

# Common Pre-Trib Arguments<sup>1</sup>

We've listed 14 common arguments that pre-tribbers use to justify the pre-trib rapture. These arguments can be found in the bible study entitled "The Rapture" in the bible studies links page. If we've missed any arguments that you would like to see addressed, please email us at the bottom of this page with your suggestions. Thanks!

## Arguments for Pre-Tribulation Rapturism

Let's take em one by one. As you will see, the reasons for pre-tribulation rapturism is based on weak inference, and not sound biblical interpretation.

### 1. The Absence of the Word Church in the Book of Revelation

Pre-Tribbers say that because the word Church is not used after Revelation, Chapter 3, the Church therefore cannot be in the 70th week. It is mentioned 19 times in Chap 1-3, but never again in the book. In response to this argument, while it is true that the word Church is not used after Chapter 3, the word saint is used numerous times throughout Revelation. This same word is used all throughout the New Testament to speak of those in the Church. Additionally, the Church is not mentioned in Mark, Luke, John, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 John, Jude, and not until the 16th Chapter of Romans. Quoting Robert Gundry, "Unless we are prepared to relegate large chunks of the NT to a limbo of irrelevance to the Church, we cannot make the mention or omission of the term "church" a criterion for determining the applicability of a passage to saints of the present age".

### 2. Revelation 4:1

Although many pre-tribbers do not use this argument, it is still taught by some so it warrants a brief discussion. Let's read Revelation 4:1. "After this I looked and, behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice that I heard was, as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up here, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." -- Pre-Tribbers say that since John hears a trumpet and is called up to heaven, this represents the rapture.

This interpretation is a perfect example of inference and without biblical justification. To equate Rev 4:1 to the rapture would be like adopting an allegorian method of interpretation--which pre-tribbers would normally reject. I've only brought this argument up because it is frequently used to support pre-trib. It is very, very weak. My response back though is this: John does not maintain his heavenly viewpoint throughout Revelation (10:1, 11:1, 13:1, 14:1, 18:1). If John, who is representing the raptured Church in Rev 4:1, why does he keep going back and forth from heaven to the earth? In other words: "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." If the absence of the "Church" from earthly scenes were to imply an absence of the Church down here, then the absence of the "Church" from heavenly scenes would imply an absence of the Church up there.

### 3. God has not Appointed Us to Wrath.

The pre-tribber believes the Church will not go through the wrath of God, and since they believe the entire 70th week of Daniel is the wrath of God, the Church, therefore, will not be in the 70th week. First of all, the bible never says we won't see his wrath, just that we are not appointed unto it. The Pre-Wrath view believes the Church will be raptured just before it, and the Post-tribber believes she will be protected through it. I personally don't have a problem with either view. The first point of contention is not whether we go through God's wrath, but will we personally experience it? And the clear biblical answer is absolutely not (1 Thes 5:9)!!

The second point is when does that wrath begin? Contrary to what pre-tribbers believe, the Bible clearly teaches that the Wrath of God (The Day of the Lord) begins after the midway point with the opening of the 7th seal. Again, the rapture occurs in conjunction with the Day of the Lord. So, if the Day of the Lord begins inside the 70th week, then the rapture also must occur inside the 70th week. We must remember that there are varieties of distresses during the 70th week: evils and violence which stem from man's rebellion against God, Satanic and Demonic forces allowed to oppress the earth under God's permissive will, persecution of the saints, God's direct wrath upon sinners, and the chastisement and eventual salvation of Israel.

### 4. The 'Gap' Argument.

There are some pre-tribbers who want to say that the Day of the Lord begins after the sixth seal, but still the rapture occurs 5 or 6 years earlier. I call this the Gap theory. They use the passage in Gen 7:4 to try and prove this. They explain the gap theory this way: God told Noah to gather the animals, get in the ark, and then in seven days he would send the flood. They then say that since Noah entered the ark 7 days before flood began, this represents the rapture of the Church well before the Day of the Lord begins. There are 3 major problems with that:

1) Where does it say that in verse 4? Could it mean also that God was telling Noah he had seven more days of preparation before the flood waters would come? The verse here is just not clear. So if the a word or verse is not clear, the next step is to look at the entire passage.

