

The Pre-Wrath Rapture

A Brief Discussion of Hermeneutics

Let's begin with a brief discussion of hermeneutics. What is a hermeneutic? Webster defines it as the study of the methods and principles of interpretation. As it applies to the Bible it is the study of how to understand the Bible. Most of us would agree on some basic principles regarding hermeneutics.

1) We should seek to understand the authors intended meaning. This is sometimes called exegesis. Getting the meaning out of the text as opposed to eisegesis, putting meaning into the text. We want to discover the meaning of the text, not determine the meaning of the text and we do that through things like context.

2) All Scripture must be taken in its proper context. This means that the interpretation of Scripture should be looked at in light of the verse and book in which the passage is found. The argument of the author and historical and cultural context should be taken into account.

3) Always compare scripture with other scripture. For example, If one is studying the return of Christ in one instance, then one needs to compare passages from Daniel Isaiah Ezekiel Zachariah Matthew First and 2 Thesalonians, 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation etc... Only once all relevant passages have been studied and compared can we be sure of our interpretation.

4) Determine the literal references of figures of speech that provide comparison, substitution, and amplification. Scripture, like any serious literature, uses figures of speech. These include similes, metaphors, hyperbole, Idioms, and parallelisms. When the Bible wants you to allegorize or take something as a symbol it will make that clear in some way. For instance, words such as 'like' or, 'as', or 'as it were' are used. For instance, 'as sackcloth made of hair'. Clearly that is poetic language yet it is intending to convey some literal truth. In that case it is that the sun will be darkened just as sackcloth is also dark. Jesus spoke in parables but he was intending to convey some literal truth.

5) Recognize the near/far implications and applications of prophetic passages. It is common in prophetic literature to have a both near application

and far application to a certain prophecy. The letters to the seven churches for example in revelation were relevant to their immediate audience. Yet these letters also mentioned the coming of Christ and are thus relevant to the final generation that will be on earth when he returns. Another example would be the abomination of desolation. This was prefigured or fulfilled in the time between the old and new Testaments with Antiochus Epiphanies. However, Christ said that we would see it again before his coming. Meaning there is another fulfillment of that prophecy as well.

There are no contradictions.

If you have a contradiction you have the wrong hermeneutic. Justin Martyr once said,

'Since I am entirely convinced that no scripture contradicts another I will rather acknowledge that I do not understand what is written.'

The Pre-Wrath View of the Rapture

There have traditionally been three views of the rapture, pre, mid and post trib. However in 2010 the second edition of "The Three Views on the Rapture" published by Zondervan did away with the second position, Mid-Tribulation, and replaced it with pre-wrath. This shows that the pre-wrath position is not some fly-by-night view but can be articulated and defended from a scholarly perspective and that it has overtaken the mid tribulation view in many people's minds and I will suggest that it will ultimately end the rapture debate altogether if it could be given a fair hearing. I think this is actually a good book for one particular reason. It explains the pre-wrath view more or less correctly. Unlike on the Internet where there seem to be many people claiming to critique the pre-wrath view who clearly don't appear to know what the pre-wrath view teaches, which is one of the greatest obstacles to a true debate on this matter in my opinion. People are unaware of what this view is actually saying.

The book of Revelation gives us very vivid images of the wrath of God. It is symbolized as a scroll. There are seals that are keeping the scroll from being opened. Revelation 5:2 says, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll". The answer is given "but one of the elders said to me 'do

not weep, behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." Christ came the first time as a Suffering Servant, to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. The next time he will come in judgment. After all who is worthy to judge but he who has no sin. Acts 7:31 says, "because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead." I will make a case later on that the seals are not the judgment itself, but only the contents of the scroll are considered God's wrath.

In the last days the wrath of God will be played out during a specific time called the '**Day of the Lord**'. This day is referred to quite a lot in the old and New Testament, in fact, about 70 times. It is a time period of longer than one day so don't let that throw you off. The word for day is 'Yom' in the Hebrew. It is used both ways in the text, which is always determined by the context. We know that the Day of the Lord in prophecy is at least longer than five months because of the fifth trumpet which is part of the day the Lord, and that's a plague that lasts about five months. So, the Day of the Lord is at least that long, but for many reasons it is probably much longer than that and Christians will be raptured before this time. Many passages speak of Day of the Lord as an unparalleled time God's wrath. Zephaniah says,

"Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them In the day of the Lord's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.." Zephaniah 1:18

Isaiah says something interesting about the Day of the Lord as we progress. He says the loftiness of man shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of man shall be brought low. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. In the New Testament John says that the Day of the Lord will be God's wrath in Revelation 6. It says "And say unto the mountains and rocks. Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great **day of his wrath** has come and who is able to stand". Peter has the same idea when he says "but the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word are reserved for

fire until the **day of judgment** and perdition of ungodly men, but the **Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night** in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat. The earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

The Promise of a Sign

Because of the severity of the Day of the Lord God has promised to give the world a sign that his wrath is about to begin. The book of Joel is almost entirely about the Day of the Lord and he says,

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.” Joel 2:31

This is also repeated in the New Testament in the book of Acts when it says,

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord..” Acts 2:20

When signs in the sun, moon, and stars are given everyone will be terrified. Everyone that is except the righteous people who look forward to this day because it means that their redemption is drawing near. It says in Luke 21,

“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” 2 Peter 3:10-13

Peter also instructs the Christians. He wrote to,

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”
2 Peter 3:10-13

In every case in scripture these signs, **the sun and moon and stars** warn the world about the wrath that is about to come on the ungodly. We are told these things could be used for signs in Genesis 1. Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night and let them be for signs and seasons and for days and years."

The Wrath of God or the Wrath of Satan?

One of the most important things to understand is that the persecution of Christians by the antichrist is not the wrath of God but instead the wrath of Satan. In Revelation 12 it says, "Therefore rejoice O heavens and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea for the devil has come down to you having great wrath because he knows he has but a short time and what does he do with that short time? He makes war against the saints and overcomes them. In Revelation 13:4 it says,

“So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty- two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him

to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.” Revelation 13:4-7

Some important characteristics of the Day of the Lord and the wrath of God are that it is against the wicked and when it happens the Lord alone will be exalted. Satan's wrath however seems to be just the opposite. According to the Scriptures it is against the righteous and, **the Antichrist is exalted**. Reading 2 Thessalonians 24,

“who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:4

We also know that it is this event, sometimes called the *abomination of desolation* where the antichrist exalts himself, that the persecution of the Christians begins in full swing.

