

15 Reasons Why the Church Will be Caught up BEFORE the Tribulation.

By DON E. STANTON

The first is, because Y'shua, Jesus the Messiah Himself, promised the church

1. EXEMPTION FROM THE TRIAL

“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you out of (Greek - out of) the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole world, to try those who live on the earth. I am coming quickly. ” (Revelation 3:10-11)

How consistent this verse is with the blessed hope - the Master's promise to come again and receive His people to Himself. (John 14:3)

Some may ask, “How can we say this promise is for all the churches, and not only for the Philadelphian church?” The seven messages given in chapter 2 and 3 of Revelation are undoubtedly for all churches throughout this 1970+-year period. Whenever the message is needed, then it should be heeded. This is why each message ends with the words, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ”

Each message was given to meet a very particular need in each of the churches named, but each message also comes to us today - to meet us in our particular needs.

The Book of Romans was written for our teaching, not only for the Romans. And the promises given in Thessalonians are given for our sake also, and not merely for the first century Thessalonians. Likewise with the seven letters.

In the message to Philadelphia the Master speaks about the worldwide trial - not a trial only for that assembly in the ancient city of Asia minor. It is clear the Lord intends this promise for believers who are in fear of the world-wide Tribulation, of which He warned in Matthew 24:21.

“But”, some will say, “why do you take the promise of keeping in 3:10, and not take the promise of 2:10: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you a crown of life. ”

We do indeed take that promise also! And believers in many parts of the world are holding to this promise at this very moment. Other promises are given in these seven messages also; but there are two references that are specifically referring to the Tribulation - Rev. 3:10 and Rev. 2:22.

The first promises “keeping from” or “out of” the trial; the second promises tribulation for false Christianity: “I will cast her (Jezebel) upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent to her deeds. ” (Revelation 2:22)

The Master has given Jezebel time to repent (verse 21) , but she does not want to repent. She is therefore to be cast into great tribulation. Those who are involved in an apostate system, but who do repent, are given the promise that they will not be cast into Tribulation. The keeping from the Great Tribulation is thus offered to those who do repent.

But the counter-argument says that God will keep His people in the Tribulation, not out of it.

No doubt Y'shua will sustain, in miraculous ways, the great number of believers who are saved in the first half of the Tribulation and who will be living on earth during that time.

But the promise of the Master to His Bride is not that He will keep us in the hour, but out of the hour of trial.

Notice the promise is not that He will keep us from trials - believers have plenty of trials and persecutions at the present time - but that He will keep us from the hour - the period of the trial.

Some argue that the preposition used in Rev. 3:10 is "from." But the Greek word used is ek, which means "out of." It is literally, "I will keep you out of the hour of trial."

Another verse that promises deliverance, is given at the end of the Lord's prophecy on the tribulation upheavals.

"But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36)

Note; the Lord doesn't say, "pray that you will be worthy," but "be accounted worthy." We could never expect to escape because of our own worthiness; but if we are in Christ, then we are counted worthy, because we have been justified through faith, on the basis of His precious blood.

When we have such comforting promises given by our Master, our Bridegroom, we are not wrong in expecting to escape the Great Tribulation.

If the Tribulation were only persecution of the saints, then we would not expect to be kept out of it, because Y'shua said that in this world we would be persecuted. But the Tribulation is nothing less than . . .

2. THE WRATH OF GOD The main purpose of the Tribulation is judgment for the world.

The Great Tribulation is the climax of man's 6000+-year dispensation upon earth. During that time, mankind has been in rebellion against the Almighty. While many have responded to God's voice, and have been saved and blessed, the majority of the world has habitually gone its own way. Now time is up! It is time for God to settle the score! It is time to purge the earth! And yet, even in the Tribulation, God is willing to save. That period is also called "the Day of Jacob's Trouble," because it is a time when YHWH will smelt the hardened nation of Israel, and turn its people to Y'shua the Messiah. This smelting will prepare them for His Kingdom.

Several promises given to the church assure us that we will be saved from the wrath of God; including the following: “For God has not destined us to suffer His wrath, but to receive salvation through our Master, Y’shua the Messiah. ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

In the context Paul is speaking about the coming of the Messiah, and “the Day of YHWH” - the day of darkness.

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ” (Romans 5:9)

“. . . you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead - Y’shua, the One delivering us from the wrath that is coming. ” (1 Thess. 1:9-10)

“The Lord knows how to rescue the godly out of temptation and trials, and how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment. ” (2 Peter 2:9)

Some may reason that these verses refer to the future wrath - the lake of fire. But if we cannot believe these promises regarding deliverance from all wrath of God, then how can we accept that He will indeed keep us even from the lake of fire? Some will argue that the Tribulation is not the wrath of God, but it is the wrath of Satan against believers. That period is indeed a time of increased demonic activity, and of intense persecution. But it’s much more; it’s the period of the wrath of God, as is seen in many passages describing the Tribulation.

(See Isaiah 13:6-13, Zephaniah 1:14-18) . Also . . .

“Surely the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze, says YHWH of Hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ” (Malachi 4:1)

Revelation also is so definite that it is God’s wrath coming upon the whole world.

