

# The Return of the Lord and Scientific Methodology

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Today, I'd like to center on two of the major theories of the Return of the Lord, the pre-trib and the post-trib theories. I call them theories at this point in the paper because under scientific methodology you must first present sufficient evidence to prove either one true or in this case, both false because neither, at this point in our 'discovery' has been tested as positive.

This method of testing some hypothesis is called scientific methodology and you must go through a number of tests to be allowed to even say that you have a theory. You can not just say that a rock and a flat piece of paper will fall at the same rate unless you include that it only happens in a vacuum because testing by someone else would prove your state was faulty and too general to be of any real value. But we can also apply some of these same tests to our doctrinal issues, provided we keep the Bible as our standard. If we say that Jesus will be returning to earth in a flying saucer then you had better have some Biblical evidence to back up your claim or its false.

Scientific methodology was first officially laid out by Sir Karl Popper, although the fundamentals were in use long before him. However, because we are dealing with a spiritual and not a scientific problem here, we shall endeavor to apply as much of the methodology as we can in testing these two major differences.

And at this point, I will assume that you, the reader, are somewhat familiar with the basic ideas between these two doctrines of the pre and post trib doctrines, although in some areas within each group there are wide variations, therefore we will not address such issues as "*is the Holy Spirit removed before the tribulation begins*" or "*is there a gap of time between the pre-trib rapture and the beginning of the tribulation*". Instead we will focus on the primary proof of the pre-trib rapture.

Is the truth "*what I tell you it is*" or is it something that can be tested and compared against known or established facts. If we look at the crucifixion of Jesus for example, could we prove with non-biblical evidence that Jesus not only existed but was crucified and rose again, and the answer would be yes, there are non-biblical historians that reported this as happening? But with the doctrine of the return of the Lord and an event that hasn't happened yet, we have to use biblical tests to see which of these doctrines '*holds water*' as it were and which doesn't. Which doctrine holds the closest to the Bible?

## Un-Contested

We start with what we know to be the common-ground between these two ideas and that is that Jesus is going to be returning to Earth at the end of the period known as the tribulation, he will set foot on the Mount of Olives which is when the trapped Jews will be allowed to escape just before the battle known as Armageddon takes place, and afterwards Jesus will reign as the King of all the kings on the earth, and that's just the short version.

So without any further proof to the contrary, we COULD conclude that all the descriptive passages<sup>1</sup> would point to the one final event at the end of the tribulation and falsely conclude that the pre-trib doctrine was wrong, but this conclusion would fail in our scientific methodology approach, because there has been no testing of the pre-trib doctrine to see if it is Biblically sound to disprove the idea that all the return events

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<sup>1</sup> A descriptive passage is one that focuses on some detail without actually defining when it is to happen.

are not just different descriptions of the same post-trib event. All that we've done is to establish the fact of a post-trib return event.

## Definitive Differences

Now while we could point out what one person or the other has written about some point, with point and counter point, that would still only be considered 'opinion' and as valuable as that may or may not be, again that would not be considered as proof. And while we have shown that there is a post-trib event and the POSSIBILITY that all the descriptive passages could point to it, in this case, the biblical validity of the pre-trib doctrine must still be proven as a valid doctrine. Because without this type of approach, the doctrine of some church could actually be contrary to Bible, despite what those inside that same church may claim.

To establish the widest possible definition for our testing without trying to prove just the validity of the post-trib doctrine, I've selected a two-point definition taken from one of their own works. Several of them have defined the premise of the 'imminent return' or the doctrine of the 'any-moment rapture', as: '*... that the rapture could take place at any moment. While other events may take place before the rapture, no event must precede it. If prior events are required before the rapture, then the rapture could not be described as imminent. Thus, if any event were required to occur before the rapture, then the concept of imminency would be destroyed*'<sup>2</sup>. This very general definition allows us to ignore most of the internal differences with the pre-trib, without following what I believe to be the 'rabbit trails'.

My understanding of this statement is that the pre-trib doctrine has two very fundamental testing points, which are, 1) there are no prophetic events to occur before the Lord's return and 2) the tribulation is to follow the rapture. So let's make just these two points the 'reference points' to distinguish between the two doctrines and make some biblical tests to see if their doctrine holds up to their claim. Remember that there is no question of the post-trib event, only what really is supposed to happen, and thus far, we have not proven their doctrine false.

### Test Point #1

The first test would be to show a passage that clearly demonstrates a secret or imminent return, which would be demonstrated with a passage mentioning something to that effect. This means that no prophetic event must happen that would precede the pre-trib return of the Lord; otherwise, it couldn't be imminent, which is their first point. A descriptive passage, on the other hand, may examine the details of the resurrection-rapture event but may not focus just on when it happens in relation to the tribulation.

But we must also remember that just because something is not mentioned in a passage, that it's not proof of an existent or non-existent relationship with something else. For example, we don't find any reference of Jesus setting foot on the Mount of Olives in either the Gospel accounts or in the book of Revelations, but no one would argue the point. The question would be are the passages that the pre-trib use to prove their point truly valid for what they claim? Does a passage clearly tell us of a secret and / or imminent return of the lord?

### Test Point #2

The second test to prove their doctrine would be to show that after their pre-trib event that something from the tribulation takes place in the same passage, thus proving the sequence of their doctrine. Saying that something is a 'fact' but it's implied in a text also means that they must show what it's based upon, other

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<sup>2</sup> 'Imminency And The Any-Moment Rapture' by Thomas Ice, Pre-Trib.org, archived article.

than another implied or invalid fact; in this case on some Biblical reference. So is there biblical proof that after a return event that the tribulation actually does follow it?

Don't get me wrong, claims made by either side can contain some implications, but they must be based on the result of already established facts, such as after a heavy rain you might expect flash floods, but to say that Jesus is coming back in secret, at any moment or in a partial return and not completely back onto the earth without a supporting passage is a theory **not based** on biblical proof and therefore cannot be used as part of the other proof of their doctrine. One or more of those "facts" needs to have that all-important biblical evidence to come close to proving the pre-trib doctrine.

Just remember that one of the many things that Karl Popper pointed out was that a theory could be refuted if testing and contrary evidence is found, despite some of the facts within the theory were true. We're not looking for minor errors here or trying to base our conclusions on those minor points but on what the Bible really says is going to happen on these two major points they make. If believers are to go through this time-period, then we had better be prepared, not just to know what is going to be happening and warn others, but even in the possibility of dying or suffering for Christ.

## Doctrinal Proof – Logical Testing

One of the many steps that any theory must go through is the logical testing, including with others, even with those of differing views, to see if it's biblically true. I mean, that if you really believed that Jesus was returning to earth in a spaceship, others would point out that when Jesus left the first time there wasn't any? The point being is that today too many have the "*I'm right and you're wrong*" attitude and the result is just the arguing to prove "*I'm right*" without the attitude of proving what the Bible says.

In the early days of A.I. (artificial intelligence) programming, a false logic was found that said, "*Fido is a dog, Fido is dumb, therefore all dogs are dumb*", well you can see the flaw in that, even without being a computer programmer. But the same type of problem should also be avoided here in our logical testing. In scientific methodology, this would be similar to the "falsification" test, where a conclusion is reached that fails other tests. But in our testing here, we need to also ask other questions as to the actual context of a reference or fact, the sequences within a passage and other passages that would confirm or refute some hunch or hypothesis someone may put forth and avoid coming up with the "Fido" conclusion.

So ask yourself these two questions: "*Is what I believe, the truth?*" and "*Is what I believe the whole truth or is there more to it?*" A biased opinion is never open to change or expansion, but that doesn't mean that that person is always wrong, some may be right. Logical testing demands a self-control of yourself to exclude as much as possible this biased opinion, such as what we saw between Peter and Paul in Galatians 2. They were both out to examine their theories as to which one was correct in accordance with God.

## Implication Tests

Another point that must be covered, along with this, are the implications. Too many times a biased reasoning uses one unproven fact to prove another, which in turn is used to prove the first, so just because someone says that something is true, scientific methodology would determine that it wasn't. Logical implications are based on the something that has already been established, such as it will be Jesus setting foot on the Mount of Olives, even though he never mentions it. Some people have used implication, telling us that "*it could be implied*" or "*one interruption of this Greek word would make this mean ...*" This business of implying something without some biblical proof or selective interruption puts the validity of the doctrine into jeopardy, like a law firm that would lie or misrepresent someone.