Daniel, Matthew, and John in Revelation all tie his bold actions here in the temple, the abomination of desolation, to the start of serious persecution of Christians, but Christ says that this particular persecution will be cut short for the elects sake. Which we are going to get to shortly. God's wrath is what will bring Satan's wrath to an end. God will rescue his people from the Antichrist persecution and begin the day Lord, which we have discussed to be a fairly long period of time and is represented by the trumpet judgments and the bowls wrath in the book of Revelation.

The Rapture and The Day of the Lord- Back to Back Events

Paul says it this way when talking about God's wrath ending the persecution of the church. He says,

“since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on

those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8

This verse, when we look closer at its context, will help us to transition into something that I think is really important and something that the Church of the New Testament, as well as the early church fathers, seemed to be well aware of. That is, ***that the rapture and the Day of the Lord were back-to-back events***. It makes perfect sense if you think about it. We are told that we are going to be raptured **before** God's wrath and the Day of the Lord **is** God's wrath. So it would stand to reason that soon after we are raptured the wrath would begin.

This would also explain all the verses that tell Christians to look forward to and hasten the Day of the Lord. Or, as Luke puts it, “*to lift up your head*”, but yet in the same breath they speak of it as a punishment for the wicked. Paul says here, in 2 Thessalonians 1,

“Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Paul says **that the repayment of the wicked will happen on the same day of the churches glorification**. Keep in mind that this is the beginning of the letter written by Paul to a church that he praises for their patient endurance through what seems to be brutal persecutions.

Paul wrote this letter because they had apparently been taught that they had missed the rapture and were in the Day of the Lord because of their torments. This opening of the second letter to the Thessalonians is assuring them that the rapture is still a future event and that the rapture will in fact deliver them from the tribulations when it does happen. As we will see it is literally impossible to understand the next chapter, 2 Thessalonians 2,

one of the most debated versus in rapture history, unless you understand that Paul believed and taught the Thessalonians that the rapture would initiate the Day of the Lord.

Paul also interchanges the idea of the rapture and the Day of the Lord in the most famous rapture verse ever, that is, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. But, it often goes unnoticed because there is a chapter break right in the middle of the chapter. Chapter 5 keeps right on going with the same thought. This says,

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Then there is the chapter break. But, then it continues,

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:1

The subject of this whole passage never changed. They were always talking about the rapture. **Paul simply refers to the rapture as the Day of the Lord** and we are going to see why he does that as we progress.

Paul's theology in this regard is demonstrated in almost all of his letters. He says things like,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7-8

So Paul, who is about to be executed writes that he looks forward, as we all should, to that day. The "D" is capitalized in most translations as it is speaking of the Day of the Lord. The word **appearing** here is a fairly rare word. It's used only six times in the New Testament and all of those by Paul. It's obvious he thinks it is the rapture. For instance,

"looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,..." Titus 2:13

Keeping consistent with his theology he also uses the word to refer to the Day the Lord that will begin to destroy the antichrist he says,

"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." 2 Thessalonians 2:8

Like the Days of Noah and Lot

This idea of deliverance of the righteous and the beginning to judge the wicked on the same day is also taught explicitly by Jesus and that's probably the reason that Paul is teaching it also.

"Then He said to the disciples, " The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it." Luke 17:22

and,

"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30

So Jesus says that his return will be like the days of Noah. God will deliver his faithful and on the same day begin the destruction of the wicked. There are some who try to say that Noah went into the ark seven days before the rain started. They do this by interpreting a verse in the first part of Genesis 7 in a particular way. They do this because it would fit a model of the church being protected, or raptured, seven years before the wrath or rain begins. It would be really interesting if it were true. The problem is that later

on in the same chapter it explicitly states that they entered the ark on the exact same day that the rain began. It says,

“In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark.” Genesis 7:11-13

Not to mention that holding to this interpretation, that they entered the ark seven days before the rain began, makes Jesus wrong, as well, in Luke 17. When he says,

“They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” Luke 17:27

So they entered the ark, salvation of the righteous, floods came, destruction of the wicked, all on the same day. It's all over scripture as Jesus mentions the same thing with Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah in the same passage just to make this point clear.

So why am I spending so much time with this issue of the back-to-back nature of the rapture and the Day of the Lord? The reason is because understanding it will help to solve the rapture debate and number 2, there are many people who, in an effort to keep the church out of any persecution, deny this is true. We will see why they do this later on.

The Ghost Doctrine of Imminence

Let's talk about the doctrine of Imminence. This is held by pre-tribulationists, it is the idea that no events, prophetic or otherwise, need to occur before the rapture happens. In other words, it could have occurred at any moment in the last 2000 years. *This is contrasted with the many events that must proceed the Day of the Lord.* For instance, Joel says that the sun

moon and star signs must happen before the Day of the Lord. Also, Malachi says,

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Malachi 4:5

Israel must be a nation and thus, back in their land. The *apostasia*, or falling away, must happen. The man of sin must declare himself to be God in the temple according to Thessalonians and Matthew 24. Thus, if the rapture and the Day of the Lord are back-to-back events, the rapture could not have happened for the last 2000 years. Many verses are used in defense of this theory like Titus 2:13 which says,

"We are those who are looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13

Here is a list of the Greek words and all the proof text used in support of imminence and other things like looking for, and waiting for, waits for, expects, alert or awake, alert, await, near or at hand. None of them have the meaning that "*nothing*" needs to happen before an event can take place. In fact, without a single exception, of every Greek word in every proof text regarding this issue not a single one of them carry the meaning that "no" events need to precede Christ's coming. In fact, all of the words, save one, are dealing with the *believer's attitude* concerning his coming. Not the timing of it at all. This attitude should be defined as **expectancy** not **imminence**.

This is why some people term this the "Phantom doctrine". But, I don't want to prejudice you against this term because there *is* a time period in which the Lord's return *will be* imminent. Although, only after certain events take place first, and after *they* do, it will be imminent.

Some Pre-tribulationists appeal to the early church writings because it seems that many of them believed the rapture to be imminent in their lifetimes. That was true for some of them. But, if you look even closer you will see that they also believed that the Antichrist was already on the scene. Whether it was a Roman Emperor or a pope, they believed that the persecution they were enduring was the persecution of the antichrist.

It was never taught that the rapture could come before the antichrist until the 1800s. Larry Crutchfield, a professor at Columbia seminary, and a pre-

tribulationist, is an expert on the early church fathers. He wrote a paper called "Rudiments of Dispensationalism in the Anti-Nicean Period". He was looking for pretribulationism in the early church fathers. But, he has this to say, "While there are in the writings of the early church fathers seeds from which the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture could be developed. It is difficult to find in them an unequivocal statement of the type of immanency usually believed by pre-tribulationists."

