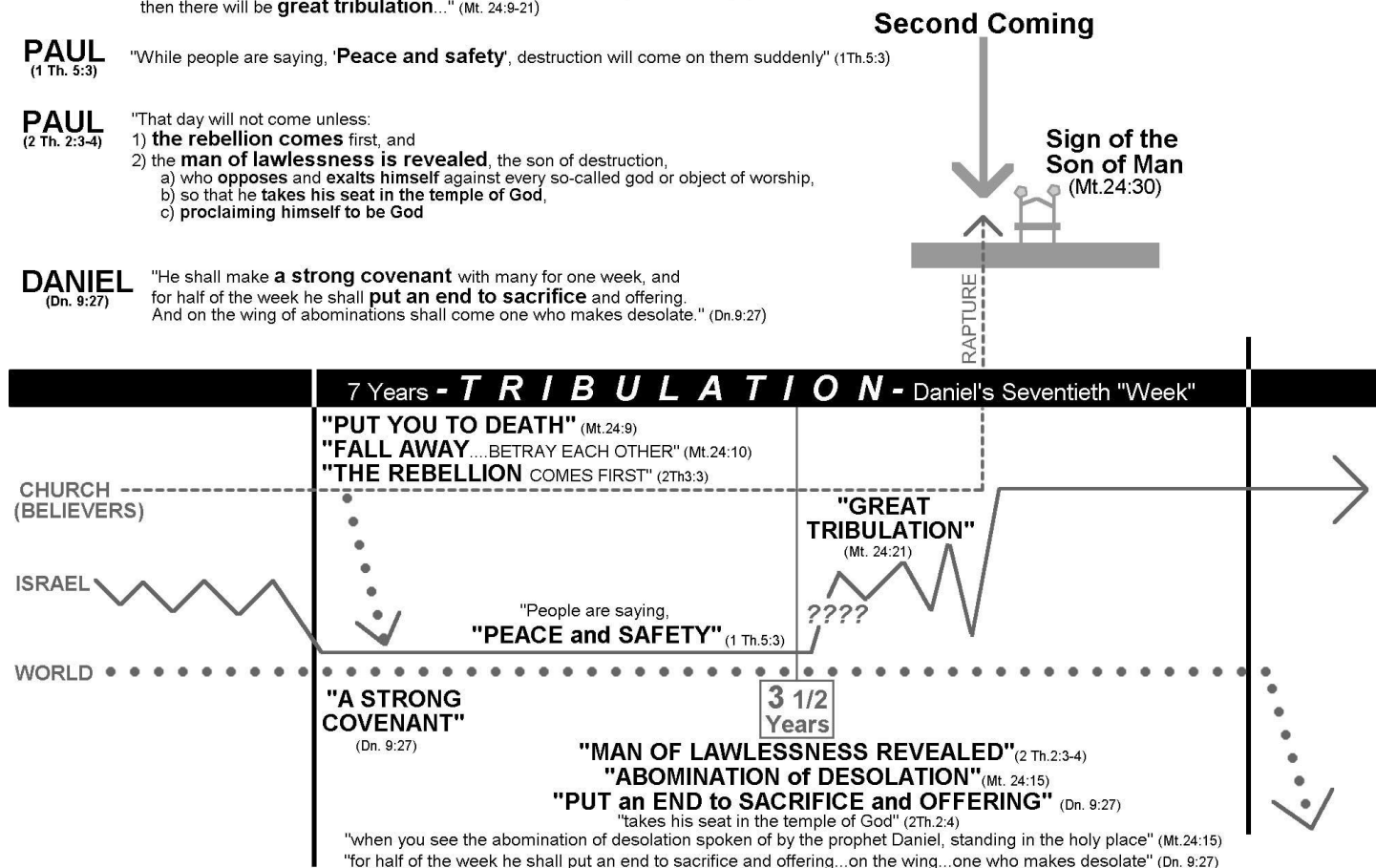
"While people are saying, '**Peace and safety**', destruction will come on them suddenly" (1Th.5:3)

### **PAUL** (2 Th. 2:3-4)

"That day will not come unless:  
1) **the rebellion comes** first, and  
2) the **man of lawlessness is revealed**, the son of destruction,  
a) who **opposes** and **exalts himself** against every so-called god or object of worship,  
b) so that he **takes his seat in the temple of God**,  
c) **proclaiming himself to be God**

### **DANIEL** (Dn. 9:27)

"He shall make a **strong covenant** with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall **put an end to sacrifice** and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate." (Dn.9:27)



## EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

### **John Chrysostom**

John Chrysostom (347-407) explains 'imminence' and 'signs' of Christ's Second Coming:

"But it may be worthwhile to ask, If antichrist comes, and Elijah comes, how is it 'when they say peace and safety', that then a sudden destruction comes upon them? For these things do not permit the day to come upon them unawares, being signs of its coming. But he [Paul] does not mean this to be the time of antichrist, and the whole day, because that will be a sign of the coming of Christ, but Himself will not have a sign, but will come suddenly and unexpectedly. For travail, indeed, you say, does not come upon the pregnant woman unexpectedly: for she

knows that after nine months the birth will take place. And yet it is very uncertain. For some bring forth at the seventh month, and others at the ninth. And at any rate the day and the hour is uncertain. With respect to this therefore, Paul speaks thus [in 1 Thessalonians 5:3]. And the image is exact. For there are not many sure signs of travail; many indeed have brought forth in the high roads, or when out of their houses and abroad, not foreseeing it. And he has not only glanced here at the uncertainty, but also at the bitterness of the pain. For as she while sporting, laughing, not looking for anything at all, being suddenly seized with unspeakable pains, is pierced through with the pangs of labor – so will it be with those souls, when the Day comes upon them.”

- John Chrysostom, Thessalonians, Homily 9 on 1 Thessalonians 5:3

Chrysostom has captured the concepts of watching for the signs of Christ's return, knowing his return is imminent but yet preserving the warning that no man knows the day or hour. Christ's return will be a surprise, but it is imminent. The signs will indicate when it is near, but we will not be able to neglect our daily responsibilities in order to wait upon a hill for Jesus to return.