## Doctrinal Proof – Biblical Testing

Is it possible to take a passage too far in one way or another? Can one word be interpreted the wrong way to distort the rest of the passage to mean something it wasn't meant to? You'll see people using things like 'hermeneutics/exegesis study' and 'Dispensationalism<sup>3</sup>', to get others to focus just on their interpretation instead of what God is telling us, and this is where the distortions come in. They'll get you to look so closely at the details and **their implied facts** that they can actually twist the truth to the point that you'll miss the context of a passage.

They use a different means of interpretation of some passage that none of the Biblical writers ever used or intended, which is something like the Bible being preached by an evolutionist. I could go on but instead I've added part of an article illustrating some of the wrong methods used to prove a point in a section at the end of this paper called [Pre-Tribulational Rapture Teachers](#), by Willy Minnix that he posted on the internet.

## Examination of Passages

Now that we've looked at some of the tests and the reasons for them, let's examine some of the passages used by the pre-trib they say proves their point, but upon closer examination, we'll see that they're actually trying to convince others without establishing the two fundamental pieces of evidence I mentioned above.

### Matthew 24:21-28

*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22] And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. [23] Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. [24] For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. [25] Behold, I have told you before. [26] Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. [27] For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [28] For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. [29] **Immediately after the tribulation of those days** shall the sun be darkened ...*

Jesus creates a window of time between verses 21 and 29 referred to as a tribulation, in fact he tells us that it's going to be so bad that if it wasn't for the elect, the 'chosen', the believers, then no one would survive it, therefore saints will be going through this period and you'll notice that he makes no mention or indication of any 'escape' by the saints, but apparently he also knew of Seal #5 and the slaughter of saints during this time.

Instead, the pre-trib will insist that the chosen ones mentioned in verses 22 and 24 are the Jews but Jesus implication, starting in verse 25 was that this message was meant for the believers, because he 1) was privately and personally warns us about these false Christ and false rumors beforehand (this message was never given to the Jews), 2) the believers are not to go following after these guys or believe the rumors because God doesn't change his plans, and 3) when he does come back it isn't going to be in some secret or hidden event, it's going to be as obvious as a lightning storm. When he says, 'believe it not' (verse 23), this is our Lord telling us, and we're supposed to be following him!

And keep in mind that where he says that there will be these false Christ and all these rumors, he makes it a point to say that it will be especially AFTER the beginning of the tribulation he mentions in verse 21. This doesn't discount the possibility we'll be seeing some of these things before all these things begin, but

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<sup>3</sup> Strong's Concordance defines as 'specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property', such as Paul's responsibility from God to the gentiles while today's Pharisee defines it as biblical time-periods.

Jesus wanted us to note especially those during this time. In any serious exploration of the scripture, all the possibilities have to be considered to avoid picking up any erroneous ones and someone's opinion is not proof of it being valid.

With that in mind, I will have you note that discussions have come up concerning if the tribulation in verse 21 is the same one as in verse 29, however, the question in this exploration really isn't relevant because those verses would still do not show or prove a pre-trib event has happened, and thus proof that this tribulation follows it would be irrelevant until they did prove it.

Either way, proof of a rapture event AFTER the tribulation is illustrated here, with the mentioning of the gathering of the saints. It would make no sense, with all the trouble that we would be going through in these next 2,000 years, that there would be some mention of an escape from the tribulation and the signs he told us of? So we see no mention of different groups, such as a church-age and a tribulational age group indicated, nor of any secret or imminent return (actually covered next), in this sequential explanation, that Jesus has given thus far.

### **Matthew 24:36**

Many of the pre-trib have also taken Matthew 24:36 out of context, which says, *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*. Now at face value, alone and out of context then they would've made at least part of their point of an "imminent" return event, but step back and a new light appears on this passage.

The first indicator of their problem is noted back in verse 32 where Jesus tells us to be expecting certain signs to appear before that day he returns. Remember that the pre-trib have stated that there are to be no previous signs before Jesus returns, so either there is no pre-trib return event or for some reason there is a complete absence, not even a hint, of proof for such an event given thus far.

In Luke, the writer tells us what these signs will be, in Luke 21:25-26, '*And there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars* (ash from volcano and meteor). *And on the earth will be anxiety of nations with bewilderment, roaring of sea and of surf, (tsunami) [26] men fainting from fear, and expectation of the things coming on the earth*' (the four Seals). He then follows that in verse 28 with, *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*.

If Jesus tells us of a post-tribulational return, in verse 29 '*Immediately after the tribulation of those days*' and in verse 32 of preceding signs before his return then he is speaking of a post-trib event, so again we need to ask in which of the Gospel accounts does Jesus tell us of a pre-trib event followed by something from the tribulation or that he is clearly switching back and forth between two separate return events, which as I said he never establishes?

Remember that Jesus had just commanded us to learn this very important parable to be looking for and being ready for when the signs begin. In other words, after we see these signs then we'll have our literal redemption (Luke 21:28), including, as covered by later writers, of our resurrection and rapture. If Jesus knew that it would be 2000 years, as it now has been, what would he have said or not said to us? Would he want believers to think that they had all this time before the return that they didn't have to live a Christ-like life? No, but by warning us that it could be a long time, that would force every one of us to keep our lives pure before God, as we lived in the expectancy of the return.

But through some magical power, the pre-trib have determined that Jesus is actually switching here from the post-trib return in verses 29 – 31, to a pre-trib return in verse 36, and then back to a post-trib return in the verses following, without any scriptural evidence even from the other gospel accounts that such a switching was even intended. So where does he mention any pre-trib return?!

So if we look closer at verse 32, in light of the verses preceding and following it, will it really tell us to be expecting an imminent return event or one that precedes the tribulation? If Jesus goes along and explain

to us what is to happen and then someone comes along and isolates one verse and says, “no that means something else” and the following verses continue on with his original train of thought then alarm bells ought to be ringing, and we would be the ones questioning “where did that come from”?

To the pre-trib, their proof must be implied without the biblical evidence of establishing this even as a pre-trib event. Why would this, supposed pre-trib event, be kept a secret? On what statement of Jesus could they base their conclusion upon?

Try this little experiment and read verse 32 through 40, **without verse 36** just once, and then ask yourself was Jesus really intending here to indicate an imminent return event or something else? **If you allow yourself to ask what other intent he had** in saying this to every believer of every day to follow, then you might realize that he’s actually telling us in verse 36 that, ‘*that this may be a long wait (we may have to wait 100, 1,000 or even 2,000 years)*, AND when you start to see the signs then you’ll know it’s close.’

God’s obvious intent was never to tell us that he’ll send his son back to earth on a certain day and in so many years, but he did intend to warn us that it could be a long wait. It was never intended to be kept a secret from the world or believers, but watch what Jesus does next as he continues to emphasize the importance of this WAITING for the leaves to bud forth.

1. Jesus first compared his return with the days of Noah, who knew and expected this coming judgment (it took him over a 100 years to build the ark) while the others of his day, ignored his warnings until it was too late. So Jesus is telling us here that we too are supposed to warn others of what is coming and to be living in expectancy, even as Noah had to wait and warn. In Noah's case, he knew that God was going to wait until AFTER the ark was done, in our case, the return would be AFTER the signs we’re told about.
2. Jesus then mentions that if the owner of the house had only known that a thief was coming, he would’ve been ready but we as believers do know of and expect this 'thief', so we need to be telling this ‘owner’ to be expecting it? Of course there were some N.T. writers that didn’t want God to wait too long as they earnestly looked forward to that day, which is something like our kids asking on those long trips, ‘are we there yet’ or ‘how many more towns until we get there’ (all in due time).
3. Jesus then tells of the wise servants who were ready for their master’s return and then of the evil servant who’ll turn on the faithful ones, which we would call apostasy. Every mention of Jesus returning as a thief was also in reference to those NOT expecting it, while the believers should be.
4. And finally, he warns us of being like the 5 virgins in the next chapter that also knew of but we’re not prepared for the bridegroom when he came, but the theme here is not that they wouldn’t be seeing any signs but to be ready because it could be a very long wait.

So have these verses actually proven test point #1, that the return of the Lord actually is the first sign and point #2 that the tribulation follows it? The one verse they claim as one of their strong points is actually warning us, not that there wouldn’t be signs or even that it was imminent, but rather to be expecting a long wait and to continue to be looking and ready in our life while warning others, and as we can see, it’s been a very long wait so far. So far, they have fail to establish their two foundational points for their doctrine.