Thomas Ice of the Pretrib Research Center quotes Crutchfield in his article, "The History of the Doctrine of the Rapture" as his evidence of a belief in an imminent return of Christ in the early church. And he said patristic scholar, Larry Crutchfield, argues that the early church fathers believed in what he calls imminent intra-tribulationism. That is, they believed that they were in the great tribulation but not the Day of the Lord. He summarizes the views of the pre-tribulation scholars on the issue as follows. With few exceptions the pre-millennial fathers of the early church believed that they were living in the last times. Thus they looked daily for the Lord's imminent return. Disbelief in the imminent return of Jesus Christ within the context of ongoing persecution has prompted us to broadly label the views of the earliest fathers imminent intra-tribulationism.

Tribulation For Believers or Not?

The early church was holding to a more biblical view. We find in Revelation chapter 6 that the only thing that is preventing the beginning of God's judgment of the earth is the number of martyrs to be completed.

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." Revelation 6:10-11

A really good example of this is in Matthew 24 where we see this passage.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heav-

en, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:29-31

There is so much confusion about this verse and the reason is because we have defined this word *tribulation* incorrectly as *the wrath of God*. If we do that we have to pretend this verse isn't talking about the rapture even though it's a mirror image of the famous verse in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, as we will see. But, if we simply look at how the Greek word "**thlipsis**" is used in the New Testament we will see that it is used of affliction or persecution. This is talking about a great affliction being cut short by the rapture.

For example, almost every instance of this "**thlipsis**" in the New Testament is promising believers they will go through it. As in Mark 4 verses 16 and 17. Where it says,

“These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.” Mark 4:16-17

Or,

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Or,

“strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22

And saying,

“ We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

And there are many more verses such as,

“knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;” Romans 5:3

Or

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”
Romans 8:35*

And also,

“rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation...” Romans 12:12

We are ***not going to go through the wrath of God***. But, to say that we are not going to go through "**thlipsis**" is quite simply unbiblical. So, yes, there will be great tribulation, a great "**thlipsis**". It is the persecution by the antichrist that Christ describes. But, we are promised that we will be raptured out from the midst of it just before the Day of the Lord and then the wrath of God against the wicked will begin.

So, before moving on, let's recap some of the basics.

The wrath of God is poured out on the Day of the Lord.

God alone, not the antichrist, will be exalted on that day.

The Day of the Lord is a long period of time, at least five months but probably longer.

The Sun, Moon, and Star sign will precede the Day of the Lord.

The rapture and the Day of the Lord are back-to-back events,

Imminence is not able to be found in Scripture or the early church.

Matthew 24 is by far the most critical passage concerning the timing of the rapture. It connects the book of Daniel to the book of Revelation and it fills in the gap that will solve the rapture puzzle. But, because Matthew 24 describes the persecution of the church before the rapture many people have had to throw away Matthew 24 to avoid that conclusion. Claiming that it was not meant to instruct the church for reasons we will discuss at length later on. But, because of this, we are left with an incomplete picture of the end times and hence the reason for the current Rapture debate.

There is one aspect of the debate, about Matthew 24's relevance to the church, which I do feel we should hit before we begin, as it is so crucial to

the rest of the discussion. That is, that when Christ tells his disciples in Matthew 24 of the events leading up to this coming He ends that chronology with a description of the rapture. However, because of the implications if that is true, namely, that Christians would endure persecution, Pre-Tribulationists have argued that these verses cannot be talking about the rapture but instead about Armageddon, which is one of the last events that takes place before the Millennium. I will show you why this is an unenviable position to argue. First let's look at verse 30 and 31 in Matthew 24,

“...they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:30-31

Now let's compare it to 1 Thessalonians 4 which is regarded by everyone, know matter what your view of the rapture is, as the most descriptive view of the rapture. It says,

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

Cooper Chart

We see from this chart put together by Charles Cooper in his book, "*God's Elect in the Great Tribulation*", that Matthew 24 verses 29 to 31 have more in common with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 than any other passage that is considered to be a rapture passage. I think Mr. Cooper could even put an X for evacuation for Matthew 24 and I think it is also implied in "*the angels gathering together the elect.*" But, even with these numbers it is still obvious that Matthew 24 is the most similar to 1 Thessalonians 4 than any other passage. You will also find that the early church held the same view

about Matthew 24. Also here is another interesting example, the King James 1611 edition seems to be pre-wrath in that it considers Matthew 24:31 comparable to 1 Thessalonians 4:16 as well as 1 Corinthians 15:52. Both, classic rapture passages. Now let's compare Matthew 24 to Revelation 19, the classic Armageddon passage, to see if Matthew 24:31 is speaking of Armageddon like some pre-tribulationists claim. But, first let me explain *when* Armageddon takes place, so that you will have a reference point. It takes place at the end of the seven-year period and just before the millennium. Now we can argue about exactly when it takes place. But I'm under the impression that it takes place at the end of that 30-day period there. However, it doesn't really matter for our discussion. Basically, just know that it takes place some time right before the millennium begins.

Now back at our Revelation 19 passage. It says,

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."". Revelation 19:11-18

They do both have angels, all, but clearly the function of those angels is very different. For example, in Matthew 24, the angels are gathering together the elect in the clouds to be with Jesus. But, in Revelation 19 angels

call birds to feast on the flesh of judged people so that's not a match. In Revelation 19 there is no trumpet, not evacuation, or assembling, nor is the sun and the moon darkened and most importantly, as we will see very clearly in a moment, the wrath of God is totally over at Revelation 19. But in Matthew 24 the wrath of God is only about to start. So that is definitely not a match.

The Parousia

The question that started everything is from Matthew 24 verse 3. The disciples asked Jesus what kind of signs there would be before his **coming**. The Greek word for **coming** used here is "**Parousia**".

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Matthew 24:3

A quick description of this word “**Parousia**” might be helpful for our discussion. The word is actually fairly rare in the New Testament. Being used only 24 times, and this, compared with the usual word for “**coming**” which is used 222 times. When this word “**Parousia**” is used of Christ it is almost used in a technical sense in order to refer to Jesus’ coming in the last days. Notice in the definition that this includes and *encompasses all the things that Christ will do starting with the rapture*, His visible return, and the raising of the dead. But it also includes the last judgment as well as the setting up of the Kingdom after Armageddon. The rapture will be the first thing to happen at his coming or “**Parousia**”. However, **there are not multiple Parousias** such as, one “**Parousia**” at the rapture, and then another one at Armageddon. There is only one word that is used to describe all of those tasks. A good example of how this word is used is in Greek literature. It was used to describe a visit from a king to the area that the king ruled over. It would be used to refer to his arrival and the entirety of his visit. The “**Parousia**” or coming of the king could last a long time. That's why the first definition is simply ‘**presence**’.