2) The passage seems to be very clear as we read further. Look at verses 12,13. It appears here to be saying that Noah entered the same day as the rains came? Is there still a doubt? Let's compare scripture with scripture.

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3) The gap theory contradicts the words of Jesus. Jesus plainly said that on the same day that Noah entered the ark, judgment came and took them all away.

How clearer can you get? This is a perfect example of twisting scripture to fit a theological view? Remember our rules of interpretation? First look at the verse, then look at the context, then compare scripture with scripture. So when we do that, the Gap theory becomes just another view that is unsupported and without exegetical support!

#### **5. The 'Sack Lunch' Argument.**

Pre-Tribbers believe that the marriage supper of the Lamb begins prior to the 2nd coming of Christ at Armageddon. Since this is so, the Church must be raptured well before this event to allow time for the supper. They refer to the marriage supper of the Lamb in a Post-trib rapture scenario as a "sack lunch". First of all, this is an absolutely ridiculous argument because it limits God to temporal time. We must understand that God exists in an eternal state where there is no time. In 2 Peter 3:8, the bible says that one day to the Lord is as a thousand years. Even if the rapture occurred just prior to Armageddon, a one second delay between the rapture and his coming could very easily be enough time to complete the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Secondly, and more importantly, the passage describing the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-10) does not locate it in heaven or during the 70th week. It is in conjunction with the second coming of Christ. To use the argument that the Church must be raptured prior to the 70th week to allow time for the marriage supper is totally without biblical support.

#### **6. The 'Yo-Yo Argument.**

Pre-tribbers frequently mock Post-tribulation by saying that the view believes in an up and down rapture, thus the yo-yo simile. They say that it is ridiculous for the Lord to call Christians to himself in mid-air only to come right back down. Why not have the Lord just come down to the earth and meet us down here? This is a silly man-made argument. First of all, the Lord can do whatever he wants--He is sovereign. If he wants to rapture the Church in this manner, He can do so. Who are we to question his methods? Secondly, we can use the same silly argument to refute Pre-tribulationism. Why does the Lord have to meet us halfway? Why have him come in the skies, only to go back up to heaven? Why not have him just wait in heaven for us to meet him? So long as there is a meeting in mid-air, someone has to turn around and go back. See how ridiculous that sounds? Thirdly, a Pre-Wrath rapture has the Lord rapturing the Church on the same day the Day of the Lord begins which is before his physical return. There is no quote, unquote "yo-yo" rapture with this view.

By the way, it was common in New Testament days for a representative portion of citizens to go out of their city a distance, meet a dignitary, and give him honor by escorting him back into the city. A similar escorting of Christians coming with our Lord certainly would fit into a Post-Trib rapture view. Anyway, you can see the extent that Pre-tribbers go to defend their position. They use silly arguments which try to put God in a man-made theological box. God is God and will do whatever he pleases, however he pleases!

#### **7. The Blessed Hope.**

Pre-tribbers rightly say that the return of Christ is the blessed hope (Titus 2:12-13). They question, however, on how the return of Christ can be a blessed hope if the Church must first experience the wrath of the Tribulation period? Again, there is no scriptural basis for such an argument. It is based purely on emotionalism and human reasoning. But I will use the opposite extreme. I say that the blessed hope is more blessed if we are going through difficult times than when things are going well. Persecution has always been good for the Church. And it is in difficult times, not fat times, that we experience real closeness and intimacy with the Lord. But the reality is, although the Church will go through persecution, it will be temporary, and our relief will come when Christ returns in glory--and that is a blessed hope!