“They called to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the Presence of Him (the Almighty) 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 (before it) ?’” (Revelation 6:16-17)

The judgments under the 6th seal are, the sun turning to blackness, and the moon to blood; the stars falling to the earth, and a great earthquake. We cannot say these things are the wrath of Satan. Rather, it is clearly written, it’s the wrath of the Lamb. It’s the Great Day of His Wrath.

Knowing that the Saviour has taken our sins away completely and that He has set us free from condemnation, the promises above are very precious indeed. If we are true believers, they give us much assurance, for we know that what He has promised, He will definitely fulfil.

A third reason why the church will not go into the Tribulation but will be caught up prior to that time, is because the Scriptures present the coming of the Lord as . . .

3. AN IMMINENT HOPE Imminent means, “impending” or “something that could happen at any moment.” The return of the Bridegroom has always been an imminent expectation of believers right down through the church age.

The Master’s promise to return to receive His people, in John 14, implies a constant imminent possibility, for in the absence of any indication of the actual time of the event, we are left expecting it at any time.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and receive you to Myself, so that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:3)

If the Rapture is to take place only at the end of the Tribulation, as Post-Tribulationists teach, then we could not say that the Master may come at any time. But it is not merely the Pre-Tribulationists who say the Master may return at any tick of the clock; Y’shua Himself, in teaching about readiness, said He may return at any time. “You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him.” (Luke 12:40)

In Matthew 24, the Master teaches about His return in great glory at the end of the Tribulation, and about the gathering of the “elect” (believing Israel) to the land and the Kingdom.

Then in the parable of the Fig Tree, Y’shua says that He is near, right at the door! But no-one knows the day or the hour of His return. Many will be taken away in judgment, others will be left to enter the kingdom.

In concluding that section of the prophecy, the Master exhorts His people to be faithful and ready.

“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Master is coming . . . for this reason you also be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.” (Matthew 24:42,44)

What else could these disciples believe except that the Master could return at any time? The nearness and imminent possibility of the Master’s return is taught by James, John, Peter and Paul.

James says: “Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Master is near.” (James 5:8)

John says; “Abide and continue in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” (1 John 2:28)

Again John says: “. . . when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:2-3)

So the Rapture is presented as a purifying hope. And it becomes a purifying hope, more and more, as our expectation of the imminent return increases.

Now if John had said, "Look! After the Tribulation we shall see Him, therefore comfort one another with these words," we might possibly respond by saying, "I hope the Master doesn't come very soon. I hope I die at least seven years before He comes." Be sure, if the church, the Bride of the Lamb, was to go through the Great Tribulation, the loving Bridegroom would not hold back the information.

The Master did tell the church at Smyrna. "You will have tribulation ten days." (Rev. 2:10) . And that church did experience severe persecution.

Y'shua also warned us believers that the world will hate and persecute us. He never covered up this fact in an effort to keep us from worrying about coming trials. No! **IT'S A BLESSED HOPE (EXPECTATION)**

Paul also warned that we will suffer with Christ (Romans 8:17) . But he certainly does not warn us that we must endure the Tribulation. Rather he says; ". . . live sensible (self-controlled) , upright and godly lives in this present age, awaiting and looking for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Y'shua the Messiah. " (Titus 2:12-13)

Paul says that believers had turned to God, "to wait for His Son from Heaven. " He also says: "Let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober . . .

. For God has not destined us to suffer His wrath, but to receive salvation through our Master, Y'shua the Messiah. " (1 Thessalonians 5:6,9)

In the context of the passage (1 Thes. 4:13 to 5:11) , it is clear that Paul was speaking about the Rapture. Again in 1 Corinthians 1:7 and Philipians 3:2-21, Paul speaks of "eagerly awaiting" the return of the Master.

Peter says: "YHWH is not slow concerning His promise . . . but is patient toward you . . . what kind of people ought you to be, in holy and godly behaviour as you look forward to and earnestly desire the Day of God. " (2 Peter 3:9, 11-12)

Peter does not say anything anywhere to suggest the Lord won't come until after the Tribulation. But He does say that in the last days there will be mockers! (2 Peter 3 3:3-4)

There is no verse that says, "Get ready for the Tribulation. " We are told that in the world we will have tribulation - that is, persecutions, trials and troubles. Peter said: "You have been distressed by various trials, that the proving of your faith . . . may be found to result in praise, glory and honour at the revelation of Y'shua the Messiah. " (1 Peter 1:6- 8)

There is nothing about the Tribulation period in this passage.

"Various trials" are not the Great Tribulation.

Trials, we all know, are a part of the believer's life, so that we might reach on to maturity. But if someone says the church must go through the Great Tribulation so that it might be purified during that time, then we must ask, what about the church that is already in heaven - the greater part of the church? These believers have escaped the Tribulation, so why should the end-time

believers of the church not also escape it ? There is no verse in Scripture to say exactly when the Rapture will take place. But there are verses to say exactly when the Master will be revealed with His angels - that is, at the very end of the Tribulation.