It is no big mystery that Christ describes the events before the rapture in this discourse because that is what they had asked him about. “*What are*

*going to be the signs of your **Parousia**?"* And, the rapture is the first thing to happen at Christ's **Parousia**. Also, it is interesting to note, that Matthew also tacks on the "*end of the age*" to this question. Because he understands that Christ's **Parousia** will be linked to the wrath of God. Because the disciples had been taught just a few days earlier by Jesus that the harvest of the righteous was to coincide with the end of the age and the destruction of the wicked. In a parable Christ says,

"Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." Matthew 13:30

And then when explaining the parable he says,

"The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age." Matthew 13:39-40

So that gives us an idea what the disciples were asking Jesus at the beginning of Matthew 24. So, Jesus then begins to answer the questions in Matthew 24:4-8. It says,

"And Jesus answered and said to them:" Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows"" Matthew 24:4-8

So he says in the days leading up to his "**Parousia**" that there are going to be signposts. But, he warns us, that they should not be confused with the end of the age or the wrath of God. The signs are only the beginning of sorrows. The word used there is *birth pangs* in some translations. He is saying these things are not the baby, and that they are only the signs that the birth is near.

Chronology of Signs

First Sign

What is so amazing is the step-by-step chronology in Matthew 24 of the signs leading up to the rapture and the wrath of God and how they are the exact same signs we see in Revelation chapter 6-8 which are speaking of the seven seals that need to be opened before the scroll, the wrath of God, can be read. If you've never seen this correlation before it's something else. So let's look at the first match starting in Matthew 24 verse 5. The first thing that Jesus says in response to this question is,

"Take heed that no one deceive you for many will come in my name. Saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." Matthew 24:5

Now if we turn over to Revelation chapter 6, as the first seal is broken, it says,

"Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." Revelation 6:1-2

Now it is the majority Evangelical view here that this rider is the antichrist and not Christ, mostly because of the company that he's keeping. Also, because of the fact that the lamb was the one that opened the scroll, I agree with that interpretation. I also think that there is a tie-in to the first birth pang that Jesus mentions in Matthew 24 because, unlike later on, he says that this individual claims to be the Christ and that may explain why he's riding a white horse just as we see Jesus doing many chapters later in Revelation 19. So, it may be that he wants people to believe that he is the return of Christ because of the bow that is mentioned, and of the Conquering. If you want to read a description of the antichrist by Daniel the prophet in the Old Testament, you would find that the antichrist is obsessed with conquering. Christ is nowhere described as having a bow as well but, instead, a sword.

Also, in Revelation 13:1, the antichrist's heads have 10 crowns, a symbol of authority. Furthermore, Satan gave his authority to him in verse two. Which is also a match as we see here in Revelation chapter 6. Also, for all those reasons I believe the first seal corresponds to the first event in Matthew 24. Okay so we're going to call that one a match and move onto the next one.

Second Sign

The real test will be to see if they continue to match all the way up to the Sun, Moon, and Stars sign and after that. So let's move on to Matthew 24 verse 6.

'And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars'. Matthew 24:6

Okay, let's check this out with the second seal in Revelation 6 to see if we have a match.

"When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword." Revelation 6:3

Now that one seems very straightforward. Sounds like wars to me. I think we can call that one a match and move onto the next one.

Third Sign

Let's take a look at Matthew 24 verse 7. So we see back here in Matthew that after Jesus says,

"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" Matthew 24:7

So, Let's check the next Seal in Revelation 6 for famines.

“When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.” Revelation 6:5-6

So, an entire day worth of work for one loaf of bread, I don't think that anyone would argue here that the third seal is speaking of famine. So famines are a match and let's move onto the next one.

Fourth Sign

Matthew 24: 9. There we see that Christ describes that people will be hated and killed for his name. Compare that to Revelation 6 where it says,

“When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.” Revelation 6:7-8

Okay, a lot to talk about here. First there is a general connection to our Matthew 24 verse. Being put to death is the primary point here. But, the deal talks of much more than that and, I think the key to showing the connection here is this last phrase *"by the wild beasts of the earth"*. While it's true that God uses sword, famine, and pestilence to discipline Israel in the past and even wild beasts in Ezekiel 14 verse 21, there is no prophecy of a future judgment of this nature against Israel. One interesting point is that the word for *'by'* as in *"by the wild beasts"* is a different Greek word than the other *'with's* in the verse. The New King James, which I'm using, does reflect this difference. You can see this clearly if you have a regular King James Version. The other *'with's* are Strong's number G1722 called *'in'* and this one is G5259 called *'hypo'*. When it says, *'with sword and with famine'*, that's the Greek word *'in'*. But, *'with'* or *'by'* wild beasts is a totally different word in the Greek and it means something different also. Vincent word-

study says the prepositioned 'by' is used here instead of 'in' or with indicating more definitely the actual agent of destruction. The meaning is defined as 'under' meaning 'under authority' of something. Working directly as a subordinate. So, the first interesting thing is that it seems that the other things in this verse, the killing with sword and famine are 'by' or 'under' authority of the wild beasts as the New King James has it translated here. Another interesting thing is that the term, "wild beasts", as some translations have it, has led to some false interpretations. It should be first admitted that wild beast is not the correct translation of the Greek in Revelation 6:8. The wording is 'thērion'. It basically means *beast*, and it can be translated as *beast* as in Titus 1:12 or *wild beasts* as in Acts 11:6. Context determines which translation is best. It is used 39 times in the book of Revelation and 38 times the term refers to either the beast, as in the antichrist, or the false prophet, the second beast or the image of the beast, and it correctly is translated there as *beast*. However, the translators, in attempting to clarify the meaning in Revelation 6 verse 8 incorrectly translated the text as wild beast. The only time it is not translated simply as *beast* in Revelation. There is no grounds for the translation wild beast in Revelation 6:8. Since the beast, antichrist in Revelation 13:7 and the false prophet beast, of Revelation 13:15 and the image of the beast in Revelation 13:15 all have the power to put to death just as it says here. Both the beast in Revelation 13:1 and the false prophet, Revelation 13:11, are a better reference for the beasts of Revelation 6:8. Both famine and plague then are here methods in which these beasts kill. That is, in addition to the sword, which is obvious if this is speaking of the antichrist and false prophet. Famine is something that could be a result of only people having the mark, being able to buy or sell. Therefore, this could be the cause of this famine, but I also think that both the famine and the plague are things that could be orchestrated by evil people today.