## 1 Thessalonians 1

Some of them point to 1 Thessalonians 1:10 as part of the proof that we as believers are to be removed from this earth BEFORE the tribulation begins when Paul states ‘*And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*’ But we need to ask some very serious questions here on their conclusion. Based on verse 10, Paul first states the obvious, Jesus was raised from the dead, so is this wrath actually referring to the tribulation, as some insist, or our deliverance from hell, which his death actually did do?

In considering these two ‘choices’ of which was intended by the author, we must examine what he had been saying in order to conclude where he was going with his thoughts? If Paul had been speaking of the tribulation here and our supposed escape from it, then where is even the inference to the tribulation anywhere in the preceding verses? But if he had been referring to our escape from the wrath of hell, then he needed to mention Jesus’ death (verse 10).

First of all, if this was speaking of a pre-trib event, it would only leave this as some secondary reference, but we find no real evidence of this addressing the subject of the tribulation or giving us proof that this was even meant as a pre-trib statement. Where is the evidence that no prophetic events preceded this wrath, which they suppose as the tribulation? Yes, we are delivered from hell, and Jesus death did do this, but those that use this passage still fail to prove their foundational statement with it.

Yes we ALL will stand before the Judge of the whole earth, even those who have already died, but Paul’s statement here was that because of the testimony of this church had even gone beyond Macedonia and Achaia, so they were being encouraged to continue to wait for Jesus, just because we are saved from hell.

In fact where does any Biblical writer speak of believers not suffering tribulation, of being rescued from the ‘tribulation’, or of a return at any moment **without** any previous signs, when Jesus himself spoke of his return **with** signs and would be as bold and obvious as the lightening flashing across the sky (Matt. 24:27).

### 1 Thessalonians 3:13

In this verse, we read, *To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **with all his saints***. To some of the blind pre-trib, this passages establishes some proof that when Jesus returns that the saints who are coming with him are all from some pre-trib event. But if we stick to just the pre-trib thinking then how can Jesus be returning WITH his saints and at the same time, these believers be told that he was coming FOR them, inferring this to be the pre-trib event they haven’t proven with any passage yet?

To the pre-trib, the trigger words are ‘*the coming of the Lord*’ and ‘*with his saints*’ and inferring that the coming IS NOT the return of the Lord back onto the earth and thus also proving that 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 17 are also pre-trib events (covered next). So we return once again to the two points of proof needed to prove this a pre-trib event.

Does this passage in any way indicate that there **can’t be** any preceding prophetic events or that a tribulation event follows it? **Remember that the absence of a fact is not proof of exclusion!** To me this could also be descriptive of the post-trib event as described in Zechariah 14:5 where it says, *And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: **and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee***. Again, this verse would fail to prove their two doctrinal points.

### 1 Thessalonians 4

The purpose of this passage was to clear the air about the resurrection of the saints who had already died when we’re told in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 ***Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord***, which is likely over Jerusalem, as I’ll show in a moment. Without question, this would be a descriptive passage to describe some portion of the return of the lord, which in this case would be the resurrection – rapture event and more of the details of it.

You’ll note, in verse 16, Paul says ‘*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout ...*’, and that doesn’t sound like some hidden or secret event. In fact, is there anything in this chapter that might

prove this to be a pre-trib event, such as it stating that there were no previous prophetic events or that a tribulational event happens afterwards (our test points #1 and #2)?

But there are clues, even if you don't want to acknowledge them, like a trumpet being sounded (4:16) here AND mentioned as the last trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52, which we also see in Matthew 24:31 where the elect are gathered '*with a great sound of a trumpet*'. But the pre-trib will still tell you that both of Paul's passages were pre-trib, Jesus only spoke of a post-trib event and these are supposedly different trumpet and therefore different events, but where is the Biblical evidence that supports this claim, or is that also implied without a scriptural basis?

Then there is the question, is this a coming with his saints or coming for them because both are mention in this passage, which again puts some of the pre-trib on very shaky ground. In verse 14, it says '*even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*' and in verse 17 it says '*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.*' In 1 Thess. 3:13, that we just covered, Paul says the exact same thing that when Jesus returns, he'll be come both with his saints and for those saints that are still alive. So what makes this event distinctively different from the post-trib event, other than what they imply, like in one event he returns on a white horse and in the other, he doesn't come with a horse, which would really mess up the return mentioned in both Zachariah 14 and Matthew 24:29?

So from the Biblical evidence so far, and without proof to the contrary, we can see that when Jesus comes back, he'll first have the angels gather us, according to Matthew 24:29, we'll meet him over Jerusalem (unless you can prove otherwise) where we'll fulfill 1 Thess. 4:17, and then Zechariah 14:5 is fulfilled *... and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee*. So when Jesus sets foot on the Mount of Olives, we see the saints have already been gathered, as in the first resurrection (Matt. 24:29, Rev 20:4 – 6), and we won't be a part of the final plague or as I like to call it, the judgment-plague, as opposed to the others being just warnings. Wraths, yes, but still with a chance to repent.

These others will tell you that the resurrection here in 1 Thess. 4 isn't the same one mentioned in Revelation 20:4-5 *And I saw thrones ... and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* [5] ... *This is the first resurrection*. But there is no indication of one being a continuation of the other, in fact, John doesn't even begin the book with any mention or hint of a pre-trib return type event, although others imply there is. The pre-trib can't allow anyone to even imagine that this first resurrection (Rev 20:5) is the same one that Paul mentions even though they never prove them to actually be a different times, other than saying it's implied and they use references that never establish the original facts. So we need to test this passage for our two test points that...

1. no prophetic events had happened as it does in the Revelations 20 passage or
2. the claim that the tribulation actually follows this passage?

Again, the pre-trib have to imply we go to heaven and come back later (they claim 7-years) and yet no other passage proves that there is some period of time between these two supposed events of a rapture and a post-trib return of the Lord.

In 1 Thess. 4:13, this church had been troubled over the saints who had already died, so Paul's conclusion in verse 18 was '*Wherefore comfort one another with these words,*' and is proof he wasn't speaking of the saints avoiding the tribulation but that the dead are raised and raptured first before those that are still alive. Somehow, I doubt that the saints, over the last 2,000 years, ever thought of this verse as comforting them in the tribulation that they went through, that they too would avoid tribulation.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:9

I could begin in verse 1, but the major error I wish to address is in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 where it says, '*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*'. Some imply that the wrath mentioned here is again in reference to the tribulation (See Rev 15:7, 16:1), but the previous verses show that he wasn't referring to our escape from the tribulation, but warning us about our 'sleeping', which obviously wasn't in reference to death (chapter 4) or sleeping at night.

But to answer this question, we first need to start back in verse 4, where Paul says, '*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief*. [5] *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness*. [6] *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober*. He's referring to a single day, which in this case is the day that Jesus returns, and **to some** it will come very unexpectedly but we should be looking forward to it and expecting it and we're not supposed to be '*spiritually sleeping on the job*'. Again in this context he doesn't suddenly or secretly switch to another time, place or event, nor does he imply anywhere of a pre-trib event happening. At the moment that Jesus returns – will you be ready?

Again, we are looking for those distinctive proofs that 1) no previous prophetic events **could not nor had occurred** before this day and 2) where are the tribulational events that follow this event, proving that this could be a pre-trib event. Remember, there is no question that Jesus will be returning AFTER the tribulation which includes a resurrection event, so this same description by Paul could also be applied to the post-trib event.

This spiritually falling asleep is actually the same thing Jesus warned us about in Matthew 24:45 – 51 with the evil servant who turned on his fellow servants (verse 49) and again with the five foolish virgins who were not ready when they should have been, but in both parables it points to believers who know of the return and a warning for us NOT to be like them, as Paul does here in 1 Thess. 5:6. We would be pretty foolish to think that we couldn't do these things especially when we see both Jesus AND Paul giving us the same warning.

Now he makes his point in 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9 *But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*. [9] *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*. We need to remember to keep living the faith, and to remember that our salvation, our literal redemption **is still coming** and because we are saved (verse 9) and shouldn't be going to hell, then we should be living like little Christs. Paul isn't promising that believers will be escaping the tribulation but warning us of not to be 'spiritually sleeping on the job' because we are saved and when it does happen, even if we died before that day, we would be ready.

