

The Pre-Wrath Rapture View

by Dr. Renald Showers

In 1990 a new view concerning the Rapture of the Church began to be published. It was called The Pre-Wrath Rapture View. According to this view the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture of the Church will take place between the sixth and seventh seals of Revelation, approximately three-fourths of the way through the seven-year 70th week of Daniel 9. The Church will go through the first half of the 70th week of Daniel 9 and the Great Tribulation, but will be raptured before the Day of the Lord begins prior to the end of the 70th week. This present article will present some of the basic teachings of the view and problems with those teachings.

Teaching 1. The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord will be totally distinct entities. They will not overlap with each other.

Problem. The Bible indicates that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord will have several things in common.

A. Both are associated with the concept of “trouble” or “tribulation.”

1. The Great Tribulation—Daniel 12:1 (described by Jesus as “great tribulation”)
2. The Day of the Lord—Zephaniah 1:14-17 (v. 15)

Note—The Septuagint used the Greek word for “tribulation” to translate the Hebrew word for “trouble” in Daniel 12:1 and Zephaniah 1:15. Thus, both the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord will be characterized by “trouble” or “tribulation.”

B. The concept of an unparalleled time of trouble.

1. The Great Tribulation—Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21
2. The Day of the Lord—Joel 2:1-2

Note—There can be only one unparalleled time of trouble. Thus, the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord must cover the same unparalleled time of trouble. The Great Tribulation will be included within the Day of the Lord, but the Day of the Lord will last longer than the Great Tribulation.

Teaching 2. The Great Tribulation will begin in the middle of the seven year 70th week of Daniel 9, but it will not continue throughout the entire second half (three and one-half years) of the 70th week. It will end before the Day of the Lord will begin with the seventh seal in the latter part of the 70th week.

Problem. Several things indicate that the Great Tribulation will last throughout the entire second half of the 70th week of Daniel 9.

A. Matthew 24:15-21 — Jesus indicated that the Great Tribulation will begin with the abomination of desolation and will be characterized by severe persecution of the Jews and their hiding in a wilderness area to escape the persecution. Daniel 9:27 reveals that the abomination of desolation will begin in the middle of the 70th week. According to

Revelation 12, Israel will hide in a wilderness to escape persecution for 1260 days (v. 6) or three and one-half years (v. 14). Thus, the Great Tribulation will last throughout the entire second half of the 70th week.

B. Daniel 12:6 — After the Great Tribulation was introduced in Daniel 12:1, an angel asked how long it would last to its end. The answer to the angel's question was three and one-half years (v. 7). Since the Great Tribulation will begin in the middle of the 70th week, this means that it will last throughout the entire second half of the seven year 70th week.

Note—The being who answered the angel's question raised both hands toward heaven and swore an oath by God. He thereby affirmed the absolute certainty of the Great Tribulation lasting for three and one-half years.

But—What about Jesus' statement about the days of the Great Tribulation being "shortened" (Matthew 24:22)? According to the Pre-Wrath view, that indicates that the Great Tribulation will be shortened to less than three and one-half years.

Problem.

A. The verb translated "shortened" means "to cut off."

B. The verb is aorist tense, indicative mood, with the augment. Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, verbs in that tense and form express action in the past. In eternity past God shortened the days of the Great Tribulation in the sense that He determined to cut it off at a specific time of three and one-half years rather than let it run its own course indefinitely (see Mark 13:20).

Teaching 3. The sixth seal will be a precursor or forewarning of the coming of the Day of the Lord.

Problem. 1 Thessalonians 5:2 indicates that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. Thus, the unsaved will be given no precursor or forewarning of the coming of the Day of the Lord.

Teaching 4. The Day of the Lord will not begin until the seventh seal is broken in the latter part of the 70th week.

Problem. Several things indicate that the Day of the Lord will begin at the beginning of the 70th week.

A. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 — The Day of the Lord will begin at the same time that the unsaved are claiming that the world has "peace and safety." A study of the first, second, third, fourth and sixth seals of Revelation 6 indicates that, once the seals begin to be broken at the beginning of the 70th week, there will be no peace and safety for the world. Thus, peace and safety will be removed long before the seventh seal is broken.

B. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 — In his description of how the Day of the Lord will begin, Paul said, "then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as the birth pang upon a woman (literal translation of the Greek text). Since it is the very first birth pang that comes suddenly upon a woman, Paul was referring to the very first birth pang of the Day of the Lord. He thereby indicated that the Day of the Lord will begin with the very first birth pang.