The famine in Russia for example killed millions of people and it was largely man-made. It was the result of price controls and requisitioning. Some people say that Lenin was trying to break the spirit of the people and steal their land with it. But, that's really conjecture. At the very least, most of the evidence is that Lenin and his associates knew the probable results of their agricultural policies but were willing to take the risks according to one

of his associates. Lenin repeatedly said he would sooner the whole nation died of hunger than to allow free trade in grain.

The antichrist and the false prophet with modern super viruses etc also could engineer plague. It could simply be the result of the famine. So we will call that one a match and we will move onto the next one.

Fifth Sign

Back in Matthew 24 it says,

“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.” Matthew 24:15-22

So, verse 15 is the first time in Matthew 24 that we can put a time as to where we are in the scheme of things. He speaks of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel. Everyone agrees that this is the midpoint of the last seven years period. If you want to know more about that almost any study of Daniel's 70 weeks will bring you up to speed. Basically it's a final seven-year period that will begin when the antichrist makes a peace agreement with Israel and at the midpoint, 3 1/2 years in, he will declare himself to be God in the temple. Now you'll find references to this time all through the Bible. Sometimes it is called the abomination of desolation as it is here. Other times it might say 1260 days, or 42 months, or a *time and a half of times* or even, *a time unlike any other time* that has ever been or ever will be. Every time you see one of those phrases or numbers. It is talking about this mid point right here in Matthew 24. So consequently, we know

more about this exact time than any other time in prophetic history and it will really help us as we progress. Almost every instance when it's spoken of, it says that this is the beginning of a great persecution of the elect. The entire section here is telling people to flee because of persecution that will start at that point. So Jesus says Daniel talks about it. So let's turn over to Daniel to see what he says happens right after the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 11 says,

“And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.” Daniel 11:31-35

I find it interesting that in the exact same timeframe in the book of Daniel, the time just after the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple, that Daniel speaks of the same scenario, an intense persecution of the Elect of God. Also interesting is that we see that God has a particular plan in the deaths of these martyrs which is also exactly what we see in the next Seal in Revelation 6. So let's check it out to see if it's a match.

It says,

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.” Revelation 6:9-11

So this verse is entirely about martyrs and that's exactly what we see happening in our Matthew 24 verse. The most interesting part of the Fifth seal is that the martyrs are asking God how long it will be until he judges those that are killing them. This would seem to indicate that all that has happened so far in the seals, wars, famines, etc., are not part of God's judgment. Also interesting, the reason God waits is because the number of their fellow servants and their brethren would be killed as they were for it to be completed. In Matthew 24 verse 22 it says unless those days were shortened no flesh would be saved. But, for the elects sake those days will be shortened. Those days are about to be cut short for the elect's sake. These souls are not going to have to wait very much longer for God to avenge them. In fact, it will happen in the very next seal. Okay, death and the fifth Seal martyrs is a match and I'll move on to the sun, moon, and stars one.

Sixth Sign

I think this one is going to be pretty obvious. Let's check our Matthew 24 passage first. It says,

“Immediately after the tribulation (or Thlipsis) of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Matthew 24:29

Now if we continue to use Matthew 24 as a guidebook for the book of Revelation, we would expect to see this exact same sign there too, the sign that the Day of the Lord and the wrath of God is about to begin. In fact, that is exactly what we see in Revelation chapter 6 when he says,

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men,

and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” Revelation 6:12-16

It seems pretty open and shut here but there is so much more to this. If we look at Luke 21, which is a parallel passage to Matthew 24, we see Luke is speaking of this exact same thing. He says,

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Luke 21:25-28

Notice he talks about this idea of men who are terrified because of what is about to happen. Just as in Revelation chapter 6. This is very important, as we will see. Also notice that, as we have already talked about, believers will take a totally different view of this event and will not hide. But, will look up with expectation. That is because the rapture will happen just before the Day of the Lord begins. Some of you may believe that this passage is speaking of the battle of Armageddon because it is sometimes taught that way. However, this is the unambiguous start of the Day of the Lord with the sun, moon and stars signs just as Joel prophesied. Armageddon happens just before the millennium. In addition, the next Seal, the seventh Seal, is the introduction to the seven trumpets, which proves they are chronologically linked to the Seals. Which causes a huge problem because the fifth trumpet, the one about the Locusts, is five months long. So the Day of the Lord must be at least five months long and there is simply not enough time for the day the Lord to be completed if it starts at Armageddon. It must start before then.

A Secret Rapture?

The rapture will be an event that everyone knows about. The idea of the secret rapture is not biblical at all. This event, the Son of Man coming on clouds with power and great glory, is an event that everyone will see. All the other lights in the sky will have been darkened. People will definitely know when the rapture happens. Now, if this is the correct exegesis of this text, that the wrath of God begins at the sixth seal, it will cause many problems for the pre-tribulational idea. Because, for them, the wrath of God was to begin before any of the six seals began. So they tend to argue with this verse. The argument is made that the tense of the verb here translated as 'has come' is in the 'aorist' tense and therefore it could mean 'Had been coming' before this time. This is a flimsy argument for several reasons. The 'aorist' tense is, generally speaking, timeless. One common use of the 'aorist' tense as we have in this passage is the so-called 'ingressive' of the 'aorist' and it is in fact used to describe the beginning of something. One biblical example of this is in Mark 14:41-43. Speaking of Jesus' betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane it says,

"Then He came the third time and said to them, " Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come" Mark 14:41

The word for 'has come' used here is in the 'ingressive' use of the 'aorist'.

“; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.” Mark 14:42

The context here is obvious. This "has come" is referring to the beginning of his passion. Not an event in the past. Similarly, the context in the revelation passages is obvious. The men are hiding themselves because the day of the wrath of the lamb has come. It's about to begin. This is consistent with many of the Scriptures. The sign they saw was what Joel said would happen before the Day of the Lord. Also we see in Luke that the reason these men were hiding was that they were in expectation of what was about to come. So, if this parallel does exist we should now see the rapture at this point. Let's check our Matthew 24 passage, verses 30 and 31. This is what happens immediately after the sun, moon, and star signs that we just saw in Matthew 24. It says that,

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:30-31

A Multitude in Heaven

Chapter 7 immediately follows the 6th seal and we see two events that apparently happen simultaneously. Some of your Bibles will title the seventh chapter as ‘*interlude*’ because it begins before the opening of the seventh seal in chapter 8. The first event is the sealing of the 144,000 Jews, twelve thousand from each tribe. This protects them from the wrath of God that is about to follow. They will become the first fruits of unsaved Israel in Revelation 14:14. These were not saved until after the rapture which is why they were not raptured. ***The other simultaneous event in this chapter is a multitude of people from every tribe, people, and language, which cannot be counted by man, appears in heaven.*** We see the same terminology in chapter 5 about people from every nation, tribe, and language that are the ones who were redeemed by Christ from the beginning of time.

