

## Left Behind?

by  
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Most Christians who believe in a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of the church have no idea of its origin or that it is only one of the distinctives of a system of theology called Dispensationalism, introduced into the church in the 1830s by the founding father of the Plymouth Brethren Movement, John Nelson Darby.

Most are completely unaware, too, that the church fathers up to 1830, supported the clear teaching of the apostle John that the “first resurrection,” the resurrection of all the saints of all time, living and dead, in order, would take place on “the last day,” in the air, with angels, at the last trump, immediately prior to “the day of the Lord” when Jesus, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords would descend to the earth to destroy His enemies at Har-Magedon and then establish His millennial kingdom.

### The origin of Dispensationalism and the pre-tribulation “rapture” theory

Most who believe in a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of the church have no idea of its origin or that it is a distinctive of Dispensational theology. And most have never conducted a Spirit-guided inductive examination of scripture to determine whether it is true or not.

The doctrine is so popular among evangelical believers in America and the Western world today that believers assume its truth without examining it. At most they have adopted without question the proof texts presented by various spiritual “authorities” in their lives.

This stronghold of doctrinal error has infected the body of Christ like a constantly mutating virus, and the truth revealed by the Spirit as a warning, like the sound of a shofar from the watch tower on the wall, has been missed by many in the body of Christ today.

***For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 Amplified*** (emphasis is the author's)

According to Paul, the overthrowing of “strongholds” is the activity of refuting arguments, theories, reasonings, and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the TRUE knowledge of God.

The overthrowing of “strongholds” is spiritual warfare, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit against spiritual deceptions and heresies that have been introduced into the body of Christ in much the same way that biological warfare is introduced in the natural world.

In [Who Are The Laodiceans?](#) I demonstrated that the Lord's condemnation of that church was not related to their religious fervor but to the blending of truth with error, which hinders their (and our) faith response to Him and causes the "winds of doctrine" division in the body of Christ by believers who are incapable of "seeing" their own "wretched" and "poverty-stricken" spiritual condition.

I have been asked why it is important to argue the merits of a pre-tribulation "rapture" or a post tribulation "rapture". Isn't the important issue whether or not we will be included in either one?

My answer is simple:

- 1) It is never wrong to expose heretical doctrine that creates a stronghold of interpretational error and exalts itself against the true knowledge of God;
- 2) It is the Lord's specific will that we interpret prophetic scripture accurately with His guidance, especially prophetic scripture that includes a **warning** to us;
- 3) I am compelled to do so in spite of the rejection I will face from many, even from those close to me who do not want to know the truth, but it is the only love choice I can make.

***But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. 2 Peter 1:20,21 NASB***

The interpretation of prophetic scripture was meant to be accomplished as the Spirit of Truth guides us into all truth. It was not given to us to interpret with mere intellect (as the examples of Dispensational pre-trib thinking included here will clearly demonstrate). And, although all prophetic scripture has a general application for any age, the light of specific interpretation shines brightest on the generation for whom it was intended.

***But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13 NASB***

Dr. Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" series, and, to a lesser extent, Hal Lindsey's, Late Great Planet Earth capped a surge of interest and promotion of the pre-tribulation "rapture" theory among evangelicals from Southern Baptist to Charismatic in America and the western nations, and, if polled, a large majority of western world evangelical believers would say that they believe in a pre-trib "rapture" of the church.

But what is the origin of this theory and its supporting theology, Dispensationalism? And, more importantly, what is the real scriptural evidence?

Most do not want to examine the issue, because they believe that it involves complex issues of scriptural exegesis that they are incapable of conducting. It's much easier just to rely on our ministry leaders, pastors, and chosen Bible "experts", with degrees in Biblical Hebrew and Greek, to tell us what to believe, **even though these experts** (in the Laodicean church) **all disagree with each other**.

But what does the Lord have to say about that?

***“But you are not to be called rabbi ... (teacher) ..., for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.”*** Matthew 23:8-11 ESV (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)

At best, those of us who teach, are merely good facilitators of His gift, inspiring others in the body to be like the Bereans whom Paul said were “noble” because they examined the scriptures thoroughly to see if what he was telling them was true. At worst we are teaching false doctrines and erroneous interpretations of scripture, even, doctrines of demons and damnable heresies.

Therefore, the most important trait any believer can have for accurately dividing the word of truth is the “noble Berean” willingness to examine the scriptures carefully instead of leaning entirely on the opinions of “experts” (including this author).

And if it is possible to know, with certainty, the answers to these questions, wouldn’t you want to know? Especially if your personal future and the future of your family and friends is involved?

At the church where I served as a deacon, a Bible teacher and home group leader, a female teacher, who was a personal friend, led a popular Thursday morning women’s Bible study. She was deeply interested in the symbolism of the Lord’s feast days, and when she heard that Edgar Whisenant, a former NASA engineer and author of 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988 was coming to San Angelo to speak at the Civic Auditorium, she enthusiastically recommended class members to attend.

“The Feast of Trumpets makes sense to me,” she said. “I don’t have any reason to think it will be 1988, but the Feast of Trumpets is the most likely time for the rapture to occur.”