God is the judge here but he's also warned us that if we add, change or delete from anything God says, then he told us in Revelation 22:18-19 *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: [19] And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*. And remember, God isn't so limited that we need to be alive during this time for Him to fulfill his word on these promises, for anyone! If you once had a part of the book of life and the holy city, God makes it very clear here that he can and will take away the part you once were to have and denying it won't change God's power to do it, as the five foolish virgins found out who suddenly found themselves NOT ready and were refused entrance they once would have been allowed to. Deny this and you've started to take away from his promises, even if it's a judgment that could have your name removed from the book of life.

If we fail to take any contrary doctrine of ours seriously, or we fail to test and re-test, our own personal doctrines then we miss exposing both **our weaknesses (vs. strengths) and our false doctrines**, we fail the Berean test, and even if it's from those we deem reliable sources. And don't let anyone tell you that they

have a degree with letters behind their name or that they've studied it more than you and you're wrong – that's arrogance and a trick to make you follow their doctrines without you having a personal understanding of it or to challenge it.

Sure it would be nice for us that are alive at that time to avoid these dark days, but so what if we have to go through 'THE' tribulation when those in our past were burned at the stake, beheaded, killed by wild animals, disowned, beaten or thrown in prison for their beliefs as some will be during this time. **This isn't about us** and here in 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul is telling us to keep on living with this one very important goal in mind, NOT to fall asleep in our faith, and that includes turning away from our faith (called apostasy) as we'll see Paul address in his second letter to this church.

God told us that saints will be beheaded during this troubling time (Seal #5), but all you'll hear is the OPINION that they must have been saved after some pre-trib return event and never that these could have been believers for quite some time or that they might actually be us. As I said, one false assumption based upon another can lead to other errors, but saints, never-the-less will be killed during this time, so the first six trumpet and vial judgments are actually warnings but the final one obviously, as Jesus comes back and gathers all the saints, is the one where the preverbal door of the ark has been closed.

## ***II Thessalonians 2***

Another issue that seems to never be cleared up is that of the restrainer mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:6 *And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season,* (ASV). From the context, I don't think that it's that hard to see who and what is really going on after we put everything back. Now while other versions of the Bible use words like 'retraineth' and 'withholdth', it's the context that we need to look at that tells us what's going on. Paul says here '*And now ye know that which restraineth*' so let's back up and ask what did the readers of this letter now know, who is doing the restraining and what was being restrained, after all there is both a WHO and a WHAT spoken of.

We begin our understanding in 2 Thess. 2:1-5 *Now we beseech you, brethren, **by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,*** [2] *That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.* [3] *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, **except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition** ...* [5] *Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*

The main focus concerns the coming of the Lord, and more specifically at the time we are gathered together to be with him (verse 1), and we're NOT to be confused as to WHEN **this day** is to happen in relation to other known events as he states in verse 2 – 3, so his focus is on THAT day and then he adds that we have to wait (that sounds familiar) and it won't happen until after these two other events. Well it looks like the pre-trib fail the first test point that no prophetic events need to happen before our resurrection-rapture event because Paul lists two of them here.

The problem is that the pre-trib want you to believe the first event of a 'falling away' (verse 3) is some type of departure of the saints from the earth, but when we look at this same verse in other versions of the Bible, their doctrine falls apart in more ways than just one. By playing off of just this one word of 'apostasia' and ignoring the rest of the context, it blows up in their face. To understand this problem they have, here are just some the other versions of the Bible of verse 3.

- ASV) *let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, **except the falling away come first,***
- (BBE) *Give no belief to false words: because there will first be **a falling away from the faith,***
- (CEV) *But don't be fooled! **People will rebel against God.** Then before the Lord returns, the wicked one who is doomed to be destroyed will appear.* Can believers be fooled and deceived?

- (Darby) *Let not any one deceive you in any manner, because it will not be unless the apostasy have first come, and the man of sin have been revealed, the son of perdition;*
- (ERV) *Don't be fooled by anything they might say. That day of the Lord will not come until the turning away from God happens. And that day will not come until the Man of Evil appears, the one who belongs to hell.*
- (ESV) *Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,*
- (GNB) *Do not let anyone deceive you in any way. For the Day will not come until the final Rebellion takes place and the Wicked One appears, who is destined to hell.*
- (GW) *Don't let anyone deceive you about this in any way. That day cannot come unless a revolt takes place first, and the man of sin, the man of destruction, is revealed.*
- (ISV) *Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, for it will not come unless the rebellion takes place first and the man of sin, who is destined for destruction, is revealed.*
- (KJV) *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*
- (RV) *let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,*

This same Greek word of ‘apostasia’ was used by the Jews against Paul in Acts 21:21, but in the pre-trib’s desperation to convince others that this is the physical action of saints leaving the earth, they need to push the envelope of the meaning of this word apostasia and hope to convince you of their doctrine instead of examining the message of Paul. In other words, there is no other correct interruption other than theirs. Yes, one possible interpretation is a ‘falling away’ but it more strongly implies a spiritual falling away or departure and not a physical one because of a different word would’ve been used, AND you’ll notice that there is no description of who was actually departing from what, instead the pre-trib say that its implied, or is it?

Not one of the above versions of the Bible actually describes this event as a physical or ‘*rapture of the saints*’ type of event where we supposedly all leave or depart from the earth, but instead as a great apostasy. And in each case, the context tells us that ‘that day’ when we’re to be gathered as Jesus returns, CAN NOT come unless these other things happen first. So two conflicts arise from their ‘interpretation’ dealing with both 1) the meaning of the word (a literal or a spiritual falling away) and 2) how a ‘falling away’ of the saints can happen BEFORE we’re gathered. However if this actually was an apostasy that the writer was referring to, then this would also match what Paul and others tell us in other passages and it could happen as one of the pre-rapture signs Jesus warned us of.

So from the list of passages above, the pre-trib seem to be in a world by themselves and **have their own version of the Bible**. But like I pointed out, Paul clearly states the sequence to be an apostasy, followed by the son of perdition being revealed AND THEN we’ll be gathered. Remember, the original warning was to not let others deceive us, but to be expecting these events, while the pre-trib tell us there are no previous events – who’s the one deceiving us, Paul who said to be expecting these things or the pre-trib? Keep looking at our methodology test points for the proofs.

## Restraining

And now we find the answer as to who is doing the restraining and what is restrained. In our list of clues, in verse 6 he stated, ‘*And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.*’ In verses 7-9 Paul adds, *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.* [8] *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with*

*the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: [9] Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*

Please note, from these three passages the highlighted areas:

- In verse 3 it says - *except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*
- Verse 6 – *And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time*
- And in verse 8 – *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth*

From the implied, it is obvious that God has the schedule when this man will appear, so we're to wait for God's schedule when it becomes this man's time. So the "who" that is doing the restraining is God as we wait for his schedule and the time he has determined.

In each of these, the antichrist is the one referred to as being revealed, however verse six specifically says that it would be 'in his time' whom the Lord will destroy when he returns (verse 8). No one is going to go over God the Father Head and change His schedule. In Acts 1:6-7 we read of God's power to determine just when things will happen, when Jesus was asked, *they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? [7] And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.* So this appears to be more of a waiting for God's schedule and then a stepping aside type of action on God's part to allow the son of perdition / antichrist to have his '*hour upon the stage*', which means we'll see something like this:

1. First an apostasy or falling away from the faith, then
2. God 'steps aside' or allows the wicked one to 'run amuck' for a season so that he could be revealed later and then
3. We will be gathered after that, and at the same time, the Lord is going to destroy this man (verse 8).

That's what the sequence describes here, and it would be nice to think that it's the believers in this world that are holding back sin, but according to this schedule and what Paul describes here, we're not removed until later, so it's God's plan and He either directly or through the Holy Spirit are the ones hold things back, we're just his tools in all this and his 'stepping aside' is to allow the worst one this world will ever see come to power.

### **Titus 2:13**

The next reference is Paul's letter to Titus, where we read in Titus 2:12-13 *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; [13] Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ...* So we need to ask, as the pre-trib claim, was he really addressing two different events separated supposedly by seven years, or a single post-trib event in which both events happen?

In our testing, is there any proof that 1) previous events had or had not occurred and 2) is there any indication that tribulational events were to occur after this point? There is no question, even in the pre-trib circles, that the glorious appearing is in reference to the Lord's post-trib appearance; however, their claim here is that the blessed hope CAN NOT BE at the same time.

They claim that there is a gap of time, something like 7 years, between the blessed hope and the glorious appearing, so the questions should also be asked 1) what within this passage determines two separate events on different days and 2) are there any other passages that would confirm this gap, other than what some pre-

trib would suggest it be? The standard here is not some person or group but to determine what the Bible says.