So let's look closer at this multitude that just showed up in heaven to see if it is those that have just been raptured after the sixth seal. Notice that this multitude is ***clothed in white robes***. It appears that these people have bodies. People who are redeemed by Christ won't have bodies in heaven until after the rapture according to 1 Corinthians 15:15-52. Contrast that with the fifth seal. Where they were ***only described as having souls***. They were ***only given white robes*** and told to wait a little while longer. A great multitude from every nation suddenly showing up in heaven with bodies can only be the rapture. Then, John told us specifically who this group is. The elder says that they are ***those who come out of the great tribulation***. This is the tribulation specifically spoken of by Christ in Matthew 24:21-22.

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And un-

less those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." Matthew 24:21-22

Later Jesus says,

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matthew 24:29-31

This phrase "out of" in revelation 7 is from the Greek preposition "ek" and has the connotation of "out from the middle of". The Pre-tribulational view point here is that this multitude which no one can number are those people who became Christians after the rapture. Remember, if this were talking about the rapture then it would mean that the church goes through persecution before the rapture. So they argue here concerning a verb tense again. They say the word "come" in this verse should instead be translated "who are coming". They say that the word for 'come' is in the present participle that is often translated as 'coming'. The idea that they are trying to convey is that this group does not arrive suddenly in heaven. But, that they have been trickling in as they have been martyred. The problem for them is that the timing of the Greek sentence is fixed by the verb of the sentence and it's context. Not by a participle. In this example the participle phrase "these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation" is attached to two Greek verbs in the 'aorist' tense. Washed and made. Both refer to an event that has already been completed before the eyes of the onlookers. The point is, is that these words tell us the timing of the phrase. Not the participle. This is also why one of the elders refers to this multitude as having already arrived when he says, "*and where did they come from?*" If the elder were witnessing an ever-increasing number of people this would not be the appropriate tense to use.

If this parallel continues we should expect to see the beginning of the wrath of God next in the seventh seal. The sign has been given, warning

the world of gods impending wrath. The righteous are now raptured and safe in heaven and now the Day of the Lord, the wrath on the wicked, should begin.

The Wrath of God Begins

'When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.' Revelation 8:1-7

There are a few things to notice here. First, the idea of silence in heaven. There is usually at least praising of God by the cherubim that hold up his throne. Yet, that seems to stop for half an hour as the soberness of what is about to happen sinks in. *Almost 6000 years of God's patience with the wicked is about to run out.* So we see the contrast here. While the six seals were bad, wars and famines and persecutions, it pales in comparison to just day one of the wrath of God in which a third of the trees are burned up and all the green grass is burned up. So I think that there's enough evidence to convict here that these two passages are parallel to one another. But we are only just beginning.

Matthew 24 For the Jews Only?

As we noted, Pre-tribulationists, like all of us, don't want the church to go through persecution and so it leaves them with only one option and that is to essentially disregard Matthew 24. They do this by maintaining that Matthew 24 is primarily instruction for the Jews only who are converted to Christ after the rapture and that the rapture happens sometime before these events in Matthew 24. They say that when Jesus spoke these words to the apostles he was speaking only to their Jewishness. Not their *'Fathers of the Christian Church'*ness. They say things like, 'Matthew was a Jew and so was his gospel audience'. There are many problems with this theory concerning Matthew 24. Number one is the Parousia problem. Throughout the New Testament Christians are told to look forward to the Parousia as if it were their redemption. We've seen this many times. This is what the entire question in Matthew 24 is all about. *'Lord, what will be the sign of your Parousia?'* Also, Luke and Mark give essentially the same accounts of this teaching from the Lord on the Mount of Olives that we see in Matthew 24. Luke, who was a Gentile, makes it clear that he's writing his gospel specifically to another Gentile named Theophilus. If Matthew is such a Jewish Gospel then how is it that Matthew is the only gospel writer to report Jesus' use of the term 'church'? Jesus first mentions the church by name in Matthew 16:18 and he actually gives instructions for church discipline in Matthew 18:15-20. Jesus also institutes the Lord supper and we see the great commission, and many other things. One could easily argue that Matthew is the most church specific among the gospels.

Ask a Pre-tribulationist if it's okay to set a date for the rapture and they will correctly state that no man knows the day nor hour. But according to their theology that verse isn't talking about the rapture at all. They seem to agree that Matthew 24 verse 31 is talking about a rapture when it's convenient. We've also already seen how the rapture in Matthew 24 verse 31 compares to all the other rapture passages. As well as how much it doesn't compare to the Armageddon passages that pre-tribulationists say that it does refer to. This view causes some major problems with the text in Matthew 24 also.

This first verse that we see here says that people will be delivered to the persecution and that they are hated because of the name of Christ. Jews

are not hated because of the name of Christ. Another verse speaks of the elect and they will say that the word elect, here, is somehow referring to Jews. However the word used here simply means 'picked out' or 'chosen' and the definition we read here, "to obtain salvation through Christ" is also used in the New Testament a number of times to speak of the Messiah, once of angels or Christian individuals. For instance, 3 John writes of the "elect lady" and here is a verse that exemplifies its primary usage in the bottom. Yet, the word is never used in the New Testament to refer to Jews.

Two textual points that people bring up to prove the position that Matthew 24 is for the Jews are found in this passage. So let's read it carefully to see if we can get the context right.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath." Matthew 24:15-20

So they will say this proves this is for the Jews. It is talking about people living in Judea and it also mentions the Sabbath. The point of this passage may be best summed up as the word 'urgency'. Apparently whatever the Antichrist is going to start doing in Jerusalem at this point is going to happen very, very quickly and in order to avoid the apparently new decree to kill people, you must not look back, just run. Particularly if you live in close proximity to it. I think the context shows that the mention of those in Judea is not here to say that this whole passage is for the Jews. But it is mentioned that, because the temple, where the antichrist will make this decree, is in Judea, that anyone at all who lives in Judea when this happens will need to run really fast if they want to escape alive. The mention of the Sabbath also makes sense in this context. It's mentioned for the same reason that winter and pregnancy and nursing babies are. All those things would slow down your fleeing. For instance, even today in secular Israel, if you were to try to travel on the Sabbath, you would find it next to impossible to do so effectively. Busses don't run on the Sabbath. Trains don't run, etc.