Some say the Rapture will take place at the time the Beast and the False Prophet are destroyed. (Rev. 19:11-21)

But to say the Rapture must take place on that day, is to say the Lord can't come any day before then. But as you look into Revelation 19, there is no hint of a Rapture associated with that Revealing. The counter-argument says that there is a Resurrection at least mentioned in Rev. 20:4, which occurs after the Battle of Armageddon. True, it is a resurrection; and it is very clear who the resurrected ones are: "Then I saw thrones, and sitting on them were those to whom authority to judge was given. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Y'shua and because of the Word of God - these had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark upon their foreheads or upon their hands. They came to life and reigned with the Messiah for the thousand years." (Rev. 20:4)

That is the resurrection of martyred believers from the Tribulation. There is nothing to suggest that these resurrection believers are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord.

And there is certainly no mention of living saints caught up at the same time. So the Rapture is not implied in that passage.

Furthermore, this resurrection happens after the battle of Armageddon, and after the Lord's revealing - not during the Master's return in glory.

If the Rapture is set for the middle of the Tribulation, the people living at that time would be able to know exactly the day of the Lord's coming - they would simply calculate 3 ½ years from the start of the 7-year covenant.

Or if the Rapture is scheduled for the end of the 7 years, then it would simply be a matter of counting 7 years (2520 days)

from the revealing of the man of sin and the start of the covenant.

A post- or mid-Trib Rapture then, does away with the imminent expectation of the Lord's call. But Y'shua said: "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him." (Luke 12:40)

Now let us consider. . .

4. THE DISPENSATIONAL ASPECT Some enemies of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture try to brand dispensationalism as the hallmark of prophetic apostasy. But that is as unfair as it is false. Dispensational teaching is consistent with God's revelation to us, and we cannot ignore it if we would "rightly divide the Word." Dispensationalism is the teaching that there are a number of different ages in human history, such as the age of Innocence (before the Fall) , the Antediluvian age (before the Flood) ; and that God has worked in various ways in each age, or dispensation. There is, however, a continuity line running right through the ages.

True, there are extreme forms of dispensationalism, just as there are extreme forms of every doctrine - which are false.

Certainly it is wrong to compartmentalize every portion of Scripture, and make it apply to one age only. We cannot say that only some sections of Scripture are relevant to us in our time. But we can say that certain portions were intended, primarily, for specific times.

The Word may be applied differently, according to the stage of God's dealing with His people, although basic principles are unchanged.

As an extreme example; do we allow our child to play alongside the cobra's hole because the Scripture says the child shall play by the hole of a cobra (and not be harmed) ? (Isaiah 11:8) . That passage is clearly referring to the Millennial kingdom - the Age of Glory that has yet to come. There is, no doubt, also a spiritual application of this verse for this present age.

God has led His people, step by step. As greater light has been given, greater responsibility and maturity has been expected. In the age of law, men got away with polygamy (having more than one wife.) And sometimes we wonder why, for it is very clear that God will not tolerate that in this age.

Why? Because we are under a new covenant.

The law said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. " And even though that law might appeal to our carnal sense of righteousness, we know that we are now under a higher law - the law of the Spirit of life and love in Christ Jesus.

The plan of Salvation is one main theme running through all the ages. But surely it is clear that although sacrifice was required in all ages after the Fall, the requirements have not been the same in all ages. The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not have the full sacrificial system as was introduced during the Dispensation of Law. Nor are we, in this present age, required to fulfil that sacrificial system. We have the perfect Sacrifice, the Lamb of God who was slain once for all.

There is indeed a very real difference between the age before the cross (the Dispensation of Law) and the present age, (the Dispensation of Grace.)

That difference must be admitted, otherwise, while confessing we believe in the unity of the Bible, we would be confused as to just what applies to the church.

Calvary brought an end to the Old Covenant. We are now under a New Covenant. The Aaronic priesthood and the Mosaic system, including animal sacrifices, were done away with. What remains of the Law, and what has been carried over into the New Covenant, is, of course, the principles and precepts of God.

This does not mean that the Old Testament is irrelevant for the church; and it does not mean that the New Testament will be obsolete for the people living in the Millennium. God's revelation has been progressive down through the ages, and it abides for ever. (1 Peter 1:25)

The Old Testament is preserved as a major part of the Scriptures, and it formed a foundation for the further revelations given in the New Testament.

Both Old and New Testament have important messages for people living in the Tribulation, as well as for us. Take for example, Matthew 24:9-27, which speaks of Tribulation conditions. Although it has instruction for us at present, the prophecy is primarily for the Jews living at that time.

The context itself makes this clear. Luke 21:28, on the other hand, which tells us to look up “when these things begin to take place,” is no doubt a promise of coming redemption for believers at the end of the church age.

We need to keep in mind that there are three distinct groups - the Jews, the Greeks (Gentiles) , and to the Church of God (1 Corinthians 10:32) , and that the LORD works out His purposes for each, in His own way and time.

The Tribulation is not part of the Age of Grace When we carefully study the period of the Tribulation, we see that this is not a part of “the Age of Grace” - the Age of the Church. It is neither a part of, nor a conclusion of, the present dispensation in which the Master is gathering out of all nations a people to comprise His Bride and Body.