## Augustine

“In connection with [the last] judgment the following events shall come to pass, as we have learned: Elijah the Tishbite will come; the Jews will believe; Antichrist will persecute; Christ will judge; the dead will rise; the good and the wicked will be separated; the world will be burned and renewed. All these things, we believe, will come to pass; but how, or in what order, human understanding cannot perfectly teach us, but only the experience of the events themselves. My opinion, however, is, that they will happen in the order in which I have related them.” (*The City of God*, Book XX, ch. 30)

## Didache

The *Didache* is a Syrian church manual from 85-120 AD that likely originated from Antioch, Syria is fully titled “*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*”. The *Didache* fully teaches that the Christian church is going through the Tribulation. The *Didache* is made up of a collection of traditions and teachings of the apostles as the second generation of Christians remembered them. The *Didache* was recorded during the years 100-150 AD. It will be interesting to see what the *Didache* records about meeting the Lord in the air, antichrist, tribulation and the Second Coming. Remember, one of the largest cities of Syria was Antioch the home church of the Apostle Paul and a church that heard the teaching of Barnabas, Peter, John Mark and many others early church leaders coming up from Jerusalem and from the Gentile churches. The *Didache* states the following in chapter 16:4-8:

“For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the deceiver of the world [Antichrist] will appear as a son of God and “will perform signs and wonders,” and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before [great tribulation]. Then all humankind will come to the fiery test, and “many will fall away” and perish; but “those who endure” in their faith “will be saved” [delivered from the day of the Lord] by the accursed one himself. And “then there will appear the signs” of the truth: first the sign of an opening in heaven, then the sign of the sound of a trumpet, and third, the resurrection of the dead [resurrection] — but not of all; rather, as it has been said, “The Lord will come, and all his saints with him.” Then the world “will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven” (The *Didache* 16:4-8)

Notice the order and the details that were traditions handed down in an apostolic church that had received the teaching of Peter, Paul, Barnabas, John Mark and unknown others under the direction of

the apostles within 40-90 years of these men teaching. It is even possible that John is still alive when this document is being recorded, but it is sure Ignatius, a disciple of John and the bishop of Antioch, Syria was alive or had recently faced martyrdom. In its presentation of events the *Didache* clearly presents a chronology that has the church enduring the persecution of the antichrist and there is no clue or hint of meeting the Lord in the air before the end time trouble begins. Here is the order as presented in the *Didache*:

1. Persecution, betrayal and hate
2. Antichrist appears as a son of God
3. Antichrist performs signs and wonders
4. Antichrist rules the earth
5. Antichrist commits abominations never committed before
6. Many will fall away from the faith and perish with the world
7. Some will endure and will be saved
8. Signs of the Truth will appear:
  - a. Heaven will be open
  - b. The Trumpet will sound
  - c. Resurrection of those that are in Christ who are returning with Christ
9. The world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven

This matches the presentation put forth here: Antichrist persecution of the church causing many to fall away, but others stand firm and are destroyed. There will be deliverance when the Sign of the Son appears in the sky and the church is raptured from the earth and the dead in Christ are resurrected to meet the Lord in the air. The world will visually see the Lord return and the raptured church with him in glory before the judgment of the earth begins.

The last chapter is devoted to exhortations in view of the woes expected at the end of the world. The author urges an attitude of watching in view of the uncertainty of the time of the end....This language, however, cannot be taken to mean an 'any-moment rapture,' for the author proceeds to sketch the consummation of the age in which he warns the Church against the peril of falling away from the faith when Antichrist appears...The Didachist looks forward to the appearance of Antichrist who will rule the world and inflict men with severe persecution. The many who are to be offended and be lost are professing Christians who do not stand true; for only those who endure in their faith shall be saved...The purpose of the Didachist in writing this exhortation was to prepare the church for the Great Tribulation and the sufferings to be inflicted by the Antichrist."

'Watch over your life; let your lamps be not quenched and your loins be not ungirded, but be ready, for you know not the hour in which your Lord comes. And you shall gather yourselves together frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls; for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you, if you be not perfected at the last season.' (Didache 16:1-5)

## **The Epistle of Barnabas**

George Eldon Ladd in his book *The Blessed Hope* writes the following about *The Epistle of Barnabas*, whose actual author is anonymous, but written between 70-130 AD:

"The author of this little tract is looking not only for the second coming of Christ but also for the last time of trouble. He warns believers to seek out earnestly those things which are able to save them, and to flee from all the works of lawlessness and to hate the era of to his present time that they might be loved in that which is to come...for 'the final stumbling block is at hand'...This means that the Antichrist is at hand...According to this, Barnabas expected the

Church to go through the Tribulation and Christ to return only at its termination. This is again asserted in 15:5:

‘When his Son comes, he will destroy the time of the wicked one and will judge the godless, and will change the sun and moon and the stars, and then he will truly rest on the seventh day.’

...That Barnabas could not have looked for an any-moment return of Christ is proven by his expectation that the end would not come until the Roman empire should fall....Antichrist would arise after the Roman empire had broken down into ten kingdoms. This obviously could not occur at once, for in the first century Rome’s might and stability was at its apex.”

## **The Shepherd of Hermas**

*The Shepherd of Hermas* was written around 100 AD. Paul addressed a man named Hermas in Romans 16:14 and in 200 AD Origen wrote that this man was the author which could date the writing of the book to 90 AD which would make sense since Hermas mentions Clement of Rome. Three ancient witness date Hermas to around 140-150 AD and claim that Hermas was the brother of the bishop of or Rome at that time. Either way, this book, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, is an early church document from the second or third generation of Christians. *The Shepherd of Hermas* says in Vision 2:2:7-8 –

“Blessed are you, as many as will endure patiently the great tribulation that is coming, and as many as shall not deny their life. For the Lord has sworn concerning His Son, that those who denied their Lord should be rejected from their life, even they that are now about to deny Him in the coming days; but to those who will never deny Him, to them mercy was given of His great loving kindness.” (*The Shepherd of Hermas* 2:2:7-8)

## **Justin**

In 150 AD Justin Martyr clearly anticipated the church being present in the tribulation and facing the persecution of the antichrist when he wrote in his *Dialogue with Trypho*:

“He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us Christians, who, having learned the true worship of God from the law, and the word which went forth from Jerusalem by means of the apostles of Jesus, have fled for safety to the God of Jacob and the God of Israel...Now it is evident that no one can terrify or subdue us who have believed in Jesus over all the world. For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others and in larger numbers become faithful, and worshippers of God through the name of Jesus”

## **Irenaeus**

Irenaeus (130-202 AD) came from Smyrna in Asia Minor and was trained by Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John and the pastor of the church of Smyrna who is addressed in Revelation 2:8. Irenaeus writes the following around 180 AD in his book *Against Heresies* (Heresies 5:26:1 and 5:30:1-4). In the sections below Irenaeus clearly states that the antichrist will “put the Church to flight” and “when this man comes we may avoid him”. Irenaeus also provides other insights into his understanding of the chronological order of events and what he considers is a correct eschatological view as we watch and wait:

"In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] shall be partitioned. He teaches us what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel, telling us that thus it had been said to him:

*'And the ten horns which thou saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but shall receive power as if kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and give their strength and power to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, because He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings.'*

It is manifest, therefore, that of these [potentates], he who is to come shall slay three, and subject the remainder to his power, and that he shall be himself the eighth among them. And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, **and put the Church to flight**. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of our Lord. For that the kingdom must be divided, and thus come to ruin, the Lord [declares when He] says: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." It must be, therefore, that the kingdom, the city, and the house be divided into ten; and for this reason He has already foreshadowed the partition and division [which shall take place]."