Even some elevators operate differently on the Sabbath. You can imagine how, if it is this way today in secular Israel, how it might be after the temple has been rebuilt and the religious system is in full effect again. You're fleeing would be made very difficult if it were to fall on the Sabbath. The same as if you were pregnant or if it was winter. You can see from this verse that it is not saying that these people shouldn't flee if it's the Sabbath. As if he's talking to Jews under the old covenant as is often suggested.

Jesus is quite emphatic that they need to flee regardless. 'Pray that your flight', he says 'your flight' is happening either way. As you can see just because these two verses mentioned Judea and the Sabbath does not mean that this chapter is for Jews alone. They are only speaking of events concerning a very important event, called the abomination of desolation.

If you're still skeptical about Matthew 24's relevance to the church I think this next section will alleviate all your concerns. Besides the book of Revelation, 1 and 2 Thessalonians are the most prophetic books of the New Testament. We'll see that, just like Revelation chapter 6, the Thessalonians letters make the same pre-wrath case in the same sequence as Matthew 24. I would go so far as to say that primarily what Paul taught to Thessalonians, in regard to the rapture, amounts to a Bible study of Matthew 24. This shouldn't be a surprise because Paul tells us that his teaching on the end times came from the Lord, in first Thessalonians 4:15,

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep." 1 Thessalonians 4:15

Many people interpret this to mean that Paul had special revelation about the subject of the rapture from Jesus. While this is certainly possible, I think the only reason that they have come to this conclusion is that they don't think that Matthew 24 applies to the church. So they have never seen the connection between these classic rapture passages and our Lord's plain and simple teaching. This is more than speculation on my part. Look at this list of 20 parallels in first and second Thessalonians and Matthew 24. This was put together by Alan Kurschner. These parallels are not supposed to exist if Matthew 24 is not for the church. Look through this list of parallels, follow the references and I think you'll come to the conclusion just as the

early church did. These two passages are talking about the exact same events and in the exact same sequence.

List of 24 Parallels

By Alan Kurschner

An Exegetical View of 2 Thessalonians 2

Second Thessalonians 2 is by far the most difficult passage for a pre-tribulationist. I've heard many sermons and read many commentaries on this passage from a pretrib viewpoint and almost none of them are the same. Most of them take a different route trying to deal with the problem that the view causes here. Let's read it.

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Paul here in the second letter is trying to reason with the Thessalonians who had been deceived somehow that they had missed the rapture and were now in the Day of the Lord. Paul is using a pretty good argument to prove that this was not the case. He says that **neither the falling away, nor the antichrist revealing himself in the temple had happened**. So therefore, the rapture could not have happened yet either.

Paul is essentially reminding them of the Bible study he gave them of the Olivet discourse or Matthew 24. He's about to remind them of what events need to happen before the gathering together. This exact same phrase in English, 'gathering together', and Greek, episynagōgē are used by Jesus in

Matthew 24 to refer to the rapture. So he's explaining what needs to happen before the gathering together can occur. Well, that's simple Paul says, don't you remember the Bible study? Don't you remember that before the gathering together, Jesus told us that the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of, must happen? Which, if you look it up in Daniel as Jesus instructed them to do, you will see that this is when the Man of sin sits as God in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. 'So', Paul says, 'you haven't seen that happen yet have you. Well then, that's a sign that the gathering together hasn't happened either.'

The other thing that Paul reminds them of, is that a 'falling away must happen first'. This word is used exclusively in the Bible as a falling away of faith. The Greek word is 'apostasia'. We'll talk more in depth about this word later on. So the question is, does Matthew 24 talk about a falling away from the faith that happens before the gathering together can happen? And it does. It says that,

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." Matthew 24:9-12

So to help visualize this for you I have a picture of Matthew 24 below and I will read the 2 Thessalonians 2 passage so you can see the correlation between the two with your own eyes.

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Refuting The Pillars of Pre-Tribulationalism

I think it's very clear when you look at this way. This is a clear refutation of the pillars of Pre-tribulationalism. Namely, that there are no events that need to happen before the rapture. It would also mean that the antichrist *must be revealed before the rapture*. There are two things that are done to explain this problem by Pre-tribulationists. The first is that while they agree that the first one is talking about the rapture. When Paul says, 'Now brethren, concerning the 'coming' or '*Parousia*'. That word there '*Parousia*', is the same word used in first Thessalonians 4 when Paul was definitely talking about the rapture. So almost no pre-tribulationist denies that Paul is talking about the rapture in the first verse. But they insist the rest of the verse is talking about the Day of the Lord only. As if Paul said, "hey everyone. Let me talk to you about the rapture" and then he forgot to talk about the rapture and talked about the Day of the Lord instead. This one is solved if you know Paul's theology about the Day of the Lord. Which he explains again apparently for the Thessalonians in the previous chapter where he describes how the justification of them and the punishment of the wicked all occur on the same day. Paul's theology was that the rapture and the Day of the Lord would logically be inseparable back-to-back events as we've already detailed. This verse only makes sense if you know that Paul considers the rapture happening on the very day that the Day of the Lord begins. The subject in verse one, the rapture, never changes. When Paul says the day of Christ and 'that day'. He's talking about the Parousia that starts with the rapture. Remember the Parousia is a multistage event. So the rapture is theologically inseparable from the Day of the Lord and it is the very first event in the Lords Parousia. So let's read it with this in mind and I'm sure that you'll see that Paul does in fact speak to his brethren about the rapture as well as the day the Lord.