#### **8. Imminence.**

As we discussed earlier, pre-tribbers believe in imminence, that is, the return of Christ would be signless, no prophesied events before it, and could occur at any moment. Let's look at the scriptures they use to defend this position. Let me give you the classic text which pre-tribbers use to base their imminence theory on. Turn to 1 Thess 5:2 (**read**). Well, Ken, doesn't that sound like an any moment return of Christ? Wait a minute--let's continue on. Read verses 3-6. Christ's return will be any moment for those who are not watching, but not to the believer. We are to be watching. For that day will not take us by surprise. That is what Paul is teaching!!

Turn to Luke 17:26-30 (**read**) The world will be partying and carrying on, and just like the days of Noah, Christ's return will be imminent because they were in darkness and were not watching. But Paul says that we should watch and be sober so that day will not catch us like a thief. Now, let's look at the passages that Dwight Pentecost uses to prove imminence: John 14:2-3 (**read**) -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and any moment? NO! But let me quote Tim LaHaye from his book "No Fear of the Storm", "The promise that our Lord could appear any moment to take His Church up to His Father's house was delivered by the Lord Himself (see John 14:1-3)." Am I missing something here? Where does the text say here that this is an any moment event?

Acts 1:11 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and any moment? NO!

1CO 15:51-52 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO! It does say it will occur in a moment, not any moment!

Phil 3:20 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO!

Col 3:4 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO!

1 Thess 1:10 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO!

1 Tim 6:14 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO!

James 5:8 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO! All James is saying is that the coming of the Lord is near.

2 Pet 3:3-4 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO!

1 Thess 5:6 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO! In fact, this is a strike against pre-trib rapturism. Paul is telling us to watch for the Day of the Lord, an event that occurs after the cosmic signs AFTER the Great Tribulation.

Titus 2:13 -- Does this passage teach that the rapture is without a sign, without a preceding prophesied event, and could occur at any moment? NO! The common argument here is that if the Church is to go through Daniel's 70th week, then we would be looking for antichrist, not Christ. In Matt 24, Jesus makes it very clear that to look for the signs of His coming is the same as looking for His coming. The coming of antichrist is simply one of the signs of Christ's coming.

So what am I saying? The bible simply does not teach imminency. What it does teach is expectancy!! Every one of us should live as if Jesus could return in our lifetime, that we could be the very generation that would see the signs of his return. Now, let's look at some specific arguments against imminency.

-- First of all, pre-tribbers believe that Jesus could return at any moment. Turn to John 21:18. Here Jesus was telling Peter how he would die. He was telling him that he would live to be old and be martyred. Question: Did Peter believe that Jesus could come back any moment??

-- Turn to Malachi 4:5 (**read**). It is very clear that Elijah must come before the Day of the Lord begins. In fact, even today, when Jews celebrate passover, there is an empty cup set for the prophet Elijah, and an empty chair set at every Jewish boy's circumcision. Most pre-tribbers believe that the Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the 70th week. If Elijah must come before the Day of the Lord, and the rapture occurs simultaneously with the Day of the Lord, then imminency is destroyed because there would then be a prophesied event which needed to occur before Christ could return.

Dwight Pentecost, understanding this problem, tries to resolve it by suggesting that the Day of the Lord is a series of mini-days, and somehow Elijah gets sandwiched in between a couple of them--thus allowing it to be said that Elijah appears before the Day of the Lord but inside the 70th week of Daniel. Not only does this have no biblical merit, but it is contrary to the biblical teaching that the Day of the Lord is a comprehensive, singular period.

-- Turn to Luke 21:5-7, 20-24. This passage is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as mentioned in Daniel 9:26. Jesus was saying that before his return, Jerusalem would be destroyed and be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. When was Jerusalem destroyed? (70 AD) So it was impossible for an any moment coming because a prophesied event had to occur (the destruction of the temple).