Jesus talked about "the beginning of birth pangs" in Matthew 24:5-8. Surely the first

birth pang would be the start of the beginning of birth pangs. The Day of the Lord will start at the very beginning of the beginning of birth pangs and will include the entire beginning of birth pangs.

Jesus placed the beginning of birth pangs (Mathew 24:5-8) before the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15) that begins in the middle of the 70th week (Daniel 9:27). He thereby indicated that the beginning of birth pangs will be in the first half of the 70th week. Thus, the Day of the Lord will start at the beginning of the 70th week with the very first birth pang.

Teaching 5. The great multitude of Revelation 7:9-17 is the Church which has just been raptured to Heaven between the sixth and seventh seals.

Problem. If it is the Church which has just been raptured, then this was a partial rapture of the Church.

A. Every person in this great multitude comes out of “the Great Tribulation” (Greek has the definite article) (Revelation 7:13-14). Where is the rest of the Church which has lived and died for many centuries and will never be in the Great Tribulation? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 indicates that the entire Church (dead and live alike) will be raptured together at the same time.

B. The verb “came” in the statement “These are they who came out of the great tribulation” is in the present tense which normally indicates continuous action. The people of the great multitude come out of the Great Tribulation one-by-one through death, not all at once as in the Rapture of the Church.

Teaching 6. There is only one future coming of Christ, not two. The Rapture and Second Coming of Christ take place at the same time between the sixth and seventh seals. The Pretribulation Rapture View is wrong to teach two future comings of Christ.

Problem. The Pre-Wrath View teaches **four** future comings of Christ within the boundaries of the one Second Coming. They are as follows:

A. First — between the sixth and seventh seals immediately after the Great Tribulation has ended but before the Day of the Lord begins and the 70th week ends. Christ comes to rapture the Church and take it to Heaven. He remains in Heaven for the rest of the 70th week.

B. Second — immediately after the end of the 70th week and at the beginning of a 30-day reclamation period. Christ descends to the earth to save Israel and to reclaim the rule of the earth for God. Sometime after the sixth day of the reclamation period Christ returns to Heaven and remains there for about 24 days.

C. Third — after the seventh vial judgment at the end of the 30-day reclamation period. Christ returns to earth with His angels to defeat Antichrist and his forces at Armageddon. Then there is a 45 day restoration period. At the close of these 45 days Christ returns to Heaven to deliver the kingdom of earth to God and to receive the rule of the whole earth from God.

D. Fourth — several days after Christ receives the rule of the earth from God, on the first day of the Millennium, He descends permanently to the earth with the Church to rule the world for 1,000 years.

Teaching 7. In Matthew 24:31 Jesus taught that the Church will be raptured at His Second Coming after the Great Tribulation (see vv. 21, 29-30). At that time His angels will “gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” with “a great sound of a trumpet.” Since the Church is God’s elect, and since it will be raptured to Heaven with the sound of “the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), this must be a reference to the Rapture of the Church.

Problem. Each part of Jesus’ Matthew 24:31 statement is derived from Old Testament passages that relate exclusively to the nation of Israel, not to the Church.

A. The Old Testament calls Israel God’s “elect” (**Isaiah 45:4**) or “chosen” (**Deuteronomy 7:6**). These passages use the same Hebrew word for “elect” or “chosen.”

B. Because of Israel’s persistent rebellion, God said that He would scatter them “into all the winds” (**Ezekiel 5:10**). Later He said that He had spread them abroad “as the four winds of heaven” (**Zechariah 2:6**).

C. God promised that He would gather together the scattered of Israel and of Judah “from the four corners of the earth” (**Isaiah 11:12**). He also promised that they would be brought from the east, west, north, and south, from far, and from the ends of the earth” (**Isaiah 43:5-6**).

D. God promised that in the future He would gather the people of Israel from all the nations where He had scattered them. He said to them, “If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from there will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from there will he fetch thee” (**Deuteronomy 30:3-4**).

E. God indicated that the people of Israel will be gathered when “the great trumpet shall be blown” (**Isaiah 27:12-13**).

For an in-depth study of the teachings and problems of the Pre-Wrath Rapture View read the following book: Renald E. Showers, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture View: An Examination And Critique* (Kregel Publishers).