We could also ask the question of this or any other return-event passage of what distinctive sign or event actually biblically defines these events as being separate? For example, if some passage actually said that Jesus WOULD NOT be setting foot on the earth and described a different set of circumstances that would make it obvious that the writer was speaking of two distinctively different events, then this difference would show up in other passages. When Jesus came the first time, many of the Jews were confused from what they thought were going to happen from what actually did happen, and they failed to see that he had to die. So let's not confuse the statements where Jesus is returning for his saints and when he returns to confront the mega army. They don't have to be at different times!

Without this consideration and open discussion, we inherit doctrines we may not fully understand which in turn makes us weak believers. This also limits our understanding to what other tell us, and often times are conflicting views, but this also keeps us testing our doctrines to sort out the false or mistaken theories. All the believers should be involved in this and have a say instead of those deemed as qualified. If you want to prove your point, then only get those who believe the same as you, but don't expect God to go along with you.

### ***Revelation 4 – 19 The Missing Church?***

Logical testing of these chapters reveals several points relative to the question at hand and the major one is to ask, "*is the church really missing or not addressed*"? For example, how many of those same chapters addresses Israel or mentions the antichrist where he makes a peace treaty with them and breaks it 3 ½ years later? And by the way, he isn't actually mentioned until later in those chapters, so we can also say that this passages really isn't about him either, which if you wanted to find out about him then look in the Book of Daniel.

Then there are the saints mentioned in Revelations 20:4 – 6 who have gone through this period and being beheaded, but the pre-trib want you to believe that this is a separate group from the so-called "church-age". In other words, to prove their theory, they need to logically explain this problem without the biblical evidence to back us up; what do we call that, 'dream evidence'? What someone wants you to believe the Bible says and what it does say can be two different things, so just where is there proof that there actually are two separately defined groups in the Bible, again other than what someone says or that it's implied.

### **Time of Wrath?**

Is this really a time of wrath and the answer would be both yes and no when you consider all of the evidence within these chapters. Yes, the vials are a wrath, but you'll also see that people still have a chance to repent; so the answer is also no, because during the other times of 'final judgment', such as the flood and the final plague in Egypt, the time for repentance stopped **after all the warnings**. Those in Noah's day, for example, had heard that the flood was coming as they had even watched the ark being built and Pharaoh had been give plenty of chances to repent and to 'let His people go' long before that final plague, or didn't you think these were warnings?

But it's this same final plague, that everyone finds out that it's now too late to repent, which is just like the other times when the real salvation kicked it. This truly is a "God-Judgment" type of wrath and it's no longer just a warning plague as the others had been.

### ***Revelation 19 - 20***

Maybe the pre-trib should take a closer look at this passage too, and question what God's intent was here? Back in Revelation 16:19-21 he starts out and tells us, *And the great city was divided into three parts,*

and the cities of the nations fell: **and great Babylon came in remembrance before God**, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. [20] And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. [21] And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. So we see the end of the tribulation here as Babylon is destroyed, but then in chapter 17, John does a short review of these ‘players’ and then in chapter 18, we see how people on the earth react to this destruction of Babylon.

But then we see the ‘flip-side’ of this in Revelation 19:1-3 *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:* [2] *For true and righteous are his judgments: **for he hath judged the great whore**, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.* [3] *And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.* John now shows us the saints in heaven rejoicing over the same thing that some of those on earth are lamenting over in the destruction of Babylon. But there is no evidence as to when these arrived in heaven, only that our first glimpse of what's going on in heaven is a post-tribulational one, but don't jump to any conclusions just yet that these are pre-trib raptured saints, because we haven't covered all the evidence.

But notice one other important clue that the pre-trib don't want you to see. They'll tell you that the marriage supper of the lamb happens during the tribulation, however as these saints are rejoicing over the destruction of this city we read in Revelation 19:6-9 *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* [7] *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: **for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*** [8] *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* [9] *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.* In verses six and seven, they proclaim after this city is destroyed that the ‘*Lord God omnipotent reigneth*’, in other words this a post-tribulational event. So as they go from one rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon, they continue on with the marriage supper. So where is their proof that this supper happens during the tribulation or that it can't happen as a post-trib event. What evidence do they have that tribulational saints CAN NOT be a part of this supper, other than making still more implications without a foundation of truth.

Now we see an obvious switch being made within the heavenly view and the actual return of the Lord with details not covered in any other passage. We see Jesus returning to earth on a white horse, the implied destruction of the mega army without the details, the antichrist and his false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire, Satan is bound in chapter 20 and then we see the first resurrection which includes those killed during the tribulation. So the facts are:

- This is the same event Jesus mentions in Matthew 24:29, after the tribulation, where the angels would gather the elect from the four corners of the globe, so they both describe a post-trib return event and there doesn't appear to be anything that would make it mandatory that they be two separate events.
- In Matthew 24:29, when Jesus speaks of gathering his elect, he mentions a trumpet being sounded, so what evidence or distinction is there that Paul's description in 1 Thessalonians 4, where Jesus also comes with (those who had already died) and for his the saints, that it isn't this same event again with the sounding of a trumpet, or what Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 15:51+, as being the last trumpet? We see the similarities but there is nothing in the passages that mandates they be separate events.
- In all the references the pre-trib use to prove their doctrine is correct, is there any passage that actually distinguishes between the two event so that non-specific descriptive passages could point to

just one of the two events? Or if a passage doesn't explicitly define it as one or the other, are we forced to conform to the beliefs of the pre-trib and to what they tell us it is?

- If one writer addresses just the glorious post-trib return where Jesus comes back to confront the antichrist or the mega army and another writer speaks of our being gathered together in a resurrection and rapture event, what biblical proof is there that they don't or can't happen on the same day? Just because some 'Pope', writer or speaker tells you the world is flat doesn't make it so and the same is true here – where is the biblical statement proving a pre-trib event?
- In none of the passages do we find biblical proof of 1) an imminent or secret return or 2) some tribulational event follows the return. Implying something may be acceptable at times, but there should be some biblical statement that proves these two points otherwise the doctrine is false.

If John tells of a first resurrection in Revelations 20:4 – 6, and there is no other passage anywhere else in the Bible to dispute the fact, then we must believe that this is when the first and the ONLY 'first resurrection' takes place. Does this passage or any other speak of previously resurrected saints joining these at this time? Just because Jesus doesn't address the church in these chapters doesn't exclude them from it, but at the same time, John never mentions any separation of the saints, some pre-trib event or some event where the pre-trib saints join the tribulational saints. No one defines multiple resurrections or gathering of the saints for those before the Law of Moses, during the time of the law, church age or tribulational, so we must assume, unless God wanted us to know otherwise, that there will be just one, and when God said it would be – as a post-tribulational event.

Otherwise the questions start to multiply that shouldn't need to be asked, such as if there were a pre-trib event then does that mean that Rev. 20:4 tell us that **only the saints that have been beheaded** get to rule and reign with him for a thousand years, because the other saints, like the church-age saints nor those that are still alive at that moment aren't mentioned there? Or why doesn't John mention a pre-trib event if he calls this one the first? Why would God need to hide a pre-trib return and not mention it somehow if there were one, because all of pre-trib evidence seems to be vague and without Biblical evidence stating the fact, not to mention the scientific methodology tests we've been using **to test their own claims**. It is valid to test your doctrines but at the same time, it would be a sin against God if we didn't.

## ***New Terms***

One slick way to get people to follow your doctrine is to introduce new, or to secretly redefine, terms as if they were already biblically based, like having both a tribulation and a 'great tribulation' or having both a '**return of the lord**' AND a '**coming of the lord**', or as some prefer, a coming FOR his saints and another coming WITH his saints. And in one sense, they are already there but the definitions are biblically different from what these others want you to believe, as illustrated in the section, [1 Thessalonians 4](#) above, where Jesus comes both with his saints and for them as well. This allows the picture of events described by God, to become fuzzy and uncertain and thus the fairy-tales and misunderstandings are given a chance to replace the truth.

In one place a writer, could be speaking of the Lord's return in regards to our gathering and in another passage it would be in regards to his coming in judgment at Armageddon, sure the wording or the phasing is going to be different but that doesn't make them two completely different events. The one is supposed to convey hope for us while the other a type of dreaded doomsday event for the world, but it doesn't prove them to actually be on different days, some 7-years apart. So are you waiting to be rescued or destroyed?