The Tribulation rather, is the long-delayed period of seven years that concludes the "70 weeks" (490 years) that has been allotted for the nation of Israel. (Daniel 9:24-27) . It is called the time of Jacob’s Trouble. (Jeremiah 30:7)

It is the period when God once more calls His covenant nation to repentance, causing them to embrace their long-rejected Messiah. He will thus deliver them from the bondage under the Law which has had them shackled for so many centuries.

(The Law was necessary, of course, as a “schoolmaster” to teach them the ways of God, and to bring them, in due time, to Christ.) (Galatians 3:24)

Israel rejected the freedom and salvation that is in Y’shua the Messiah, when they said, “Away with Him. ” But God, who is rich in mercy, did not annihilate that nation as He did with some, such as the Amalekites. Rather, He planned, in “the fullness of time,” when “the times of the gentiles” would be fulfilled, to bring Israel to the Fountain where “sins are washed away. ” (Zechariah 13:1)

But until the fulfilment of the Times of the Gentiles, Israel would wander in the wilderness - for a second time. The first desert journey was in the Sinai - for 40 years. Israel’s second wilderness experience - in a very dry “wilderness of bones,” is one that has lasted for 1,900 years. (Ezekiel 37)

And the great majority of the people of Israel today - both those in the land and those amongst the nations, are still in that spiritual wilderness.

But now, as the church is nearing completion, God is calling His ancient people “to enter the land” - not only the land of Israel, but “the life of promise” as described by Ezekiel: “And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, YHWH, have spoken and done it,” declares YHWH. ” (Ezekiel 37:14)

The Great Tribulation is the period in which God will purge Israel, and bring “one third” through the fire. (Zech. 13:8-9)

At the same time, the Tribulation is “the trial to come upon the whole world. ” (Rev. 3:10) . Indeed, it is nothing less than the wrath of God coming upon this rebellious generation.

(Revelation 6:15-17) . But the Tribulation is not a purgatory for the Body of the Messiah.

5. THE “70 WEEKS” OF DANIEL Let me explain why the Tribulation is part of a completely different dispensation to the church age.

In Daniel’s prophecy, chapter 9:24-27, it is clearly revealed that “70 weeks” are allotted to Israel and the holy city, to make atonement for sin, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to anoint the most holy place. This prophecy will be completely fulfilled when Messiah begins to reign.

The “70 weeks” are weeks of years, not weeks of days; i. e. , each week is seven literal years. The first 69 “weeks” (483 years) started from the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, which was given by the Medo-Persian ruler, Artaxerxes in 445 B. C. It ended with the triumphant entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem, a few days before He was “cut off” - that is, crucified.

The remaining “one week” (seven years) , was not fulfilled after the 69th week. And it has never been fulfilled. The 70th week has been put on hold for this 1970+-year period, while God is calling out of all nations, a people for His Name - a Bride for His Son.

When the Bride, which is also called the “Body of the Messiah,” is complete, the Bridegroom will take this body of believers to the Father’s House. God will then take up His specific program with Israel once more - during the 70th week.

Thereafter He will bring in ever-lasting righteousness.

The reason why God has suspended the 70th week, and “stopped the clock” as far as Israel is concerned, is because; 1. Israel has not been ready to receive the Messiah.

2. The Master must call out a people for His Name - the Bride - out of all the nations, so that she might take her place alongside the King when He reigns over the whole restored world. After the Bride is complete. Israel will be saved, purified and prepared to become the centre of the world, and a blessing to all the earth.

The teaching of the 70 weeks of Daniel is very important to our understanding of the Tribulation and God’s dealings.

Indeed, it is from Daniel’s prophecy that we know the Tribulation lasts for seven lunar years. (7 x 360 days) . The Book of Revelation does not specifically say how long the Tribulation lasts, but it

does speak of 1,260 days (the witness of the two prophets - ch 11) ; 1,260 days (the nourishment of the woman - ch. 12) ; and 42 months (the reign of the beast - ch. 13.)

If we ignored Daniel's prophecy, we would not know if the Tribulation will be 3½ years, 7 years, or 10½ years.

Now if we accept and place significance on Daniel's prophecy, we must accept the fact that there has been a long 1,970+ years parenthesis between the 69th and the 70th weeks.

Parenthesis means brackets () . A parenthetical period is a period that is inserted into another period, but which, although it may form a part of the whole program, is itself a separate period altogether.

We may illustrate the church age in brackets like this: Pre-Trib.

69 "weeks" 1 "week" 483 years 7 years A-millennialists do not accept our interpretation for the 70th week at all. They claim the 70th week was fulfilled immediately after the 69th week, without a break - 3½ years after Calvary.

The timing of the Rapture - Before, in the Middle, or After the Tribulation - does not concern A-millennialists as they completely reject a 7-year Tribulation at the end of the age.

As the 70th week has still to be fulfilled, it is clear that the church age must be a parenthetical period. Otherwise there would be no justification for a delayed 70th week.

It is not logical for the 70th week to be part of the parenthesis, while being part of the overall period! We might have brackets within brackets, but we cannot have a period in the parenthesis and outside at the same time. This is the diagram that would be drawn by the Mid-Trib. and the Post-Trib. views.