-- Turn to Deut 30:5. This is describing the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel after the dispersion. When did the dispersion begin? (70 AD) When did Israel become a nation again? (1948) All pre-trib rapturists believe that before the end could come, Israel had to become a nation. They believe that was absolutely essential before the end could come. Question: If that is so, and I strongly agree, how could Jesus have returned at any moment between 70 AD and 1948? You couldn't believe in imminency before 1948! Is that not a prophesied event that had to occur before the return of Christ?

Hal Lindsey compares the fig tree in Matt 24 to Israel. He stated that when Israel became a nation in 1948, that event set the prophetic scene into high gear. He stated that the generation that saw Israel become a nation again, would be the generation that would see the return of Christ. So by his very words, he destroyed imminency. Because if one prophesied event has to occur before Daniel's 70th week, then imminency has no foundation. So, does the New Testament teach imminency?? It can't. There are prophesied events that have to occur before his return. And Jesus himself was asked what was asked "What would be the sign of your coming", and he answered them by giving them what? SIGNS! That's the fallacy with this view. There is no way Jesus was teaching imminency because several signs had to occur prior to his coming. Imminency is a man-made doctrine with no biblical substance whatsoever. Could the 3rd century believers have seen Israel become a nation again, and expect Jesus to return in their lifetime? Yes. Could the 11th century believers have seen Israel become a nation again, and expect Jesus to return in their lifetime? Yes. What about the 17th century believers? Yes. And can we expect Jesus to return in our lifetime? YES!

The return of Israel as a nation is not the only thing that must occur prior to the Day of the Lord. The coming of Elijah must occur before the DOL (Mal 5). Cosmic disturbance must occur before the DOL (Rev 6). The

sealing of the 144,000 must occur before the DOL (Rev 7). The apostasy must occur before the DOL (2 Thes 2). The revealing of the Antichrist must also occur before the DOL (2 Thes 2).

-- Sensing the enormity of the problem, some pre-tribbers have suggested that there is a period of time between the rapture and the start of the Day of the Lord to allow time for these predicted events to occur. Where is that in the bible? They are grasping at straws and there is absolutely no biblical basis to put any amount of time between the rapture and the Day of the Lord.

The bible teaches expectancy, not imminency. Jesus said, when you see all these things, know that my return is at hand. We are to live with the expectation that Jesus could return in our lifetime, and we should live in light of that expectation (holiness). Now, it s going to seem like I m contradicting myself, but the bible does teach a point in time when his return will be at any moment, without any sign, and with no prophesied events to be fulfilled. Anyone know when that is? It is when the last sign will be given. READ Matt 24:30. Then and only then will his return be imminent. At that point, as Luke 21:28 says, look up and lift your heads for your deliverance is drawing near .

#### **9. Imminence and Holiness**

Pre-Tribulation rapturists contend that anything but a pre-trib rapture gives the Church a license to sin. They say that the imminent return of Christ is the single most important motivator that the Church has for holiness, and without it, the Church will simply not live the way she ought until she sees the signs of the end, and then she will repent. Although I admire the desire to preach holiness, the return of Christ is not the single most important motivator for holiness. The most important reason we should live holy simply is because we love Him. Christ said very clearly in John 14:21 that if we say we love Him, then we will keep his commandments.

I personally believe that the pre-trib rapture view does not motivate to holiness, but rather gives believers a false sense of security that they will escape hard times. This is true, especially for American Christians, where there is no choice between are faith and our physical lives. I believe this view encourages apathy and laziness rather than holiness and watchfulness. Lastly, while it is true, that the bible clearly exhorts us to live holy in the light of his return, again--the bible does not teach imminence as taught by pre-tribbers. The bible teaches expectancy--that is, we are to live expectantly in the light of his soon coming return. We are to be awake, sober, and watching for his return.

#### **10. No Man Knows the Day or the Hour**

Pre-Tribbers say that if you believe the Church will endure the tribulation, then you will know exactly when Christ will return, thus violating the passage in Matt 24, where no man knows the day or the hour.

-- First, the bible teaches that the rapture will occur somewhere in conjunction with the Day of the Lord. We know from Matt 24:29, that the Day of the Lord begins sometime in the 2nd half of the 70th week, after the Great Tribulation.

