

The Last Days

An In-Depth Study of Biblical Eschatology

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Between Revelation 3 and 4 *The Rapture of the Church*

Rapture passages ^{1 Corinthians 1:7-8, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Thessalonians 9b-10, James 5:7-9, 1 John 2:28-3:2}

John 14:1-3 Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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.

Positive reasons to believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture

In other words, the *Church* will not be on the earth during any part of the 7-year Tribulation.

1. Simple analysis of Scripture ^{Revelation 1:19, 4:1-3} hints at a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

The divinely provided outline of Revelation ^{Revelation 1:19} divides the book into three sections: "what you have seen", "what is now" and "what will take place later". Most conservative scholars agree these sections describe: Chapter 1 (John's vision of the glorified Jesus), Chapters 2-3 (7 Church letters) and Chapters 4-22 (Tribulation and beyond), respectively. Also, the 7 letters seem to be a 'complete' description of churches through the Church age. The Greek phrase *meta tauta* (lit "after these things") appears in the outline's third section. Therefore, it seems clear the third division is a time period occurring after the Church age.

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Underlined phrases in these Scripture passages are the NIV1984 translations of *meta tauta*.

Revelation 1:19 Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

Not coincidentally, the same Greek phrase (*meta tauta*) is also used twice in the first verse of Revelation 4. This appears to indicate that what happens after this statement is post-church, and therefore, the church would have to be raptured prior to the rest of the Revelation Scripture. Even more, the first two verses of Revelation 4 seem to describe John's entrance into heaven in a similar manner to (and a foreshadowing of) the Church's entrance at the Rapture (e.g., the call of Jesus and the trumpet call ¹ Thessalonians 4:16).

Revelation 4:1-2 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven...

2. The Tribulation is a special time for Jesus to focus on the Church in Heaven.

There is a beautiful parallel between the marriage of a young Jewish couple and the marriage of Jesus Christ (the Bridegroom ^{Matthew 25:1-13, John 3:27-29}) and the Church (the Bride ^{2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation 19:7}) (see attached). The marriage will be consummated when Jesus takes His bride (the Church) away to spend the 7 years of the Tribulation (time of the Judgement Seat of Christ. ^{1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 4:1-5, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10}) in the heavenly bridal chamber before coming out for the Wedding Feast ^{Luke 14:15, Revelation 19:9}.

3. The Tribulation is also a special time for God to refocus on the Jews on Earth.

The 7 years of the Tribulation will be the 70th week revealed by the angel Gabriel to Daniel as God's design to complete His redemptive plan for His chosen people, the Nation of Israel/the House of David. ^{Ezekiel 20:34-38, 22:18-22, Zechariah 12:10-13:1, Malachi 3:2-4, Romans 11:25-32}

Daniel 9:24-27 Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens', and sixty-two 'sevens'. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens', the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

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Jeremiah 30:1-11 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ... “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,” says the LORD. These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: ... “Cries of fear are heard – terror, not peace. ... How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob [the time of Jacob’s Trouble], but he will be saved out of it. In that day, ... I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. So do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel,” declares the LORD. “I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid. I am with you and will save you,” declares the LORD. ... “I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.”

Zechariah 12:10-13:1 [The LORD said:] “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, ... The land will mourn, ... On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.”

4. The entire Tribulation is a time of God’s Wrath. Revelation 11:18, 14:9-11,17-20, 15:1,7, 16:1

Revelation 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the 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 their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

However, God promised to save His Church *FROM* His Wrath. 1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10, 5:9

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

Revelation 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

5. The Holy Spirit (and, therefore, the Church) is removed prior to the Tribulation.

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would always be with the members of the Church.

John 14:15-17 If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.

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One of the responsibilities of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin.

John 16:8-11 When [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgement, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

The Holy Spirit is 'holding back' evil during the Church age, but the removal of the Holy Spirit (the restrainer of the "power of lawlessness") also implies the removal of the Church.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-10 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. ... And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved.

The removal of the church before the "lawless one [is] revealed", implies a time prior to the Tribulation, which will begin when a covenant with Israel is confirmed by the Antichrist.

Daniel 9:27 He [the Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many [Israel] for one 'seven' [Tribulation].

6. The Rapture can only be a Surprise prior to the Tribulation.

If God planned for the Rapture to occur in the middle or at the end of the Tribulation, then it could not be a surprise, because once the covenant confirmed by the Antichrist is signed by Israel (signifying the start of the Tribulation/70th Week of Daniel) ^{Daniel 9:27}, the middle or end of the seven year period of the Tribulation could easily be determined.

Christians should prepare for the rapture and expect it at any moment, but they do not know the actual time it will happen. ^{Matthew 24:36,42-44, 25:13, Luke 12:35-40, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6}

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Mark 13:32-37 No one knows that day or hour, not even the angels ... nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ... Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back ... What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'.

For the non-believer (those who are in “darkness”), the rapture will come as a great surprise (like a “thief”), and ‘steal’ away the Church (i.e., the Christians). ^{2 Peter 3:8-10}

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

Revelation 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

7. The *Church* is special to God, but the word *Church* is not cited after Revelation 3.

The word *Church* appears 19 times in Revelation 1-3, but the only other occurrence of the word is found in the concluding verses of the book, referring back in time to the churches.