Mid-Trib. ——— (—) — 483 years (1970 + + + 3½) 3½ Post-Trib. ——— (———)

483 years (1970 + + + 7 years)

If you put the church in the Tribulation, then you may as well put Daniel's prophecy into the archives.

The dispensational aspect, and particularly the prophecy of the "70 weeks" supports, and demands, that the Bride of Christ be removed from the scene before the 70th week.

The next reason why I believe the Rapture will take place before the seven years is because of the . . .

6. TOTAL LACK OF EVIDENCE TO PROVE THE CHURCH IS ON EARTH DURING THE TRIBULATION Many are emphatic that the church will go through the Tribulation because the book of Revelation speaks of saints on the earth during the 7 years. A Post-tribulationist says, "that proves the church is in the Tribulation. " But it doesn't! We affirm that there are saints on earth during the seven years, but we emphatically deny that they are members of the church.

They are, in fact, a body called Tribulation Saints - people who will come to Y'shua and be saved in the first half of the Tribulation. (Revelation 16:9 & 11 suggests that no-one repents in the second half.)

Post-tribulationists often reject the teaching that Israel, the church, and the Tribulation saints are different bodies. They claim, like A-millennialists, that the church is "spiritual Israel. " But we reply, "No! Spiritual Israel is the believing part of the nation of Israel. " It is true that we believers are called the children of Abraham.

We are his seed by faith, not by physical descent - unless we are Hebrews. Remember, even Abraham was not a part of "Spiritual Israel!" He died even before Israel was established.

The church is part of the Household of God, even as spiritual Israel is, but that does not make us Israelites. (My brother and I belong to one household, but that does mean that my brother and I are one body, does it?)

Some who maintain that the church is not a new body, but is a continuation of the spiritual Israel, like to cite "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38) . But this is a shallow argument.

The word 'church' (ekklesia in Greek) simply means 'assembly. ' There was indeed an "assembly in the wilderness," but there's no way it can be called "the church, the Bride of the Lamb. " Messiah's church was still future. In Matthew 16:18, Y'shua said, "Upon this rock I will build My church. " This new Body was begun at Pentecost.

Ephesians 2:12-16 shows that the church is a new body - a body composed of both Jews and Gentiles. It was previously a mystery but it is now revealed - a new body, a Bride, a special companion for the Son of God; a mystical body composed of believers from Pentecost to the Rapture; a people with a heavenly calling, who belong to a heavenly city - the New Jerusalem - in the Father's House.

Jewish believers from this present age share that heavenly calling with us. But Israel, as a nation, is one with an earthly inheritance - a kingdom that is to come in the renewed world.

Israel is destined to be a blessing in the midst of the earth.

(Isaiah 19:24)

The Bride of Christ shares in the Millennial reign, of course, but not as a nation on earth. Her place is in the palace of the King; it is the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven, and is positioned above the earth. (Revelation 21:2,24)

Some people ask, "How can people be saved if the church is taken away?" It is God who saves, not the church! He will pour out His Spirit (Joel 2:27-32) . He will also send two witnesses to prophesy in Jerusalem (Rev. 11:3-12) . He will raise up and seal 144,000 Messianic Jews in that period. (Rev. 7:3-8) . They will be Spirit filled evangelists like the apostles. There will also be millions of Bibles available after the Bride has been caught up. For a short time, before the Bible-burning begins, the Scriptures will fall into the hands of those left behind, and people who are anxious to know what has happened, will read them, and many will believe, and be saved.

The Church is in Heaven during the Tribulation In the first five chapters of Revelation the church is mentioned many times. In chapters 2 and 3 we see the seven progressive stages of the church on earth; but then, in chapters 4 & 5, we see the redeemed in heaven.

“And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments; and they had crowns of gold on their heads . . . and they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals, for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe, language, people and nation. You have made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign over the earth’. ” (Revelation 4:4, 5:9-10)

There has been a lot of debate about the identity of the 24 elders - some insisting that they are angelic elders rather than redeemed, glorified human elders. But the fact that they are sitting on thrones, with crowns upon their heads, indicates that they are elders of the universal church, for we read: “We shall also reign with Him. ” (2 Timothy 2:12)

Again Paul says, referring to the church . . .

“The saints shall judge the world,” “and if the world is judged by you . . . ” (1 Corinthians 6:2)

The Master earlier told His disciples, “You will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ” (Matthew 19:28)

We would certainly call the twelve apostles, elders, wouldn't we? And it may be that Y'shua has chosen 12 other elders to judge the gentile nations.

The fact that they are already crowned, also indicates that the Judgment Seat of Christ (where the church is evaluated, and given rewards - crowns) has already taken place. And as the Bride - the church - is one body, we would expect the members to be judged at one and the same time.

Notice also, seven times in Revelation 2 & 3 (before the Rapture) , we read, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. ” But in Revelation 13:9, during the Tribulation, and we read, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ” The church is missing.

In Revelation chapters 6 to 19 - the Tribulation period - there is no mention whatever of the Bride on earth.