-- Second, remember that Jesus us tells us that the Great Tribulation will be "cut short" for the sake of the elect (Matt 24:21-11). We have absolutely no idea when that will be.

-- And lastly, his coming (parousia) does not include just his physical return. It includes many things including his judgment (the Day of the Lord). And that will be anytime after the 6th seal.

#### **11. Dispensationalism (the Nature of the Church and Israel)**

By far, the biggest argument for pre-trib rapture is the strong belief in dispensationalism. If you remember, we defined dispensationalism as the belief in a separate Israel and a separate Church. The pre-tribber would contend that since the Church was not around during the first 69 weeks of Daniel s prophecy, it will not be in the 70th week of Daniel. In other words, pre-tribbers believe that the 70th week is the dispensation specifically for Israel. So, if the 70th week is a time when God deals with his chosen people, the Church cannot be a part of it. In response, a fair question should be asked. On what basis can it be argued that since the Church was not in the Old Testament, it can t be in the 70th week? Certainly not on the basis of the Bible!

Again, the problem with this argument is that it has no biblical support. The premise is correct, but the conclusion is wrong. The Church did not exist before Pentecost, so it couldn t be in the OT. The Church does exist now, however, so it can be in the 70th week. And that s exactly what the bible teaches which I believe has been clearly shown.

First, with the birth of the Church (Acts 2), God did not stop his working with Israel. Bible scholars have always looked at the book of Acts to be a book of transition from Israel to the Church--from the age of law to the age of grace. The first converts were Jews (Acts 2). Early believers continued to go to the temple for worship (Acts 3:1).

Secondly, it would be impossible to defend the position that a Jewish man, who was deemed righteous and acceptable before God under the OT economy the day before Christ died, was unrighteous and rejected the day after Christ s death. The period after the death and resurrection of Christ was the passing of the old economy to the new one--but both economies co-existed for a period of time.

-- The 70th week will be exactly the same. It will be a transitional period, in reverse this time, from the Church to Israel. As Israel entered the Church age, the Church will enter the 70th week.

-- The Church will enter the 70th week and co-exist with Israel. God will have purposes for both, cleansing for the Church and judgment and salvation for the Jews. Then both will live and reign with Christ forever.

-- One more argument on whether the Church and Israel can co-exist together. What will be the current state of Israel during the 70th week? (Unsaved) What is the current state of Israel now? (Unsaved) And right now the Church and Israel co-exist together, right?

The problem with this argument is the extreme that pre-tribbers go to protect dispensationalism. I am a strong dispensationalist, but that does not mean that dispensationalism automatically exempts the Church from the 70th week. Again, we must not base our theology on what we think the bible says, but what the bible actually teaches. And clearly the bible teaches that the Church will enter the 70th week.

## **12. Rev 2-3 (Periods of Church History)**

The Pre-Trib argument is that the seven churches in chapters 2-3 of Revelation represent seven distinct periods of Church history. Gary Cohen outlines his view on this:

- Ephesus--The Apostolic Church (AD 30-100)
- Smyrna-- The Persecuted Church (AD 100-313)
- Pergamos--The State Church (AD 313-590)
- Thyatira--The Papal Church (AD 590-1517)
- Sardis--The Reformed Church (AD 1517-1730)
- Philadelphia--The Missionary Church (AD 1730-1900)
- Laodicea--The Apostate Church (AD 1900- )

Therefore, according to Cohen, when we reach Rev 4:1, Church history is complete and the Church is raptured before all the events in Revelation. Well, again, this view has some serious flaws.