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5:26:1 (180 AD)

Concerning the number of the beast, 666, Irenaeus says in *Against Heresies*:

"This number being found in all the most approved and ancient copies [of the Apocalypse, the book of Revelation], and those men who saw John face to face [Polycarp, Papias, Ignatius, etc.] bearing their testimony [to it]; while reason also leads us to conclude that the number of the name of the beast, [if reckoned] according to the Greek mode of calculation by the [value of] the letters contained in it, will amount to six hundred and sixty and six; that is, the number of tens shall be equal to that of the hundreds, and the number of hundreds equal to that of the units ... there shall be no light punishment [inflicted] upon him who either adds or subtracts anything from the Scripture, under that such a person must necessarily fall. ... These men, therefore, ought to learn [what really is the state of the case], and go back to the true number of the name, that they be not reckoned among false prophets. But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, let them await, in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn] to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation. This, too, the apostle affirms:

*'When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them.'*

And Jeremiah does not merely point out his sudden coming, but he even indicates the tribe from which he shall come, where he says,

*'We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from Dan; the whole earth shall be moved by the voice of the neighing of his galloping horses: he shall also come and devour the earth, and the fullness thereof, the city also, and they that dwell therein.'*

This, too, is the reason that this tribe is not reckoned in the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation) along with those which are saved. It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfilment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved. For if there are many names found possessing this number, it will be asked which among them shall the coming man bear. It is not through a want of names containing the number of that name that I say this, but on account of the fear of God, and zeal for the truth:

- for the name **Evanthas (ΕΥΑΝΘΑΣ)** contains the required number, but I make no allegation regarding it.
- Then also **Lateinos (ΛΑΤΕΙΝΟΣ)** has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable [solution], this being the name of the last kingdom [of the four seen by Daniel]. For the Latins are they who at present bear rule: I will not, however, make any boast over this [coincidence].
- *Teitan* too, (TEITAN, the first syllable being written with the two Greek vowels ε and ι, among all the names which are found among us, is rather worthy of credit. For it has in itself the predicted number, and is composed of six letters, each syllable containing three letters; and [the word itself] is ancient, and removed from ordinary use; for among our kings we find none bearing this name Titan, nor have any of the idols which are worshipped in public among the Greeks and barbarians this appellation. Among many persons, too, this name is accounted divine, so that even the sun is termed “Titan” by those who do now possess [the rule]. This word, too, contains a certain outward appearance of vengeance, and of one inflicting merited punishment because he (Antichrist) pretends that he vindicates the oppressed. And besides this, it is an ancient name, one worthy of credit, of royal dignity, and still further, a name belonging to a tyrant. Inasmuch, then, as this name “Titan” has so much to recommend it, there is a strong degree of probability, that from among the many [names suggested], we infer, that perchance he who is to come shall be called “Titan.”

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him [John] who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign. But **he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is**: the name, however, is suppressed, because it is not worthy of being proclaimed by the Holy Spirit. For if it had been declared by Him, he (Antichrist) might perhaps continue for a long period. But now as “he was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the abyss, and goes into perdition,” as one who has no existence; so neither has his name been declared, for the name of that which does not exist is not proclaimed. But when:

- this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world,
- he will reign for three years and six months, and
- sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and
- then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father,
- sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire;
- but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day;
- and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that:

*‘many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ ”*

– Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5:30:1-4 (180 AD)

In summary, Irenaeus writes about 80 years after the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation and after having been trained in John’s church in Smyrna by several of John’s disciples that the church should await the fulfillment of prophecy, but will need to be prepared to avoid the antichrist when he comes since the antichrist will pursue the church.

## **Tertullian**

Tertullian, from Carthage in North Africa, wrote *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* in 208-212.

Tertullian clearly teaches that the rapture and glorification of the church occurs at the Second Coming and after the reign of Antichrist when Tertullian quotes 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

“For the apostle makes a distinction, when he goes on to say,

‘For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked,’ ”

which means, before we put off the garment of the flesh, we wish to be clothed with the celestial glory of immortality. Now the privilege of this favor awaits those who shall at the coming of the Lord be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints; as he writes to the Thessalonians:

‘For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.’ ”

- Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chapter 41,  
“The Dissolution of Our Tabernacle Consistent with the  
Resurrection of Our Bodies”

Tertullian clearly states around 210 AD that those who suffer at the hand of the antichrist “deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints” at “the coming of the Lord” that occurs at “the time of Antichrist”. Tertullian then cites Paul’s words to the Thessalonians concerning the rapture! Tertullian also understood the rapture to take place at the time of the Second Coming which delivered the Church from the antichrist.

“Tertullian believed that the end could not come at any moment but would be heralded by signs of warning...The object of Tertullian’s hope and prayers is not a secret any-moment coming of the Lord to rapture the Church; it is the hope of standing before the Son of man after a series of cosmic signs have appeared and ‘all of these things have taken place.’ ”



## Pseudo-Ephraem

Many supporters of the pretribulation rapture theory use the text of *Pseudo-Ephraem* as proof that the early church's eschatology supported a pretribulation rapture. The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraem* is a document from Syria dating to the 600's AD. The writer of this document attempts to credited the writing to Ephraem of Syria (306-373) a bishop and teacher in theological schools in the 300's AD. The document itself is NOT written by Ephraem, but comes from sometime between 450-700 AD. Four Latin copies survived and one is credited to Isidore of Seville (560-636 AD).

Grant Jeffrey says in his book "When the Trumpet Sounds" on page 105 in an essay called "A Pretrib Rapture Statement in the Early Medieval Church":

"...that the pretribulational rapture is taught so clearly in the New Testament that it is virtually impossible that no one ever taught this doctrine in the 18 centuries before 1830."