But in chapter 19, (before the Revealing of Christ) , the completed Bride is seen in heaven, prepared and already glorified - in fine linen, bright and clean. It is written, “the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ” (v. 8)

The fine linen here is not referring to the imputed righteousness of Christ with which we are already clothed, but in this context, it is the tested, spiritual works of the believers - the gold, silver and precious stones that have passed through the fire of the Judgment Seat, and that have proven worthy. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

The Marriage of the Lamb will be held before the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs of Rev. 20:4, which indicates the Church and the Tribulation believers are two separate bodies.

So this passage adds to the evidence that the Bride is caught up to heaven before the Tribulation. Certainly she is in heaven before the Lord returns to earth at Armageddon which is at the end of the Tribulation.

7. CONTRAST: THE RAPTURE AND THE RETURN Post-Tribulationists say the Rapture and the Return to earth are one and the same event, and that it takes place at the end of the Tribulation. We do not believe this is possible, because of major differences between the two events.

The Rapture and the Return are both part of the Second Coming of Christ, true! But they can be satisfactorily explained, only by describing them as two stages.

Notice the differences :

THE RAPTURE

Before the Tribulation the Lord meet the saints in the air.

The living saints are caught up without dying.

The saints (the Church) go to the Father's House with the Master.

The judgment of the world begins.

The Rapture is imminent.

The Rapture is a 'mystery'- not revealed in the O.T.

The Rapture concerns only the saved.

THE RETURN

After the Tribulation The Lord descends to the Mt. of Olives, and the surviving remnant are gathered before Him on earth.

There is no catching up to the sky.

The Tribulation saints are ushered into the kingdom on earth.

The judgment is concluded.

The Return, predictably, follows the reign of the Beast.

The Return was revealed by several OT prophets.

The Return concerns both saved and unsaved.

The Restrainer is taken out of the midst; which allows the conspiracy of Satan to proceed.

Satan goes forth with great wrath to destroy

The Rapture is an exclusive promise to the church.

A private revealing.

Believers taken to heaven.

Christ revealed to church. Rom 8:18

The church gathered.

Believers transformed. Phil 3:21

The conspiracy of Satan is destroyed.

Satan is bound.

The Return is promise for Israel.

A public revealing.

Unbelievers taken to Hell.

Christ revealed to the world with the church. 1 Thes 3:13

The elect of Israel gathered.

Creation restored. Acts 4:21

You will notice that these two events are always dealt with separately. The translation of saints is never mentioned in any passage dealing with the return after the Tribulation. And neither is the return to earth mentioned in the passages dealing with the Rapture. (John 14:1-3. I Thess. 4:14-17, I Cor. 15:50-57)

Gathering the Elect Some may argue that the Rapture is pictured in Matthew 24:30-31, but this passage is dealing with the Messiah's Revealing when He returns to earth to establish the Kingdom.

“ . . . and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY (Dan 7:13) with power and great glory.

And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather together His elect (His chosen people) from the four winds, even from one end of the heavens to the other. ” (Matthew 24:30-31)

These verses may fit the interpretation of A-millennialists who believe the return of the Master completes God's program for the world with a general resurrection, and the destruction of the planet. But as A-millennialists do not believe in a future kingdom on earth, nor in the seven-year

Tribulation, their arguments and views do not arise in our present discussion on the timing of the Rapture in relation to the Tribulation.

The above verses mention the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, the trumpet sound, and the gathering of God's elect, which, at first may appear to be the Rapture. But it's not so! It is a different event.

In this passage there is no catching up of the saints, and there's no going to the Father's House. Neither is there a resurrection mentioned, but there is a tremendous gathering which is accomplished by the angels.

At the Rapture, however, the angels are not called upon to gather the church. There is simply the voice of the arch-angel.

1 Thess. 4:16 says the Lord comes with the trumpet. In 1 Cor.

15:52, it says the last trumpet will sound. But there is no reference to angels gathering the believers.

The difference is that the Rapture before the Tribulation catches the church up to the clouds and to the Father's House; but the Return of Christ to earth after the Tribulation, gathers His saved Tribulation people into the Millennial kingdom. It is most presumptuous to say these are one and the same event.

Some say the word "elect" in Matt. 24:31, proves this is the church that is gathered after the Tribulation. Not so! The word "elect" (Heb. bachir; Gk eklektos) means "chosen." In one place the Lord Jesus Himself is called the elect (1 Peter 2:6) .

In another, the elect refers to angels (1 Tim. 5:21) . In other places the elect refers to the church, or to certain individuals; and it also refers to the saved ones from the Tribulation.

The Last Trump Another argument that comes up from the Matthew 24:31 passage, is "the trumpet argument." In 1 Cor. 15, we read of the Resurrection and Rapture, at the sound of the last trump.

According to the trumpet argument, Matthew 24:30-31 proves that the Rapture is not before the Tribulation.

There are also mid-Tribulationists (those who believe the Rapture takes place in the middle of the seven years) , who insist that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15 is the last trump.

Some post-tribulationists also maintain the last trump is the 7th trumpet, but they say that this seventh trumpet sounds at the end of the Tribulation.

It is presumptuous to identify the trumpets like that. The seven trumpets of Revelation are trumpets of judgment, whereas the "last trump" of 1 Corinthians 15:52 is a trump of summons.