Just because someone uses a bunch of fancy terms, says that some passage implies a pre-trib event and has a bunch of other people like-minded with degrees behind their name supporting them, that doesn't prove them right; you can follow them off the cliff if you like, but the choice is yours. Martin Luther saw this

same deception when the Pope and the Catholic Church started indulgences<sup>4</sup> during his days, and they claimed at the time that it was also biblically based, but that doesn't make those who stand by it right in God's eyes as well.

## Pre-tribulation Rapture Teachers

By Willy Minnix, (taken in part from an article posted on <http://www.posttribpeople.com/>)

One of the big problems the Church faces when studying this subject is that many of the verses and passages used to defend the Pre-trib Rapture view are subject to incredibly bad exegesis of the text in question. Incorrect methods that are commonly employed in explaining so-called "Pre-trib proofs" include:

- 1. Passages out of context** – Many of the Pre-trib proof texts are taken completely out of context. When the texts are examined in their proper context, one can quickly see that the passage is not talking about a Pre-trib Rapture.
- 2. Combining Out of Text Passages** – The second method often used by Pre-trib teachers is to apply several passages that are taken out of context in an attempt to overwhelm the End Times student with the volume of "proof texts." But, the mere fact that there is a volume of badly treated texts does not prove anything other than the complete inability of the Pre-trib teacher to read the Bible in context.
- 3. Misuse of the Greek or Hebrew** – Often Pre-trib teachers will point to a Greek or Hebrew meaning of a word to lend support to their argument when, in fact, the Greek or Hebrew word often does not mean what they say it means. Another related incorrect technique they use is to not give the full possible meanings of a Greek or Hebrew word – instead, **giving only one possible translation of a word that supports their argument without also giving the additional meaning(s)** that would defeat their argument entirely. An example of this is the common misuse of the Greek word "ek" by Pre-trib teachers to mean "from" where it is often translated as "through."
- 4. Reliance on Obscure or Unclear Passages** – After Pre-trib teachers take several passages out of context, good Bible students, seeking the truth, may point to the rest of the verses – so, the Pre-trib teacher falls back on passages having nothing to do with eschatology, or if they do, they are too obscure and unclear to bolster or support any argument – let alone a Pre-trib position. An example of this technique is the false pairing of I Thessalonians 4:16 (where we are told Jesus descends with a shout) with Revelation 19:11-21 (where it doesn't mention a shout at all). These passages are often used incorrectly by most Pre-trib teachers. Such teachers simply obscure the facts; and then present a text that does not provide conclusive evidence – as if it were some sort of proof for their false position.
- 5. Reliance of "Traditional" Interpretations or Commentaries** – I personally believe this has become a big problem in Bible study in general. Now a days, the proliferation of Bible study tools makes it possible for someone to study many different authors without the benefit of knowing the particular theological background or stance of the author. Without that knowledge, readers are often subjected to heretical doctrines they otherwise would avoid or reject. Many times, people will turn to the "experts" without praying about it first. And, when they do point to so-called "experts," they give those opinions more weight than they deserve – without examining that author's historical background. Because of this tactic, many people think the Pre-trib Doctrine is a very old and ancient concept; when, in fact, it has only been around for about two centuries.

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<sup>4</sup> (Roman Catholicism) the remission by the pope of the temporal punishment in purgatory that is still due for sins even after absolution.

6. **Tradition over Truth** – This is similar to the last point. Many people are reluctant to study the Bible on their own because they fear they cannot understand it; so, they put their confidence in the traditions that came before them – without examining what the Bible actually says.
7. **Taking Scholars out of Context** – Another travesty of the Pre-trib movement is to take Biblical scholars out of context. It's bad enough to take the Bible out of context, but to quote Bible scholars out of context – regardless of their stance – is adding insult to injury.
8. **Taking Ancient Texts out of Context** – A similar problem is that of misusing ancient texts to bolster their view. This is most often seen when they misquote Pseudo-Ephram or the Book of Enoch I – and/or other documents.
9. **Propagation of Fear** – Pre-trib teachers often use fear tactics to get people to accept their doctrine – rather than teaching people to be strong in preparation for persecution. These teachers will also often accuse other eschatological opinions as “fear mongering” when they try to warn people to repent and prepare for the End Times. I can see no greater example of fear-mongering than the horrible exegesis found in the films from the 1970s by Don Thompson – such as “*A Thief in the Night*” and the more recent “*Left Behind*” series by Tim LaHaye. A similar thing happened to Jeremiah the prophet, so it is nothing new – just the same old tactic being brought into modern times.
10. **Using Text to Prove a Point Rather than to Find Truth** – One of the worst things I have found – not only in the Pre-trib movement, but also in many areas of research – is that people often use a text **to prove their point** rather than going to the text **to find the truth**. As Christians, we should always be of a mindset that we are in a search for Truth – because God is Truth. We are to be diligent seekers of Him; and, therefore, we are diligent seekers of the Truth. As Richard Wurmbrand once said, the Bible is the truth about the Truth. So, we must approach the Bible with a humble attitude. “*What does the Bible teach me about this topic?*” Not, “*this is my opinion on the topic – or this is what I’ve been taught - now where can I find that in the Bible to prove it?*” If we follow the latter approach, we will always be able to find passages that prove our point; but we will be in danger of abusing the text by ripping passages out of context.

The entire history of the Pre-tribulational Rapture movement has been based on faulty methods of study, fear mongering and out-right lies. But, proper Bible study, sound exegesis, and careful connection of prophetic passages will lead us to be able to endure persecution – and appreciate and understand the glory that lies beyond the momentary afflictions this world has to offer.

## Conclusion

As I said, there is no question Jesus will be returning at the end of the tribulation, however, I think I have also proven that **the theory of the pre-trib return-event** is false because -

1. Without an established biblical reference to a pre-tribulational event, there is nothing to build upon.
  - 1.1 The scientific methodology method that we used, based upon their own statements given in the section [Definitive Differences](#), and against the passages they admit to using, fails to prove a pre-trib event.
  - 1.2 The question of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, although not directly stated in the Bible, does have a biblical basis that the implication can be safely made, however the same implication cannot be made without some proof of their pre-trib event.
  - 1.3 The idea of building one implication upon another without a foundational passage leads to circular reasoning similar to the house built upon the sand that Jesus mentioned.
- 2 Major claims made by the pre-trib used as proof have been proven false.

- 2.1 The claim that the church is not mentioned in Revelations 4 – 18, for example, is not the full truth as pointed out above.
- 2.1.1 During this time, several passages tell us that people could repent which would automatically invalidate any notion that this is actually God’s judgment-type of wrath but rather a warning type, such as what preceded the death-angel plague in Egypt.
- 2.2 The claim of separate groups called the church-age saints and the tribulational saints has not been shown to have a biblical foundation, either with a direct biblical reference or an indirect one where those during the tribulation are referenced differently in some doctrinal or spiritual way from those of the previous age. The conclusion here would be that the so-called church age, so named just by the pre-trib, would continue through the tribulation and on into the millennial time.
- 2.3 Many of the pre-trib have made the claim that their return will be a secret and or imminent, but again they lack any passage stating that claim. When has God ever done anything major like this and not warned the world in some way that he was doing this and that they had better repent. Examples of this include:
- 2.3.1 Noah and the flood
- 2.3.2 Moses in Egypt
- 2.3.3 Jonah in Nineveh
- 2.3.4 The many prophets sent to Israel
- 2.4 There is no logical reason to believe, from either knowing God or what he has said, that he would need to keep a resurrection – rapture event a secret from the world. He’s plainly told us that he wants to offer salvation to everyone, so if Almighty God wants to use believers, even during this time, to **keep warning the world** of Armageddon and his coming judgment (singular) and he wants to reinforce that with predicted plagues, then be prepared to go through this coming time!