Jeffrey wants to believe he found pre-1830 support for the pretrib rapture in Pseudo-Ephraem when the author writes around 600 AD the following:

"Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that He may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms the world?...Because **all saints and the Elect of the Lord are gathered before the tribulation which is to about to come and are taken to the Lord**, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins." (Pseudo-Ephraem, Section II)

First, we will take a look at the linguistics of this passage. It is worth mentioning that in his book *First the Antichrist* Bob Gundry who writes on page 175-176 the following:

"Let us first observe the use of the present tense of the verbs of **gathering** (*colliguntur* both in Section 2 of Pseudo-Ephraem's Latin sermon and in the sermon's Latin Ephraemic source; ***sunagontai*** in the Greek Ephraemic source) and of **taking** (*adsumuntur* both in Section 2 of Pseudo-Ephraem's Latin sermon and in that sermon's Latin Ephraemic source). Of course, the present tense is often used in a futuristic sense, as elsewhere in Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon. Section 1 provides an example: 'Whenever the Roman Empire has begun to be consumed by the sword, the coming of the Evil one is at hand [Latin: *adest* – present tense] . ...In those days two brothers will come [followed by a string of further verbs in the future tense, so that 'is at hand' must mean 'will be at hand'].' But more frequent than a futuristic use of the present tense is its use for an action or state of being in progress. As every student of Greek and Latin knows, this use is often translated best into English by a form of the verb *to be* plus an *-ing* form. Thus, a likely better translation of the second passage under contention in Section 2 reads as follows: (Bold mine)

"For all the saints and elect of God ***are being gathered*** prior to the tribulation that is to come, and ***are being taken*** to the Lord lest they ever see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins." (Bold mine)

This understanding is favored not only by the greater frequency of the progressive present tense, but also by the contrast between meeting the Lord Christ after the tribulation, and being gathered and taken to the Lord before the tribulation.”

The real Ephraem used the image of a Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a symbol of nations being evangelized and gathered to the Lord. It would seem that Ephraem is referring to believers being gathered and taken to the Lord through evangelism and conversion not in the rapture before the Tribulation begins. These church age believers are renewing their minds as they grow into spiritual maturity. They are obeying admonition of Jesus and the apostles to be alert and sober as they prepare themselves for the Day of the Lord.

Second, we will compare this verse to the very text that proceed this sentence to establish the context of Pseudo-Ephraem’s text:

**“We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging.** Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and **there is no other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one** in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and **prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion**, which overwhelms all the world?” (Section II)

It seems clear the writer is focusing on rousing the believers in the church to awaken and be sober and, prepare themselves for “meeting the Lord” [renewing their minds and maturing in their faith] so that the Lord can “draw us from the confusion. This is just as Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13 and Paul says in Romans 12:2-3:

“Preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:13)

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

Third, we will compare this verse to scripture to see if any of the themes that the Bible associates with the rapture are mentioned in the context of Pseudo-Ephraem’s text and we will find that there is nothing in the text that can be paralleled with:

- Christ’s coming as in the 1 Thess. 4:16-17 rapture
- Resurrection of the dead as in 1 Cor. 15:51-52
- Glorification of living Christians as in 1 Cor. 15:51-52
- Believer’s taken into heaven according to pre-trib doctrine based on John 14:2-4; Rev. 4:1-2.

Fourth, we examine other passages in Pseudo-Ephraem that seem to describe and prepare Christians who are on earth during the Tribulation facing the terrors and persecution of the antichrist:

- “When therefore the end of the world comes, there arise... constant persecutions, slaughters and massacres everywhere, fear in the homes, panic in the cities.” (Section III)
- “In those days people shall not be buried, neither **Christian**, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people ignore them while they are fleeing.” (Section IV; Bold mine)
- “In these three years and a half...there will be in those days lack of bread and water, and no one is able to sell or to buy of the grain of the fall harvest, unless he is one who has the serpentine sign on the forehead or on the hand...those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the faces of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the udders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs.” (Section VIII)
- “When this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ, and in order to accuse the enemy. And when those just ones have appeared, they confuse indeed the antagonistic serpent with his cleverness and they call back the faithful witnesses to God, in order to (free them) from his seduction (Section IX)
- “When the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! (Section X)

And, finally, fifth, we ask if the author of the text of Pseudo-Ephraem held to a pre-trib rapture why does he not focus on the hope the church has in the pre-trib rapture and encourage the believers that they will not face any of the hardships and persecutions described in his document? Instead, he expends his energy detailing the horrors of the tribulation and his best exhortation is to tell the Christians to prepare for it by drawing close to the Lord and leaving their worldly passions behind. And, what is more, the author is NOT using his description of the horrors of the tribulation as leverage to convince the unbeliever to get saved in order to escape the coming antichrist, and likewise, he does not warn the backslidden Christian that if they don't straighten up and walk the walk they will miss the rapture and enter the tribulation. The author of Pseudo-Ephraem seems to be focused on preparing believers in the church for the day they encounter the antichrist. To me he seems to be saying, “Stop trying to have your best life now and get spiritually sober so the Lord can draw you into the Truth and lead you through this most difficult time period you are about to face.”

After observing the entire text (ten brief sections available below in this book) I conclude that it appears that as Pseudo-Ephraem wrote his sermon he considered:

- The church would be face to face with the “serpent” (antichrist)

- The resurrection of the saints would occur at the Second Coming of Christ, and not seven years before

This document of Pseudo-Ephraem is important to examine because it is the “strongest claim” the pretribulation teachers have of an early church document that “clearly teaches” the pretribulation rapture. But, the fact is, it is not even close to pretrib and is even further from the modern Western seeker church mentality.

Below is the text of Pseudo-Ephraem:

## On the Last Times, the Anti-Christ, and the End of the World

A Sermon by Pseudo-Ephraem

### The Last Trumpet - Pseudo-Ephraem

#### Section I

Dearly beloved brothers, believe the Holy Spirit who speaks in us. We have already told you that the end of the world is near, the consummation remains. Has not faith withered away among mankind? How many foolish things are seen among youths, how many crimes among prelates, how many lies among priests, how many perjuries among deacons! There are evil deeds among the ministers, adulteries in the aged, wantonness in the youths--in mature women false faces, in virgins' dangerous traces! In the midst of all this there are the wars with the Persians, and we see struggles with diverse nations threatening and "kingdom rising against kingdom." When the Roman Empire begins to be consumed by the sword, the coming of the Evil One is at hand. It is necessary that the world come to an end at the completion of the Roman Empire. In those days two brothers will come to the Roman Empire who will rule with one mind; but because one will surpass the other, there will be a schism between them. And so the Adversary will be loosed and will stir up hatred between the Persian and Roman empires.