The last trump that Paul speaks about, is the summons or call to the church - the trumpet sound of God. The seven trumpets of Revelation on the other hand are trumpets given to angels - to announce God's wrath.

In studying the details of the seventh trumpet in Rev. 11, we read nothing of a rapture or resurrection. But we read only of an anticipation of the kingdom of God. But more important, the seventh trumpet certainly does not end the tribulation - there are still seven bowls of wrath to be poured out upon earth, including the battle of Armageddon.

The last trump is the last summons of a particular event.

Throughout the church age, trumpets have been sounded, heralding the coming of the Lord.

Today the Messiah's people are sounding trumpet warnings, but the last trump is the summons, the call - "Arise Beloved - and come away." H A Ironside has explained the familiar military expression of the last trumpet. "When a Roman camp was about to be broken up, whether in the middle of the night or in the day, a trumpet sounded. The first blast meant, 'Strike tents and prepare to depart.' The second meant, 'Fall into line,' and when what was called 'the last trump' sounded, it meant, 'March.'" The "trumpet arguments" can be a very noise exchange, and if guns were used instead of trumpets, I guess most of the prophecy teachers would be looking forward to the Resurrection, rather than the Rapture.

8. THE ORDER OF EVENTS The scheduled order of events for the church requires a time period between the Rapture and the Revealing. The following order is essential so that the Bride can be glorified, and revealed as the Wife of the Lamb, when He is revealed in glory.

"When the Messiah, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:4)

i The Rapture ii The Bema Seat (The Evaluation - the Judgment Seat of Christ) . 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

Here the believers' lives are evaluated. The "gold, silver and precious stones" represent that which is truly spiritual in their lives. The believer's carnality - the "wood, hay and straw" - is purged by fire so that he stands perfected in Christ, and glorified.

"And whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." (Romans 8:30)

iii The Marriage of the Lamb and the Bride The Bride, having passed through the Bema Seat, is now in a perfect condition to be presented to the Messiah as His glorified wife. All taint has been removed. All tears are wiped away. (Rev 21:4) . Not a blot, or spot, or tear remains to mar her glory.

"Bright and clean fine linen was given to her to wear; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the set-apart people of God." (Revelation 19:8)

The Marriage then takes place, and the status of the Bride is changed from “Betrothed” to “Married.”

iv The Revealing in Glory The Bride is revealed, not as the Messiah’s betrothed, but as His glorified wife during the revealing of the King of Kings.

(Rev 21:9-11. Col. 3:4)

The Pre-tribulation rapture allows the Master to receive the remnant of His Bride from on earth, unite them with the ‘dead in Christ,’ take them to the Father’s House, evaluate, reward and array them in glorious dress, and formally present them to Himself; and, after the marriage, to manifest them with Himself in glory at His return - when “every eye will see Him.” (Revelation 1:7)

A Post-tribulation rapture which sees the Rapture and the Revealing as the one and same event, does not allow time for the Bema Seat and Marriage of the Lamb.

And if it is replied that the Bema Seat and the Marriage takes place in the skies immediately after the Rapture, then that argument itself implies there are two stages in the second coming. (But Post-tribulationists ardently reject any idea of two stages.)

A serious fault in the Post-tribulation view is that it leaves believers expecting death and resurrection, and not the hope of the Rapture, for very few will escape martyrdom in the Tribulation.

“He (the Beast) was given power to make war with the set apart people of God (the Tribulation followers of Y’shua) , and to overcome them.” (Revelation 13:7)

The Tribulation saints, definitely have the specific promise of resurrection (Rev. 20:4) . But the church has the specific promise of being caught up without dying. (1 Thess. 4:16-18)

9. THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS Another important point. In Matthew 25:31-46 we read of the judgment of the nations after the Master returns to the earth.

The surviving people, both sheep and goats - saved and unsaved - are brought before Him, and are then separated.

But if the Rapture took place at the end of the seven years, that itself would be a separation, so that there would then be no need to divide sheep from goats - for only goats would have been left behind (unless you insist on a partial rapture!)

Matthew 25 also indicates that the sheep and goats are still in their natural bodies. How is it that the sheep are still in that condition if the Rapture has just taken place? No, the sheep here are Tribulation saints, not the church.

10. THE SUBJECTS WHO REPOPULATE EARTH Another problem with the Post-tribulation view is that it does not leave any believers on earth to inherit the kingdom. If all believers are caught up and glorified after the Tribulation, who would be the subjects in the kingdom on earth? All the goats (unbelievers) will be cast into outer darkness.

And the glorified believers will not repopulate the earth, for they now have the spiritual bodies that do not procreate physical children. Clearly the destination of the Church is the Heavenly City. (John 14:1-3. Rev 21)

The heavenly Jerusalem is “the palace” from which the Messiah, with the Bride at His side, rules over the millennial kingdom.

The believers (the sheep) who enter the kingdom (Matthew 25:34) , are Tribulation believers, not the church.

Of course, Post-Tribulationists may bring up various counter arguments, and we might keep on countering counters, like barristers in a court of law, until it comes to a stage where one is duelling over the box and not over the treasure.