### 3 Contextual Problems

- 3.1 As noted in the [Examination of Passages](#) section, the evidence they present is more focused on convincing others of what they believe rather than showing the biblical proof, a man vs. God approach. For example, in the 1 Thessalonian 4 passage, they have not proven that this passage CAN NOT BE a post-trib event based on some biblical difference and not on some implied “*we go to heaven and come back 7 years later*” claim.
- 3.2 In Matthew 24:36, they make the claim that this “return at any moment” is both imminent and without signs, when Jesus in verse 32 said to be looking for the signs. By ignoring the possibility that Jesus was actually telling us that it could be a long wait, they can isolate that, and other passages, to prove whatever doctrine they wish and still make it at least sound like it is biblically true.
- 3.3 Selective definitions, such as in the reference to the apostasia / “falling away” in [2 Thess. 2](#) means that THEY choose what they want the passage to say instead of exploring the possibilities and its impact on the following verses in the passage.
- 3.3.1 Was the claim by the Jews in Acts 21:21 of Paul, of his “apostasia”, a physical one or spiritual, thus helping to justify in some way our physical departure from the earth?
- 3.3.2 Was there any other indication in 2 Thessalonians two, that this departure was of the saints or that it actually was from the earth? Was there the possibility that this was in reference to an apostasy that Paul was referring to, such as what Jesus mentioned of the evil servant in Matthew 24? Don’t throw away these possibilities because you could, as the old saying goes, *be throwing the baby out with the bath water*.

Like any theory, as new facts come to light, the theory, and its evaluation, has to also be changed. At one time, the pre-trib believed that the rapture would take place before Israel became a nation and so when it was discussed, these and many other ideas were 'protected' from the ignorant and the church determined the doctrine's truth, thus closing the door on Jesus to come in and 'talk' **just like he said would happen in Revelations 3:14 and the church at Laodicea**. We had to rely on others to rightly divide or discern the truth, which really opened the door for even more fairytales and false doctrines to enter in.

So I ask two questions, and the first is if someone has a wrong doctrine or an error in their thinking, then shouldn't those in the church meet with them and explore where their thinking is to see **if they were wrong or not?** And the second question is that if a church is serious about following God **and they had the problem**, wouldn't they want it corrected before God spits them out of his mouth as he warned us in Revelation 3:16-18 *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, **I will spue thee out of my mouth.*** [17] *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; **and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*** [18] *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.* In other words, they were saying, "we don't have any problems that need to be addressed", so no one, including Jesus, was allowed to correct them.

Living this much later in time from the early church also means that there are more erroneous doctrines today than ever before and they need to be tested. So we need to understand and deal with them, and **just because a church says that some doctrine is good doesn't make it so**. And at the same time we as individual believers need to make sure that we keep focused on being a believer and following God with both our heart (dedication / faithfulness) and mind (our understanding of who he is and what we need to be).

God give us a choice, while the liar and deceivers of this world will tell you, entice you or pressure you to conform to something other than God's ways and doctrines. So step back and for once listen to what and how something is said and even what isn't said, and then look for yourself to see if what they say is even close or possible. Test your doctrines.

Sure it would be nice if saints didn't have to go through this 7-year period, but if there is no biblical evidence of escape from it and saints are to be beheaded, then we need to understand and be prepared, even in this day and age and even in the U.S. to not only actively live a believer's life where people can see Christ in us as our Lord, but be willing to die for him as well.

The Muslims actively kill and behead others and in their laws they directly mention the "people of the book", meaning Christians and Jews, as being their enemy so are we to remain silent and not know or warn others of the coming judgment that they all will be facing, or do you think your escape gives you the right to ignore God in being a faithful watchman, knowing what is coming but remaining silent or ignorant about it.

I think Satan would say something like "well done thou good and faithful servant, you remained silent and you deviated from what God said". But on the other side of the coin I heard a saying that said that a good Christian should be able to preach, pray or die on a moment's notice, so are you ready because you just may get the chance to be found faithful to God, even to die for Him and don't think that it can't happen even inside the United States, because people are seeing less and less of Christ in our lives and they will pressure and intimidate us into conforming to their will and ways.

## Prediction

We have just looked at testing the pre-trib doctrine, but to remain in a regressive state and not make any predictive conclusion would be to hide from the obvious facts of the Bible, that very soon we could be seeing the very same signs that we've been telling people, or at least we should be telling them. In science when you make a theory, then you should also be able to predict what other evidence there might be. If there

were a worldwide flood, what evidence might we expect to find in sedimentary rock, on tops of mountains or in coal fields? In other words if we know that these prophetic events will happen, then we should be able to tell others what they are AND able to Biblically prove what they are and the sequence they would appear.

We also know that currently we are 2,000 years closer to that time than they were in Jesus' day and from historical records, that in the last century or more, Christians, including the pre-trib, have been noting more and more events that indicate the day is closing in, especially after Israel once again became a nation.

So let me make a series of prediction, that if it were to begin, in say the next 10-years and hopefully in your lifetime that it would prove the post-trib doctrine as being true and the pre-trib doctrine false, because these would be, according to test point #1, the prophetic events that the Bible says will happen and the pre-trib say will not. So the following is a list of events that I would expect to see among the nations and the passages that I believe support my theory. Note: this will not be a comprehensive study or 'revelation' of all the expected events but just a thumbnail of what the nations will be doing.

### *Ten Events to Armageddon*

To keep things somewhat simple, I'd like to give you the time line of the nations as ten events, which you might want to use to warn others to be expecting these events, and please note that right now I'm NOT including any of the plagues. Oh sure, most people you tell, won't believe you at first, but I think after they see the first five or six events you told them would happen, they just might start to recognize that the actual Armageddon-event is coming. And if I were to guess, yes they all could begin within the next ten years, well within our lifetime, but even if we don't get to live that long then we can at least be warning others.

#### **Event 1 – A Peace Treaty**

The first event begins in Daniel 9:27 and the 70<sup>th</sup> week, which we know is still to come upon the earth. From the previous passages, we know that the first 69 weeks covered 483 years, which would indicate that each week was 7-years long, therefore the last week is also being assumed to be 7-years long. Now, while this passage indicates that the Jews don't seem to have any outside trouble until midweek, this does not presume that they are not trouble-free.

However, this 'week' was primarily to define this last time-period or 7-years and that Israel's worst troubles are to come AFTER the mid-point. The fact is that this is the ONLY 7-year period defined for the End-times, so even though the focus was on Israel, other passages tell us what other events are to happen with other nations during this same window of time.

In Daniel 9:27, we'll see a peace treaty between Syria and Israel, that I call **SIT**, or the **Syrian – Israeli Treaty**, as the first event, not just in this passage but for the entire time line. I don't have the time here, but there are a number of passages, including Isaiah 17 and Daniel 11, and the new territory given to Israel later on that points to Syria as the country the antichrist will be leading.

Most people today would say that such a peace treaty would be impossible or ridiculous, but when you look at the passages to follow, we realize that this is the root cause for everything that is to happen, especially the reactions we see later on, and remember that prophetic events don't always adhere to the purely logical thinking. Watch for the three other clues highlighted for you, and by the way, one of the indicators of their promised Mahdi, is that initially he doesn't act as a Muslim should but in one night he's supposed change.

#### **Event 2 – The Pushing**

Next, in Daniel 11:40 we read, ***And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.*** Previously in this

chapter, we saw the king of the south had been in reference to the Egyptian kingdom after the fall of Alexander the Great, and the northern kingdom was centered on the Syrian kingdom, and I don't believe that changes here.

Note: as in our previous testing we've done, I would invite you to do the same here. Is there anything here that would indicate when and why these events happen from previously established evidence. And based on later passages, would this passage expand or explain what the later passages don't?

So at '*the time of the end*', we'll see this king of the north is doing something that these African nation don't like, such as making a peace treaty with Israel, and they appear to be very hostile about it. So let's assume, under today's Middle East situation, that someone like the Muslim Brotherhood in Africa, doesn't like the fellow Muslim nation of Syria making this peace treaty with Israel. It's at this point that this whole thing turns into a Muslim issue. The general attitude of the radical Muslim is a hatred for Israel and the Jews, but if Syria made a peace treaty with them then Syria wasn't being a very good Muslim and we see the reactions that follow.

Note: the 'pushing' mentioned here is the first of three clues of what is going on emotionally with the Syrian leader. Watch for the others, because they tell a story.

### Event 3 – African Attack

The next event we see in Daniel 11:42, will be when Syria attacks these African nation, beginning with Egypt and in verse 43 we see that he continues on to still other nations, *But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps*. Now if you look at a map of Africa, you'll see that this will probably include the two additional nations of the Sudan and the South Sudan, which didn't exist in Daniel's time. But as you'll see, all these nations will be included in the ten nations mentioned later coming up against Israel. (Xref: 10 nations – Daniel 2:41 – 43, 7:19 – 22, Rev 13:1, 2, 17:3+)

Note: it is interesting that God mentions at this point, that this man will have power over the gold and the silver of Egypt because in the Muslim belief, one of the signs of the expected Mahdi is that he would spread the wealth around to other Muslims. Maybe Syria is stealing from Egypt to pay others, or that Egypt wasn't paying their bills?