First of all, there is nothing in this text that indicates these are periods of Church history, nothing! Secondly, this view is totally subjective. Who determines when a period begins and ends? Church history is not that clear cut. Third, the terms given to the seven churches do not fully conform to everything that is written in the letters. For example: the Church in Thyatira gets higher marks from Jesus than history gives to the papal Church. Conversely, the Church of the reformation age is graded considerably higher than Jesus grades the Church of Sardis. Well, how then should these 7 churches be understood? Simply as this: The seven churches were real, historical churches that represent all churches throughout history, not periods of Church history. Revelation is a prophetic book about end times. Everything in this book is prophetic, including the first 3 chapters.

-- Frequently in the bible, current or even historical events are addressed and then linked to future events. For example: in Matt 10:1-15, Jesus sends out his disciples to minister throughout Israel. He told them what to take, what to say, and what to expect. Then without any noted interruption, he began speaking about the end of the age. He told them that in that future day, he would give them words to speak and what the results would be.

-- Another example: Daniel wrote about Antiochus Epiphanes who would persecute the Jews and defile their temple in 168 BC (Dan 11:21-35). He then uses this historic event to describe the antichrist and what he will do to the temple (Dan 11:36-45).

We are to look at the seven churches in Revelation in the same exact way. These were actual historical churches which had certain strengths and weaknesses. These are the exact strengths and weaknesses the Church will have as she enters the 70th week. Look at the prophetic words given to these churches:

First, look at the promises to the overcomers: 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21. Second, look at the references to Christ's near coming: 2:5, 2:16, 2:25, 3:3, 3:11, 3:20. Third, look at the references to patience (which is translated: endurance under affliction): 2:2, 2:19, 3:10. Fourth, look at the warning to the church of Sardis: 3:1,3

-- Pre-tribbers do not look at these as warnings to the Church while they are in the 70th week, but see them simply as periods of Church history. They do this simply to sustain pre-tribulation rapture. But to do this ignores the clear and direct warnings given to the churches, and it avoids the urgent warnings to be ready, and exhortations to endure to the end. And by the way, if you take this viewpoint, then you destroy imminence. Because in order for Christ to return, you must have every one of these Church ages take place. Christ cannot return until the Laodicean age.

In addition, pre-tribbers will say that the Church of Laodocia is one of apathy and lukewarmness which will mark the characteristics of the Church before the return of Christ. One question: Why should Christ come back to take an apathetic, lazy, cold Church away from a period (Great Tribulation) which not only will prepare her for His coming, but will separate the true believers from false ones? This makes absolutely no sense. Let's look at the scriptures literally, and not assign subjective rationales to them which have no biblical basis.

## **13. Rev 3:10**

Second to the dispensational argument, Rev 3:10 is what pre-tribbers hang their hats on. Let's read it. Pre-tribbers will say that since Jesus says that "I will keep thee from the hour of testing", then we are exempt from the 70th week of Daniel. Again, if we look at Rev 2-3 in context to the prophetic nature of the book, it is clear that Christ is warning the churches to prepare and to be overcomers during the 70th week. But what about this tough verse?

-- Robert Gundry, a post-tribber, says that Rev 3:10 is the most debated verse in the rapture discussion. Many see 3:10 as the key in understanding the rapture issue. Some go far to say that this verse is the watershed verse that divides the different positions.

We need to be very careful to base a biblical viewpoint on one scripture. There are men who take one or two passages in the bible and say that a believer can lose their salvation. But clearly, as a whole, the bible teaches that a believer's salvation is secure. So what do we do? We take those few debatable scriptures and reconcile them to what the bible on the whole teaches concerning eternal security. The same rule applies here. On the surface, it appears that Rev 3:10 is saying that the Church is not to go through the great testing, but what about the tens of other passages (which we have looked at), that indicate otherwise. So we must therefore reconcile this one difficult passage with what the bible says on the whole concerning the rapture of the Church.

-- As we have shown in other instances, what a text appears to be saying in English is not always what it says in the Greek.