11. THE TRIBULATION IS NOT A TYPE OF PURGATORY FOR THE CHURCH Some people imagine the church should go into the Tribulation because it has become worldly, or lukewarm, and therefore it should be purged or cleansed during the seven years. No so! This would be making the Tribulation a type of purgatory.

And why should the final generation of the church be singled out for purging in the Tribulation? And why should all believers be consigned to that purging? Y’shua, the Lamb of God, has already made purification of sins - He has already purged His people by His atoning blood.

(Hebrews 1:3)

The church stands justified through faith in the Saviour, on the basis of the precious shed blood of the Lamb. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

The time of testing by fire of the works of believers is at the Judgment Seat of Christ - not in the Tribulation.

12. THE RESTRAINER MUST TAKE THE CHURCH AWAY BEFORE THE MAN OF SIN IS REVEALED There has been a lot of debate on the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2, which speaks of the coming of Y’shua our Master, the Day of the LORD, and the subsequent revealing of the Man of Sin.

“And you know what is restraining him (the Man of Sin) now, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the mystery of iniquity and lawlessness is already at work; but He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way (or out of the midst) . And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Master will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the glory of His coming. ” (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8)

We identify the Restrainer as the Holy Spirit, for He is the only One who restrains the evil plan of Satan. And He does that largely through the presence of the church in the world.

Believers are called “the salt of the earth. ” (Matthew 5:13)

Some have tried to identify the Restrainer as the Roman Emperor, or the Roman Empire. In that case, the Man of Sin should have been revealed when they passed away.

Others say that the Restrainer is the present order, or government, which will be violently thrown down by the new world order. But which present government or ruler could be truly called, “The Restrainer”? It is the Holy Spirit who is certainly holding back the conspiracy of Satan; and He will continue to do so until He is taken out of the midst. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent, but He can certainly withdraw His restraining influence.

But how could the Holy Spirit withdraw His Presence, or His influence, from the church that He permanently indwells as the Temple of God? He must take the Church away.

The Holy Spirit is like Eliazer in the story of Isaac, who escorts the Bride to the heir, who is waiting on the outskirts of his city. (Genesis 15:2, 24:1-67) . Y’shua is waiting in the sky as the Holy Spirit escorts the Bride to the Heir of all things, on the portals of Heaven Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit is the Restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2, and this is further evidence that confirms the Pre-tribulation Rapture.

Some argue that the Rapture can’t take place before the Tribulation because 2 Thessalonians 2:3 says the Rapture will not take place unless the Man of Sin is revealed. But that is not what the passage says.

The prophecy makes it clear that the Day of the LORD (the Tribulation) will not take place unless the Man of Sin is revealed. And verses 6-8 are saying, the Man of Sin will not be revealed until the Restrainer is taken out of the midst. So the order of events is . . .

i The Rapture (the Restrainer removed)

ii The Revealing of the Man of Sin iii The Day of the LORD (the Tribulation)

A question is, “Is there an interval between the Rapture and the Day of the LORD?” Quite possibly. There was an interval between the end of the 69th week of Daniel (9:27) , and the commencement of the church age at Pentecost - about 54 days. So it is possible there could be some days in between the Rapture and the time Antichrist is revealed.

It is possible, however, that the Man of Sin will be revealed immediately after the Rapture. The revealing of the Man of Sin takes place with the signing of the 7-year treaty. And the Tribulation, (the 70th week of Daniel) begins from the date the treaty actually comes into force.

13. OLD TESTAMENT TYPES Old Testament types confirm the Pre-tribulation Rapture.

Y’shua the Messiah said, ‘As the days of Noah,’ and ‘as the days of Lot,’ so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

1. Enoch, the man of God who was caught up to heaven before the flood, is a picture of the church which will be taken away before the Tribulation.
2. Noah, and his family, are a type of Israel which is preserved through the time of wrath.

3. Lot and his two daughters, who were caught away from Sodom before the fire fell, are a type of the church who will be caught up before this world burns in the Tribulation.

14. AMBASSADORS MUST BE WITHDRAWN “We are ambassadors for Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

All born again believers have become citizens of Heaven, and are ambassadors for the King of Glory.

Before a war or a pending major disaster, a country’s ambassadors must be recalled to their own country.

15. LITERAL INTERPRETATION The Pre-tribulation Rapture teaching is based on a literal interpretation of Scripture. In fact, this is the only view which allows a literal interpretation of all OT and NT passages on the Tribulation.

It is not based on natural desires to escape suffering and the terrible time of wrath, but rather, it is based on the principle of sound interpretation of the Word of God.

The Pre-tribulation Rapture, we believe, harmonizes the relevant passages, without strained arguments. It does not confuse the Church with Israel and the nations, and God’s dealings with each of them.

It recognizes the differences between the chastening of the LORD, and the wrath of God; the age of grace, and the 70th week; the provision for exemption for the Bride, and the preservation of saints in the Tribulation.

We do not claim that we have produced faultless “arguments,” but we do believe that this is a consistent and balanced interpretation, that gives God the glory, and that presents the Rapture as the imminent and . . .

BLESSED HOPE, which is both purifying, and a constant comfort for all who eagerly await the Master’s return.

MARANATHA! Y’shua the Messiah is coming soon! (1 Corinthians 16:22)

Amen !