In those days many will rise up against Rome; the Jewish people will be her adversaries. There will be stirrings of nations and evil reports, pestilences, famines, and earth quakes in various places. All nations will receive captives; there will be wars and rumors of wars. From the rising to the setting of the sun the sword will devour much. The times will be so dangerous that in fear and trembling they will not permit thought of better things, because many will be the oppressions and desolations of regions that are to come.

#### Section II

We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, **what is imminent or overhanging**. Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and **there is no other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one** in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time. Or do you not believe unless you see with your eyes? See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!" **For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.** And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!

### Section III

When therefore the end of the world comes, there arise diverse wars, commotions on all sides, horrible earthquakes, perturbations of nations, tempests throughout the lands, plagues, famine, drought throughout the thoroughfares, great danger throughout the sea and dry land, constant persecutions, slaughters and massacres everywhere, fear in the homes, panic in the cities, quaking in the thoroughfares, suspicions in the male, anxiety in the streets. In the desert people become senseless, spirits melt in the cities. A friend will not be grieved over a friend, neither a brother for a brother, nor parents for their children, nor a faithful servant for his master, but one inevitability shall overwhelm them all; neither is anyone able to be recovered in that time, who has not been made completely aware of the coming danger, but all people, who have been constricted by fear, are consumed because of the overhanging evils.

### Section IV

Whenever therefore the earth is agitated by the nations, people will hide themselves from the wars in the mountains and rocks, by caves and caverns of the earth, by graves and memorials of the dead, and there, as they waste away gradually by fear, they draw breath, because there is not any place at all to flee, but there will be concession and intolerable pressure. And those who are in the east will flee to the west, and moreover, those who are in the west shall flee to the east, and there is not a safer place anywhere, because the world shall be overwhelmed by worthless nations, whose aspect appears to be of wild animals more than that of men. Because those very much horrible nations, most profane and most defiled, who do not spare lives, and shall destroy the living from the dead, shall consume the dead, they eat dead flesh, they drink the blood of beasts, they pollute the world, contaminate all things, and the one who is able to resist them is not there. In those days people shall not be buried, neither **Christian**, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them.

### Section V

Whenever the days of the times of those nations have been fulfilled, after they have destroyed the earth, it shall rest; and now the kingdom of the Romans is removed from everyday life, and the empire of the Christians is handed down by God and Peter; and then the consummation comes, when the kingdom of the Romans begins to be fulfilled, and all dominions and powers have been fulfilled. Then that worthless and abominable dragon shall appear, he, whom Moses named in Deuteronomy, saying:-Dan is a young lion, reclining and leaping from Basan. Because he reclines in order that he may seize and destroy and slay. Indeed (he is) a young whelp of a lion not as the lion of the tribe of Judah, but roaring because of his wrath, that he may devour. "And he leaps out from Basan." "Basan" certainly is interpreted "confusion." He shall rise up from the confusion of his iniquity. The one who gathers together to himself a partridge the children of confusion, also shall call them, whom he has not brought forth, just as Jeremiah the prophet says. Also in the last day they shall relinquish him just as confused.

### Section VI

When therefore the end of the world comes, that abominable, lying and murderous one is born from the tribe of Dan. He is conceived from the seed of a man and from an unclean or most vile virgin, mixed with an evil or worthless spirit. But that abominable corrupter, more of spirits than of bodies, while a youth, the crafty dragon appears under the appearance of righteousness, before he takes the kingdom. Because he will be craftily gentle to all people, not receiving gifts, not placed before another person, loving to all people, quiet to everyone, not desiring gifts, appearing friendly among close friends, so that men may bless him, saying;-he is a just man, not knowing that a wolf lies concealed under the appearance of a lamb, and that a greedy man is inside under the skin of a sheep.

### Section VII

But when the time of the abomination of his desolation begins to approach, having been made legal, he takes the empire, and, just as it is said in the Psalm:-They have been made for the undertaking for the sons of Loth, the Moabites and the Ammanites shall meet him first as their king. Therefore, when he receives the kingdom, he orders the temple of God to be rebuilt for himself, which is in Jerusalem; who, after coming into it, he shall sit as God and order that he be adored by all nations, since he is carnal and filthy and mixed with worthless spirit and flesh. Then that eloquence shall be fulfilled of Daniel the prophet:-And he shall not know the God of their fathers, and he shall not know the desires of women. Because the very wicked serpent shall direct every worship to himself. Because he shall put forth an edict so that people may be circumcised according to the rite of the old law. Then the Jews shall congratulate him, because he gave them again the practice of the first covenant; then all people from everywhere shall flock together to him at the city of Jerusalem, and the holy city shall be trampled on by the nations for forty-two months, just as the holy apostle says in the Apocalypse, which become three and a half years, 1,260 days.

## Section VIII

In these three years and a half the heaven shall suspend its dew; because there will be no rain upon the earth, and the clouds shall cease to pass through the air, and the stars shall be seen with difficulty in the sky because of the excessive dryness, which happens in the time of the very fierce dragon. Because all great rivers and very powerful fountains that overflow with themselves shall be dried up, torrents shall dry up their water-courses because of the intolerable age, and there will be a great tribulation, as there has not been, since people began to be upon the earth, and there will be famine and an insufferable thirst. And children shall waste away in the bosom of their mothers, and wives upon the knees of their husbands, by not having victuals to eat. Because there will be in those days lack of bread and water, and no one is able to sell or to buy of the grain of the fall harvest, unless he is one who has the serpentine sign on the forehead or on the hand. Then gold and silver and precious clothing or precious stones shall lie along the streets, and also even every type of pearls along the thoroughfares and streets of the cities, but there is not one who may extend the hand and take or desire them, but they consider all things as good as nothing because of the extreme lack and famine of bread, because the earth is not protected by the rains of heaven, and there will be neither dew nor moisture of the air upon the earth. But those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs.

## Section IX

Then, when this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ, and in order to accuse the enemy. And when those just ones have appeared, they confuse indeed the antagonistic serpent with his cleverness and they call back the faithful witnesses to God, in order to (free them) from his seduction ...

## Section X

And when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth. And he shall be bound and shall be plunged into the abyss of everlasting fire alive with his father Satan; and all people, who do his wishes, shall perish with him forever; but the righteous ones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever.

## Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome (referred to in Philippians 4:3) writes 70-90 AD:

“Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, “Speedily will He come, and will not tarry; and ‘The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One for whom we look.”

“Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those that wait for Him in order that we may share in His promised gifts.”

## **Cyril of Jerusalem**

Cyril of Jerusalem (315-387):

“Let us wait and look for the Lord’s coming upon the clouds from heaven. Then shall Angelic trumpets sound; the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

## **Commodianus**

Commodianus (around 250-450 AD):

“We shall rise again to Him, who have been devoted to Him. And they shall be incorruptible, even already living without death. And neither will there be any grief nor any groaning in that city. They shall come also who overcame cruel martyrdom under Antichrist, and they themselves live for the whole time, and receive blessings because they have suffered evil things; and they themselves marrying, beget for a thousand years...the earth renewed without end pours forth abundantly.”

## **NOT PRE-TRIB RAPTURE**

1 Thess. 5:2-4 that day coming “as a thief” has no point if the Christians are not here for it. The Christians do NOT need instructions (1 Thes. 5:1) concerning “times and seasons” because they already know whose coming will precede the Lord’s coming. Who? The Antichrist! Paul told them when he was with them (2 Thes. 2:5) and refers to it again.

The reason the pretrib rapture is “secret” is because it is NOT identified in the Bible. All the “rapture” verses connect with the boldly proclaimed Second Coming verses. So, actually, the rapture is not quite and it is not secret. The Rapture is bold, revealed, proclaimed and every eye will see it, including the Jews.

Jesus does not describe a pretribulation rapture. If the pretrib rapture is described in the New Testament it does not come from the writings of John. The writer of the book of Revelation addresses the church and he goes into great detail about the return of Jesus. Two questions should be asked: One, why so much detail about the Second Coming of Jesus if the church is going to be taken seven years before the Second Coming? And, two, why is there no reference to the rapture of the church in a book about eschatology that is addressed to the church? John had no trouble making things vivid, clear and unforgettable, yet the pretribulation rapture is at best vague, illusive and unrecognizable unless you are trying to find it in the text before you start to reading.

It has often been argued that the word “church” is only found in Revelations chapters 1-3 and once more in 22:16. This is supposed to be proof that the church is not referred to in chapters 4-21 which is supposed to mean that the church is not in the tribulation which then is presented as scriptural evidence of a pretribulation rapture. To begin it is not necessarily useful, but it is interesting that John uses the word “church” eighteen times in the book of Revelation in chapters 1-3 and 22. In John’s other writings he uses the word “church” zero times in the Gospel of John, the letter of First John and the letter of Second John. It is only 3x in the fourteen verses that make up Third John that John uses the word “church” outside the book of Revelation. If we want to use this as an argument as scriptural support for a pretrib rapture then are we to assume that Jesus’ words in John 14-17 about sending the Holy Spirit, the world knowing us by our love, the vine and branches, bearing fruit and us having a place prepared for us in heaven do not apply to the church since the word “church” is nowhere in the Gospel of John? We know John is talking about the church in John 14-17 by the context and by other

ways of referring to the church and the church age. Is it possible to do the same in Revelation chapters 4-21? No. When John uses the word “church” in Third John he is not talking about the church universal but instead is addressing a situation in a particular local church. This is also how John uses the word “church” in Revelation. Every time John writes “church” in Revelation he is talking about a local church or the local churches he is addressing. In the Gospel of John or the epistles of John any reference to the universal body of Christ is identified through other appropriate language: children, brother, lady, sister. The real problem with stating that the “church” is not in Revelation 4-21 is with the fact that the church has to be mentioned somewhere and somehow in these verses since there are scenes describing believers on earth and believers in heaven. There are believers in the presence of God the Father and the Lamb and believers in the presence of the antichrist and the false prophet. Are none of these the church? The church is either on earth or in heaven and the church is either in the presence of God or in the presence of the antichrist. But, if we accept the theory that no mention of the “church” is scriptural support which makes the pretrib doctrine irrefutable we have a problem since if we continue along these same lines the church has ceased to exist in Revelation 4-21 since references such as these would not be references to “church” people:

- “souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained”
- “servants”
- “brothers”
- “elders”
- “saints”
- “kingdom of priests”
- “they who have come out of the great tribulation”
- “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”
- “servants the prophets”
- “a great multitude”
- “his bride”
- “those who are invited”
- “armies of heaven were following him”
- “souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God.”
- “those who wash their robes”
- “God’s people”

In the pretrib system the church comes back with Christ in Revelation 19:11-16, but yet there is no mention of “church” in those verses. This undermines the scriptural evidence the pretrib model claims to use. If we are to be consistent the lack of “church” in these verses means the church is still on the earth which would then be scriptural “proof” that there is no rapture at all in the way Paul understood it...?

In all honesty, it is best to at least allow room for a possible understanding that the church is on the earth during part of the tribulation and that there could be a rapture of the church during the tribulation before Jesus returns. My intention is to call into question the absolute doctrinal authority claim of the pretrib rapture advocates and suggest we make room for a possible tribulation confrontation with the kingdom of the antichrist. I am simply watching and attempting to prepare the church for what would be the most horrific days of church history. And, I understand, that if we get raptured before the tribulation begins I will not get invited to the after-parties in heaven sponsored by the pastors and Bible teachers of the twenty-first century Western church. In that way it will be a lot like being on earth.



## The SIXTH SEAL

When the throne of God and the wrath of the Lamb appear to the people on earth after the sixth seal is opened (Rev. 6:12-17), Revelation chapter six ends asking this question: "The great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev. 6:17) This question is answered in the beginning of the next chapter, Revelation 7. There are two groups identified as being able to stand: believers who have been taken to meet the Lord in the air and stand before the Lord who has just appeared on his throne and unbelieving Jews left on the earth who have just recently converted who will receive the seal of God before the wrath of God is sent to destroy the earth.