-- The phrase in question is the phrase *keep thee from*. Pre-tribbers would say that clearly says removal from. But is there another possibility? The Greek word used is the word *tereo*. It can carry the idea of protecting someone while he is in the sphere of danger. But there is a tiny word used in conjunction with this word *tereo*. It is the Greek work *ek*. This word is in direct contrast to another preposition *apo*. *Apo* means kept outside of, while *ek* means within the sphere. It is this preposition *ek* that is used in conjunction with the word *tereo*--so we have the word *tereo ek*. Alexander Reese says this about Rev 3:10: "The use of *ek* in Rev 3:10 distinctly implies that the overcomer would be in the hour of tribulation; the promise refers either to removal from out of the midst of it, or preservation through it."

-- The only other use of *ek* in the NT is found in John 17:15.

-- Jesus here makes a clear distinction between removal from the evil one and preservation from the evil one. His prayer was not that they would be taken out of the world, but preserved from the evil one while in the world.

So while Greek scholars are definitely not in agreement, there is strong evidence to suggest that Rev 3:10 is not referring to a removal before the testing, but either a removal while in it or a protection while within it. Again, any unclear verse must be compared with other passages talking on the same subject that are clear. So although, on the surface, Rev 3:10 appears to be saying one thing, it actually could mean just the opposite--when considering the original Greek and comparing it with other passages such as John 17:15.

#### **14. The restrainer in 2 Thess 2:7**

Read 2 Thess 2:7,8. Who is the restrainer? Most pre-tribulation rapturists believe the restrainer is either the Church or the Holy Spirit--with the majority leaning toward the Holy Spirit. Their explanation goes something like this: the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, and antichrist cannot be revealed until the Spirit is removed. Since the Spirit indwells all believers, then when the Holy Spirit is removed, so is the Church. This viewpoint lacks solid biblical support. To my knowledge, there is no verse in the bible that calls the Holy Spirit a restrainer of sin, and certainly in this passage there is no indication of this. But there is one being in the bible who is specifically called a restrainer.

Turn to Dan 10:12,13 (**read**) Scholars agree that this verse is talking about Michael the archangel. In his relationship to Israel he is called Michael your prince (look at verse 21). The word holdeth in the Hebrew can be translated restrainer. Daniel, the prophet, is told that Michael is the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people (look at 12:1). Both Christian and Jewish scholars believe that Michael, the archangel has a special guardian relationship over the children of Israel. Look at Jude 9. In the Midrash, a Jewish book of interpretations, it says this about Michael, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Michael, you are silent? You do not defend my children."

Now remember we said that at the midpoint of the 70th week, there was a war in heaven? Remember? And who did the war involve? (Michael and Satan--Rev 12-7-17) And do you remember immediately what Satan did after he was thrown to the earth? (He persecuted the woman, verse 13). Go back to Daniel 12:1. The phrase stand up can be accurately translated stand aside or to be inactive (this according to Rashi--one of Israel's greatest scholars). Michael, in chapter 10:13,21, had earlier fought for Israel, but now is stepping aside or is inactive as a restrainer.

When, according to 12:1, does this happen? (at the midpoint) How do we know this? Look at what he says: After Michael steps aside, there will be a time of trouble, such as never was... Does this sound familiar? Look at what Jesus says after the Abomination occurs (Turn to Matt 24:21). There is no doubt what is happening here. Michael (Israel's protector) will fight with Satan casting him down to the earth. He will step aside at the midpoint of the 70th week, and allow Satan to indwell the antichrist, cause him to desecrate the temple, and then severely persecute Israel (and us by the way).

Now, let's go back to 2 Thess 2:7 (**read**) The word hindereth means to hold down, and the phrase taken out of the way means to step aside. So according to Paul here, the restrainer, will continue to restrain, until he steps aside--exactly what Daniel tells us will happen! And according to Paul, when does this happen? Look at the context. It is when antichrist exalts himself in the temple, precisely in the middle of the 70th week. No, there is no evidence that the Holy Spirit, the Church, or human government is the restrainer. But as I have shown, there is strong evidence to suggest that the restrainer that Paul is speaking of, is none other than Michael, the archangel.

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