### Event 4 – The Troubling Tidings

But then we read in Daniel 11:44, *But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many*. Now at first this would be a little confusing that if he was already going after these African nations, then wasn't he already going forth to destroy and so on? I'm not going to cover it just yet but the next verse says that he's going to attack Israel, which previously he hadn't done just yet. No, they **want** him to attack Israel but he doesn't want to! Keep watching the progression here.

Note: the '*tidings that trouble him*' is the second of three clues of what is going on emotionally with the Syrian leader because they want him to attack Israel despite his previous treaty with them.

But there is one more passage we need to look at before we can move on, that also proves his reluctance to attack Israel. Back in Ezekiel 38:4-5 we're told, *And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: [5] Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet.*

Note: the '*putting hooks in his jaw*' is the third of three clues of what is going on emotionally with the Syrian leader. Now add the three clues together and it portrays the pressure this man faces as a Muslim

who wanted peace with Israel, but is now being forced instead to ultimately become one of the most notorious figures this world will ever know, and soon you'll see when and why.

This leader obviously doesn't want to attack Israel, however God is using these other nations as his 'hooks' to force him to initially force him to do it and you'll notice that it includes the two nation of Ethiopia and Libya he once threatened back in Daniel 11:43. And among those nations joining him will be Persia (changed to Iran in 1935), who is also east of Syria (Dan. 11:44). And for those that like to keep count, this will be his first coming, because like I said God has to force him this time to attack Israel, because he'll be coming back.

Note: please continue to test 'my' hypothesis and the story that I present here with the Biblical account to examine how accurate it may be.

Now let me add a little history at this pointy, which God foretold us was going to happen in this separation between the iron on the miry clay we read about in Daniel 2:41-45, which will soon come into play. There are differences of opinion as to what really happened and people do like to change their versions of history, but in one version it all started after June 8, 632 AD when Muhammad died and the 'difference of opinion' between the Sunni and the Shiite as to how they were going to be led. However it was on Oct 10, 680 AD when a Sunni group massacred Husain, the grandson of Muhammad in Karbala, Iraq, along with his family and friends, and they supposedly took his head back to Damascus. The two groups have hated each other ever since, in fact the Shia Muslim still remember that massacre each year on a day they call '[The Day Of Ashura](#)' (W) (talk about holding a grudge!). Some say that the Shite religion started out as a political movement and only later became religious and that the grandson wasn't supposed to be killed, but this is where the differences between them started.

Now keep these things in mind of what happens, and even what should have happened after the attack Israel this first time.

Note: *I am compelled to add that in recent days with the appearance of the ISIS, or the Islamic State movement, that it's brought up the question concerning them being possibly the 'iron' mentioned in Daniel 2:41 (the iron that breaks in pieces) however in Revelations 13, covered later they are noted as nations. ISIS may play a part in this story but I don't believe they are a part of the 10-nation beast.*

## Event 5 – Let's Attack Israel

It's after these nations meet and force this man to lead them against Israel, a nation that previously they could never beat alone, that they all attack northern Israel as a group as noted in Daniel 11:45 *And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.* This, in turn, breaks his original covenant / peace treaty with them we saw in Daniel 9:27. But now things start to go downhill for everyone. One of the Muslim prophesies tell us that in one day he would go from not being religious to being the most righteous of Muslims, and he is about to do that as he becomes the Mahdi, the rightly Guided One.

But I would also have you note that at this time they only take northern Israel, which I believe in part to be the result of their differences of opinion, based mostly on Daniel 2:41 – 45.

## Event 6 – The Wound

Now we pick up the story in Revelations 13, where the first thing we see is a beast or a kingdom arises with ten nation but only seven leaders; this would be the same beast mentioned in Daniel 7:8, 24 that would subdue three other countries. So after this beast is formed, then according to Rev. 13:3, 4, one of these kings is to be wounded but is allowed to live for another 42 months (verse 5), in other words for another 3 ½

years. Can you see how these passages inter-relate with each other to tell us the full story from the many other points of view?

This means that when he broke his covenant in the middle of this 7-year window (Dan 9:27) that he is also wounded. So the beast is formed first, they all attack and take northern Israel and then he is seriously wounded. Note: in the [Yom Kippur War](#) (W) on Oct 6 – 25, 1973, there were only six nations and they lost; now they'll be coming from one direction with 10 nations.

### Event 7 – His Influence Grows

After he's wounded, we know that he's got 42 months left, so when we look at Revelation 13:6-9, and the period-of-time following his wound, it says, *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.* [7] ***And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*** [8] *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* [9] ***If any man have an ear, let him hear.*** Watch the sequence of events here within these passages, because a lot of people have ignored key parts to this and they've missed the story here God is telling us.

In Daniel 2:41-45, we saw that they (the Muslims) would mingle themselves with those in the world and now, as the great Mahdi and long-expected 12<sup>th</sup> Imam appears, it would appear that his influence grows among the Muslims which would include those in other countries as well. So if you speak up against their new Mahdi, the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam, their grand Caliph, even inside the United States, you're liable to be attacked or even killed for it. Fear has always been a great tool of theirs. Look for the black flags of the Islamic State to be waving, very possibly even inside the U.S.!

Remember that this guy is both recovering from his wounds and becoming more and more powerful as his influence upon others grows, and this isn't some local influence. Once the Muslims have an initial toehold in some country, then the reaction to this man, within those countries will be magnified to others in the world. And as more and more of them believe in the prophecies of the Mahdi, people want to be on the side that is obviously winning, or that they think will be winning. Liken this to what happens to a sports team that suddenly finds itself in the playoff games and they have a chance to be the champions and even the spectators, those in other countries, can become 'hard-core' radical followers.

### Event 8 – His Hatred of the Jews Grows

But his attitude changes towards Israel in Ezekiel 38:10-11 where we're told, *Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought:* [11] *And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.* Wait a minute, didn't we just read in verse four and five that he was forced to attack Israel, so how can they now be dwelling safely? And this will be his second coming against Israel.

But note that this time he is the one that wants to attack Israel, so there's an apparent time-lapse here. So let's do a little math here and I'd like to introduce you to what Revelation 9:15 says, *And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.* If he originally had 42 months after he was wounded and we see 13 months mentioned here in Rev 9:15, then there must have been about 29 months from the time he's wounded until the time he has this change of heart and begins to gather this mega army (the gap between when he was wounded and Ez. 38:10) because it should only take a couple of days to surround and take Jerusalem after that (or so you think).

No, these first 29 months are very likely the time, not just of his recovery, but also his growth in power and influence throughout the world. He's become the perfect Muslim now and their great expected leader,

both in the temporal and their spiritual leadership and to all the Muslims of the world their great messiah, Caliph and 12<sup>th</sup> Imam. To them, their goal of the return of Jesus / Isa is to lead the Muslims and be a world religion, and to them that's about to happen, or so they think.

### Event 9 – Release the Mega Army

I won't get into Joel chapters two and three and the terrifying description of this massive army, but the estimated numbers have ranged from 100 to 200 million men or as one version of the Bible put it as myriads upon myriads. Zechariah 13:8, 9 tell us that by the end of this period, that 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the Jews will be killed and very likely, while this mega army still setting up in northern Israel, Lebanon and Syria that they'll put up a boycott around Israel to prevent any more weapons from coming in to resupply the Jews.

Can you imagine the pressure and the fear there will be on the remaining Jews when they know that there is no escape from that coming dreaded massacre, to wipe them out. You know this would've been a perfect plan except for one small flaw, that if you're going to have a holy jihad then you had better make sure that the only one who is holy, is on your side, otherwise you're going to have to face, one very angry and powerful God.

### Event 10 – Jesus Returns and Armageddon

This is the day that everything changes; for the world, their mega army is destroyed in one day, terrifying earthquakes rock the cities of the world and even start tsunamis while believers look down and safely watch from above.

If we apply our scientific methodology to these ten event, I believe that we would find 1) that I have been true to the sequences within (and between) the passages, that 2) with all the details within these and other passages, that there is no conflict with other Biblical records that weren't addressed, and that 3) despite some differences of opinion on minor points with other believers, that this actually is a very close representation of what we may expect to happen in the near future.

We can always prove our doctrines are correct, but that doesn't necessarily prove that they are Biblically correct. Remember what we were told in 1 John 4:1 *Beloved, **believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:** because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*