Group One, the raptured church, is the group discussed in Revelation 7:9-17. This is the church that went to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17) when the Sign of the Son of Man appeared (Matt. 24:30) on his throne (Revelation 6:16) whose glory had overwhelmed the light of the sun, moon and stars (Rev. 6:12; Luke 21:25-27) while causing cataclysmic events in the physical world (Matt. 24:27-29; Rev. 6:12-14). The angels gathered the elect from the four winds of the heaven (Matt. 24:31) and the Church is the only ones who can stand before the Lord (Rev. 6:17; 7:9; Luke 21:36) as they meet him in the air to appear before him on his throne to "be with the Lord forever" and "are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple" (1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 7:15) where, "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev. 7:16-17). This is what Paul meant when he said,

"After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to **meet the Lord in the air**. And so **we will be with the Lord forever**. Therefore **encourage each other with these words**...For **God did not appoint us to suffer wrath** but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may **live together with him**,...Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing." (1 Thes. 4:17-18; 5:9-11)

Group Two, the Jews left on the earth who have just recently repented, is the group identified and discussed in Revelation 7:1-8. The angels are seen "standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree." This may be the same "four winds of heaven" that Daniel saw in his vision in 553 BC (Daniel 7:2):

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea." (Daniel 7:2)

And, also in Zechariah 6:5, the four winds (spirits) of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. They are sent out to accomplish the Lord's eschatological purposes for Israel during their days of restoration after Babylonian captivity in 519 BC.

In Revelation 7 the angels in charge of these four winds are told "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." Then 144,000 Jews are sealed after apparently having repented after having seen the Sign of the Son of Man appear and the Church receive deliverance.

Up until this point the unbelieving Jews will have continued to look for the rise of their militant, worldly Messiah until they find what they have been looking for when the antichrist presents himself to them. This faulty thinking of the Jews reaches back to the earliest days of King David. In the Old Testament the Jews looked to their kings in Judah for Messianic leadership. After the rise of Syrian opposition in 168 BC the Jews looked to Judas Maccabaeus and his family that followed him, the Hasmonians. In the days of Jesus Christ the Jews rejected and pierced their Messiah with Roman crucifixion in 30 AD. In the same generation of Jesus' crucifixion the Jews followed their insurgents and the Zealots of 66 AD into a disastrous nation-ending war with Rome. They did this again in 132 AD when they followed an assumed militant Messiah, Simon bar Kokhba, to total annihilation and a deportation that lasted until the 1900's AD. With the rise of the antichrist the Jews find their militant, worldly messiah as Jesus warned in John 5:43: "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him." They are given a treaty by the antichrist (Daniel 9:27), the worthless shepherd of Zechariah (Zechariah 11:4-17) and gain access to the Temple Mount in the early days of the Tribulation. By doing this the Jews will have continued their error of rejecting Jesus and looking for another more militant, more worldly, more kingdom oriented Messiah. This is the false Messiah (antichrist) of Zechariah 13:7-9 who will accept the same offer Satan gave Jesus in Matthew 4:8-9: "The devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.' " The Jews will be aligned with the world conquering, politically savvy, nation unifying Messiah that they have been looking for. The only problem is this Messiah is in some fashion the incarnation of Satan whose intention is to destroy the Jews. Half way through the treaty the antichrist ends the treaty, ends the sacrifices and enters the temple proclaiming himself to be God as is revealed by Daniel, Jesus and Paul:

**Daniel:** "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." (Daniel 9:27, ESV)

**Jesus:** "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak...For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." (Matthew 24:15-21)

**Paul:** "While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' (a reference to the treaty between the Jews and the antichrist) then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:3, ESV) and "Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, ESV)

When the Jews realize they have been betrayed by what they thought was the Messiah or at least the man who would lead them to the Age of the Messiah, they will not know where to turn. The Jews will be out of options. The persecution that the believing Church has faced for three and a half years now expands and begins to afflict the Jews all around the world. As the Jews cry out to help to a savior they do not know and have rejected the Sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky and every eye will see him. Those who pierced him, the Jews, will see him:

**Zechariah:** “when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:10)

**John:** “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.” (Revelation 1:7, ESV)

The Jews will see their deliverer appear in the sky, but the deliverer will be the pierced one, the crucified one, the lamb that had been slain! When the Lord appears it is actually his re-appearing, or Second Coming. What is more when the Lord appears in his wrath he brings deliverance and salvation to his church, not to the Jewish people. The Lord will gather his church from the four winds of the heavens to meet his people in the air at the time of his coming. The Jews will witness the Lord’s deliverance of a people who are not even a physical nation. Upon his appearing the Lord will chose, deliver and cloth with salvation the *ekklesia* (church) instead the Jews. On that day it will be the believers in the crucified Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will be delivered. It will not be the chosen nation (Jews) who stand in the presence of the Lord and in his glory “when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed.”

It is at this time Moses words spoken to Israel in 1400 BC are fulfilled:

“I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” (Deuteronomy 32:21)

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 10:19 before Paul describes his own ministry as having this as its very goal:

“I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.” (Romans 11:13-14)

It is this context that Paul’s statement, “All Israel will be saved”, will find fulfillment. After having rejected Jesus Christ, the pierced, crucified Messiah and seeking after a worldly, kingdom building Messiah the Jews finally realize their mistake when they are betrayed by the worldly Messiah (antichrist) and are forced to observe a worldwide manifestation of the Lord’s deliverance of the church, a people who are not even a nation, the Jews had been will repent. They will repent in mass numbers. They will repent as they did on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) when after explaining the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and proclaiming that “Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs”, Peter accused them of having crucified the Jewish Messiah:

“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” (Acts 2:23, ESV)

On that Day of Pentecost in 30 AD when confronted with the sign of tongues and the realization that they had pierced their Messiah the Jews cried out in to the early church.

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ (Acts 2:7)

The Jewish response to the rapture and deliverance of the church out of the Tribulation will result in national mourning and repentance:

“On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left each by itself, and their wives by themselves. On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.” (Zechariah 12:11-13:1, ESV)

God seals 144,000 of these Jews as believers in Jesus Christ, the pierced and bruised Messiah, and they divine protection from God against Satan’s last attempt to wipe them out. With the appearing of the Sign of the Son of Man and the Lord’s glorious presence in the earth’s atmosphere not only has the sun, moon and stars light no longer visible and earth’s gravitational forces are wreaking havoc with tsunamis, disappearing islands and collapsing mountains, but Satan himself has lost his place as “the prince of the power of the air” and has been cast to the earth:

“ ‘Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!’ And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child...” (Revelation 12:12-13)