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any

means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Some pre-tribulationists who see the problem in that view take a different route altogether in dealing with 2 Thessalonians 2. They will argue that the word falling away or Apostasia in the Greek means ‘*departure*’ and thus, is denoting the rapture in the verse. One popular proponent of this theory is Thomas Ice who writes for raptureready.com. He doesn't appeal to the Greek or to any other contextual argument in the New Testament. But rather instead to early English translations of the Bible such as the Geneva Bible. Which translates the word as departure in English. Therefore, he concludes that the rapture is in view where the word falling away is. So it would read, let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come unless the rapture comes first and the Man of Sin, etc., etc. So, for a moment, let's look past the idea that this would mean that Paul is saying that the rapture can't happen until the rapture happens. Let's look at the details of this word. While it is true that some early English Bibles translated the word ‘apostasia’ as departure such as the Geneva Bible. It's also equally evident that the Geneva Bible meant a religious departure. In fact the Greek term ‘apostasia’ it is only used one other time in the New Testament, in Acts 21:21. Where the word ‘forsake’ is the word ‘apostasia’. It says,

“but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”
Acts 21:21

In the Septuagint it's used five times in the Old Testament and every time it means apostasy, or rebellion, in a religious or political sense. Never in a spatial or physical sense. Furthermore, even the very pre-tribulationist Scholar Paul Feinberg who wrote the argument for the Pre-tribulationist view in the first edition of the "Three Views of the Rapture" for Zondervan admits, "If one searches for the uses of the noun ‘apostasia’ in the 355 occurrences over the 300 year period between the second century BC and

the first century A.D. one will not find a single instance where this word refers to a physical departure." This idea of the apostasia being the rapture is sort of a pop view. It is not held among the pre-tribulational scholars in the vast majority and most pretribulational pastors that I listened to while doing this research openly rejected this view in their sermons. A few verses later in 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul talks about this enigmatic restrainer. He talks to the Thessalonians like it's old news. I suggest that it was old news and that Paul got his understanding of the identity and purpose for the restrainer from Matthew 24. Let's review what Paul wrote first.

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way." 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7

The pre-tribulational view teaches that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit and that he will be removed with the church at the rapture. There is a scriptural problem here though. We are told that the antichrist cannot be revealed until the restrainer is taken out of the way. But, we are told that our being gathered together to him cannot happen until the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, is revealed. The logic of the restrainer being the Holy Spirit and being removed at the rapture is an impossibility. The scriptural order is:

Number one: The restrainer is taken out of the way.

Number two: the antichrist is revealed.

Number three: the church raptured.

Who then is the restrainer? The answer to the question of who the restrainer is lies in the Old Testament. In the book of Daniel. In a parallel verse to Matthew 24:15-22. Parallel, because this is the section in Daniel about the abomination of desolation and it is where Jesus told us to turn if

we wanted to know what he was talking about. I'm sure that Paul did in fact turn to Daniel 12 and here he would have found the passage about the abomination of desolation that says,

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

Some people say that this is Michael standing up to protect his people. But, if that's the case, he kind of does a terrible job of it. Because, the minute he "stands up", there is trouble like there has never happened before and we find out from Zechariah 13 that starting at this very time two-thirds of Israel, who he is supposed to be protecting, are killed. It actually appears as though Michael stops restraining at the abomination of desolation. One theory is that he's needed somewhere else at this exact time. In Revelation 12 it says,

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." Revelation 12:7-14

So, this phrase, 'time, times and a half times' in Revelation 12 gives us a direct link back to Daniel 7:25 where he is talking about the abomination that causes desolation and uses this exact same phrase. It is the dragon that gives the beast its power. It would seem that Michael is currently holding back the revealing of the antichrist. But, at some point in the future he will be called to Heaven to battle Lucifer. He will prevail over Satan and he will be cast to the earth. Satan then goes after the woman through the beast whom he gives power to. We see that Michael has been given this particular power to battle with Satan. He is uniquely qualified to restrain the workings of Satan. Remember what Jude said. "Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with Satan, He disputed about the body of Moses." So all Paul had to do was to do as Christ said, and look up the abomination of desolation in Daniel. What he would have found was this incident where Michael's 'standing up' is a crucial aspect to the timeline of the abomination of desolation. The idea that Michael the Archangel is the restrainer has been peer-reviewed in Oxford Theological journals. I would encourage you to look at some of the following links for more information about that.

So let's finish up by giving you a visual idea of what the prewrath view is stating. We can see here that the final seven-year period is followed by a 30-day period and a 45-day period of which the prophet Daniel spoke about in which the battle of Armageddon takes place. Now we haven't spoken much about that in this book. But, for more on this 75-day period you can see Albert Sharpie who has a great presentation on this particular issue.

Then we see the thousand-year millennium following after that. We see here at the beginning of the seven-year period the covenant that is made with Israel by the Antichrist. I want to point out that it may not be that the public is told that it will only be a seven-year peace agreement. The Bible simply says that it will only last seven years. It may very well be that the public is told the peace agreement would last forever. It may also be that the public is totally unaware that the agreement has even been made. I say this because Matthew 24:15 says, "So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolations spoken of through the prophet Daniel. Let the reader understand." What Jesus said to look for was the abomination of desolation. That does not happen until the midpoint

of the 70th week. Based on what Jesus said it may be possible that we would not know what is happening until we are already at the midpoint.

The rapture takes place at an unknown time after the midpoint. It could be hours or it could be years. But, let us take a closer look to make sure that we better understand. Again, thanks to Albert Sharpie who put some of these final slides together. The great tribulation is the time period between the abomination of desolation that occurs at the midpoint. This includes the fourth, fifth, and sixth seals of Revelation and it is cut short by the rapture, which begins the Day of the Lord, and God's wrath, which is the seventh seal in Revelation in which the scroll is finally opened and the wrath begins. We know that the Day of the Lord is an outpouring of God's wrath. God's wrath is not mentioned in the book of Revelation before the sixth seal and the Day of the Lord. However, the seals do tell us the tragic events that will take place on the earth under the reign of antichrist. Therefore it is evident that God's wrath is poured out **after** the Day of the Lord begins. But, it is the wrath of Satan that takes place **before** the Day of the Lord. The Bible teaches that we will suffer persecution. However, it also teaches that we will not suffer God's wrath.

Let's say, for a moment, that this view that I just presented is correct. Would anyone here prefer it over the pre-Tribulational view? Of course not. Our flesh would much prefer the pre-Tribulational view. Therefore we have to realize how hard it would be for us to change our views if this is correct. If you are a pastor or a teacher then you know that holding this view would probably mean that you would lose your job. Many pastors and Ministers hold to the prewrath view secretly because they know that their financial support would dry up if they went public and began to teach this. But, please consider the implications. The people that you are teaching are in danger of embracing the antichrist when he shows up. Because they're going to be so sure that it can't be the Antichrist. Because you have taught them that he won't show up until the rapture takes place. So, they won't be afraid of this cool new guy. In addition, many Americans are not going to be ready for the persecutions of this type and many will fall away just as Jesus predicted. I think that Jesus makes it absolutely clear that the reason that they will fall away is because of the persecution that they are unprepared for in conjunction with the false prophets who offer a way out of the persecution by way of a type of religious compromise. Don't let those who you're

teaching be a part of that group. For more references check out the books and Website links that follow. Remember, the biggest struggle that this view has is people not understanding what it teaches. So first understand what it teaches by those who are teaching it. There is a lot more to know. Thanks for your time.