Revelation 22:16 I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.

8. To the Church, God is known by the personal name *Father*, but not by OT Saints.

Christianity is based on personal relationships between God and man, including the Church knowing God as *Father*. ^{Matthew 5:13-16, 6:1-18, 23:9, Luke 6:36, 11:2, Philippians 4:20, 1 Thessalonians 3:11,13}

Romans 8:15-17 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

In the Tribulation account ^{Revelation 4-19}, God is called the Father of Jesus once and never the Father of anyone else. He is only referred to impersonally as “God”, much like the O.T.

Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.

Three other issues in Scripture that appear to support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

1. Enoch was a Godly man (he “walked with God” ^{Genesis 5:24a} and was “one who pleased God” ^{Hebrews 11:5}) and he did not die, because “God took him away” ^{Genesis 5:24b}. Soon after, God brought the judgement of the flood ^{Genesis 6:1–8:14}, which killed all of mankind, except for Noah and his family. Enoch was taken to heaven and saved from facing the flood judgement, while Noah and his family were saved through the judgement of the flood. Therefore, it seems Enoch was a model of the church, saved before the judgement, while Noah and his family were models of Israel, saved in spite of the judgement. And those that drowned represent all of the unsaved of that time, as well as those at Armageddon
2. As noted in both Daniel ^{Daniel 7:21-22} and Revelation ^{Revelation 13:7}, the Antichrist will be allowed to defeat the “saints” during the Tribulation. However, neither Satan nor any of his followers have (or will have) the ability to defeat the saints in the church ^{Matthew 16:18}. Therefore, the church saints must already be gone from the Earth before the Tribulation.

Daniel 7:21-22 As I watched, this horn [the Antichrist] was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgement in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

Revelation 13:7 He [the Antichrist] was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

Matthew 16:18b [Jesus said] “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

3. Since early in their history, Jews have often had hardened hearts to God’s truth ^{Psalms 95:8}. This hardness of hearts continued when the Jewish people (especially the leadership) refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah ^{Mark 12:1-12, John 12:37-43}, which led them to having a “spirit of stupor”, “eyes that could not see” and “ears that could not hear” ^{Romans 11:8}. This hardening for most of the Jews will continue until the Church is complete (“until the full number of Gentiles has come in”) ^{Romans 11:25}. Then, and only then, will the time be right for God to complete His restoration of Israel ^{Romans 11:26}. These facts seem to indicate that during the Church Age, there will be: a quietness in God toward Israel, a blindness in the Jewish people, and the formation and completion of the Church. The Bible seems to point next to: the Church being Raptured from Earth, the blindness being removed from Israel and God’s completing the restoring of His chosen people in the 70th week of Daniel.

Romans 11:25-26 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The delivery will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” ^{Isaiah 59:20-21, 27:9, Jeremiah 31:33-34}.

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<i>Marriage Customs (Title)</i>	<i>Marriage Customs (Activity)</i>	<i>Biblical References</i>
Marriage Covenant (Preparation)	Bridegroom (BG) and/or his father decide on a young lady	Ephesians 1:3-14
	BG and father write up the contract	John 3:16
	BG gathers the marriage covenant payment	Mark 15:15-37 Hebrews 10:10
Marriage Covenant (Proposal)	The BG goes to the Bride (B) to present the contract & payment	Revelation 3:20
	BG pours a cup of wine; if B & BG both drink, covenant established	1 Corinthians 11:25-29
Marriage Covenant (Engagement)	Covenant payment is left with the B, guaranteeing the contract	2 Corinthians 1:21-22
	BG leaves the B's home with a promise to return for her	John 14:2-3
Wedding (Preparation)	BG builds the wedding chamber at his Father's home	John 14:27-28a
	B wears a veil so people will know she belongs to someone	1 Corinthians 6:19-20
	B prepares for wedding – packing, wedding dress, lamp	Matthew 24:42,44 Revelation 19:7
	BG's father decides when the wedding chamber is ready	Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:7
Wedding (Day)	BG and friends go to get B (usually in the middle of the night)	1 Thessalonians 5:1-2
	The friend of the BG shouts as they approach house of B	1 Thessalonians 4:16 Matthew 25:6
	The BG and friends take B and attendants from home	Matthew 25:1-13
	Bridal party makes their way to the bridal chamber	1 Thessalonians 4:17
Wedding (Honeymoon)	B & BG enter the bridal chamber for seven days	Daniel 9:24-27 2 Corinthians 5:10
	BG announces marriage consummation to the friend of the BG	John 3:27-29
	Father of the BG gathers friends for the wedding celebration, while B & BG in bridal chamber	Judges 14:10-12 Matthew 8:11 Revelation 19:9
Wedding Feast (Reception)	B and BG come out for the marriage banquet	John 2:1-9 Revelation 21:2
Couple Travels to New Home	B, BG and friends go through streets to permanent home	Hebrews 11:16 Revelation 21:3

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