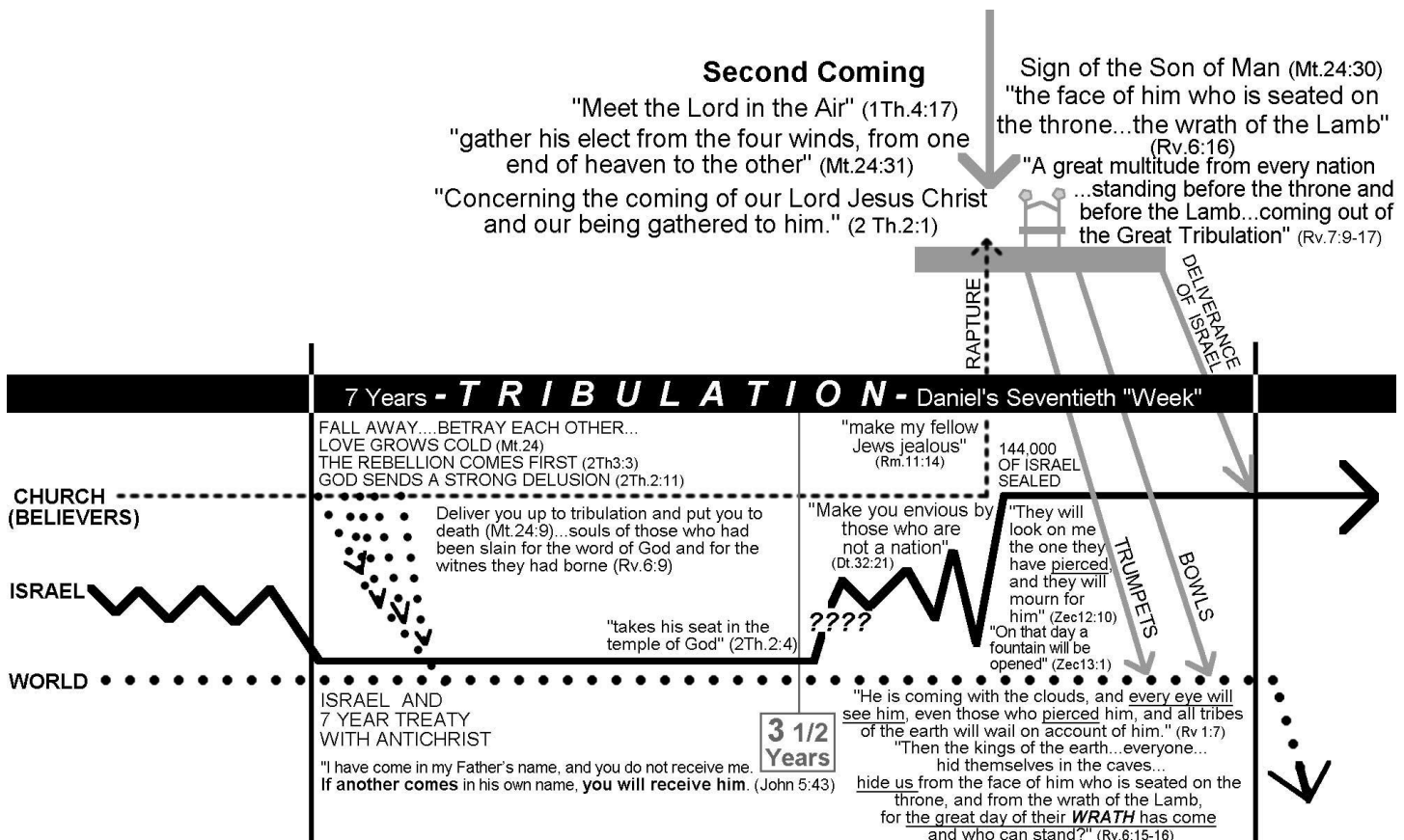
This will continue the time of judgment and tribulation for Israel’s testing, cleansing and purifying before their day of deliverance comes.

**Malachi:** “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.” (Malachi 3:1-4, ESV)

**Jeremiah:** “Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it...I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished...All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you...Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt on its mound and the palace shall stand where it used to be.” (Jeremiah 30:7-18, ESV)

**Paul:** “Has God rejected his people? By no means!...if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?...So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you (referring to the Gentile church)...Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved.” (Romans 11:1-26, ESV)

Once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in the Sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky, the believers rise to meet him in the air, Israel witnesses this deliverance of a people who are not a nation and Israel repents. It is at this point and in this way the words of Scripture are fulfilled: “In this way all Israel will be saved.”



## Meet in the Air

W. G. Moorehead of Xenia Theological Seminary from 1873-1914, appears in the call for the first prophetic conference in 1878 and his name will be found in the Scofield Reference Bible as a consulting editor...has written, 'There are only two other places in the New Testament where the phrase "to meet" occurs...and in both of them the party met continues to advance still in the direction in which he was moving previously. **Augustine perceived this:**

"It is as He is coming, not abiding, that we shall go to meet Him."

Christ does not return to heaven with His saints; He comes on with them to the earth. As an ancient writer expresses it,

We shall be caught away to meet Christ, that all may come with the Lord to battle,"

Here is a clear rejection by an editor of the Scofield Bible of the pretribulation rapture of the Church with the two comings of Christ which is found in the Scofield Bible.

## **WRATH**

The believers (the saints, the church, etc.) in the tribulation will not face the trumpets or receive the bowls of God's wrath which are poured out on the unbelievers who are identified as:

- First bowl – “So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.” (Rev. 16:2) and “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” (Rev. 14:9-10)
- Second and third bowl – “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” (Rev. 16:5-6)
- Fourth bowl – “They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.” (Rev. 16:9)
- Fifth bowl – “The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.”
- Sixth bowl – “They are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty...they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.” (Rev. 16:14-16)
- Seventh bowl – “God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.” (Rev. 16:19)

## **Two Witnesses**

A comparison of the martyrdom, resurrection and rapture of the two witnesses correlates with the events and description of a Second Coming rapture. Compare Revelation 11:11-12 with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, ESV)

“After the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.” (Revelation 11:11-12)

If these events are parallel references to the rapture then the visual witness of this event by unbelievers of the world parallels these verses:

“I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him” (Zechariah 12:10, ESV)

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.” (Rev. 1:7, ESV)

“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (Rev. 6:15-17, ESV)

““I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13-14, ESV)

**Laodicea**  
**The Four Generation Cycle**  
 that has led today's church into the  
 Laodicean Church Age  
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**1880-1920**  
 Systematic Growth  
 Methodology  
 Emotionalism

**1921-1960**  
 Showmanship  
 Materialism  
 Theology of Success

**1960-2000**  
 Charismatic  
 Individual/Personal Experience  
 Mysticism

**2001-2040**  
 Market Driven  
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"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."  
 - Revelation 3:17-18

## Present Crisis??