When my own class members, some of whom were in her Thursday morning Bible study, asked me if I was going to hear this self-proclaimed prophet prove from the Bible that the rapture would take place during Rosh Hashanah in 1988 (only a few months away), I said, “I don’t have any intention of going, because whatever he says is going to be wrong.”

Afterwards, because of the stir in my own class, I asked my pastor if I could address this issue in the general assembly on the following Sunday, and he agreed. What I told the fellowship was that Mr. Whisenant was one of many false prophets who were unknowing collaborators with the Great Deceiver, the Father of Lies, and that this Rosh Hashanah would come and pass like the ones before it, proving that he was a false prophet.

Later, on the Sunday following Mr. Whisenant’s presentation at the Civic Auditorium, I heard from those in my own class who had attended, and they quoted Mr. Whisenant as saying, “I will stake my life on the fact that the rapture will occur on Rosh Hashanah this year.”

Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) was completely sucked in by Mr. Whisenant’s book and prediction, as well as Hal Lindsey’s and pastor Chuck Smith’s similar predictions, and they held regular broadcasts on how to prepare for the rapture.

Whisenant also stated that if it did not occur, then he was a false prophet and should be stoned to death.

When the rapture did not take place during Rosh Hashanah 1988 he did not return to San Angelo to be stoned as a false prophet. Instead, he did what all date setters and false prophets do. He re-calculated several times with predictions for various dates in 1989, 1993, and 1994 before everyone simply lost interest. In the meantime, he sold 4.5 million copies of his book to gullible Christians.

Being saved into a denomination where the Scofield and Ryrie Study Bibles were widely recommended and used and Clarence Larkin's charts on Dispensational Truth reflected and illustrated popular teaching concerning Dispensationalism and a pre-tribulation "rapture", I naturally adopted that theological position until a brother I was in correspondence with challenged me to be a noble Berean (exactly as I always challenge others) in regard to a pre-tribulation "rapture" and the dispensational doctrine in general.

The popular acceptance of dispensational theology and a pre-tribulation "rapture" theory among a large number of evangelicals in America had overwhelmed me, and I was guilty of assuming the correctness of the doctrine without a thorough, Spirit-guided exegesis of the scriptures where that doctrine is concerned. After all, it was being taught in seminaries wasn't it?

I was already aware of the fact that all believers, even the most brilliant and well-trained, are subject to some bias and assumptive traditions where biblical doctrine, practice, and the interpretation of scripture are concerned. But I was shocked to discover how much a dispensational bias had blinded my own ability to "see" truth. It was a spiritual "stronghold" in the classic sense, and it kept me from making a correct, Spirit-guided exegesis of scripture where dispensationalism and the pre-tribulation resurrection-"rapture" of the church were concerned.

My mentor advised me to examine the historical origin of dispensational doctrine first, without which a pre-tribulation resurrection-"rapture" of the church could not be imagined, and I am, in turn, asking readers to journey down that same path. This will lead to the reader's willingness to thoroughly examine the scriptures to see if what is being said about dispensational theology and its most popular distinctive, the pre-tribulation resurrection-"rapture" of church only saints, is true or not.

What I am reaching for here is merely a temporary suspension of belief, a trial move whereby we take the puzzle pieces that were forced into a position where they did not belong and test them in more appropriate places on our puzzle board. Then the Berean reader can make his/her own decision (hopefully guided by the Spirit) about whether the square pegs should be forced back into the round holes again or not.

We have some record of the concept of a pre-tribulation resurrection of all the saints from the late 1700's, but Dispensationalism and its accompanying distinctives did not fully emerge until the 1830's (about the time the Philadelphian type of church began to decline and the "lukewarm" Laodicean type of church, the church that has blended truth with error, gained momentum, which does not seem coincidental to me), and the source of that doctrine, once known, should cause any pastor, Bible teacher, or believer who has a strong assumptive belief or a strong deductively reinforced belief in both to either harden their hearts in anger (because he/she has too much invested in them), or retch and fall to his/her knees in repentance once the truth is known.

Each generation of the church tends to believe that the theories and scriptural interpretations popular in their day are the same as they always have been. A study of church history reveals a vastly different scenario, and the fact that some form of the pre-tribulation "rapture" theory was not prevalent in church writings prior to 1830, including the prolific writings of the early church fathers during the first three hundred years of church history, should be a concern to any believer who wants to know the truth.

Historic Premillennialism was the predominant view of the early church fathers (i.e. the return of the Lord prior to His millennial reign and a single resurrection of both living and dead saints prior to His physical return to Mount Olivet at the end of the age to destroy His enemies and establish His 1000 year reign on earth (the millennium) prior to the final battle with Satan at the end of the millennium, which issues in a final judgment and a new earth.

This continues to be the predominant view of true conservative theologians today. (But not the predominant view of western evangelical Christianity.)

Dispensationalism is an offshoot of Historic Premillennialism with numerous and constantly changing variations and schools of thought up to and including the current “Progressive Dispensationalism” view, but classic Dispensationalism can generally be described by the following distinctives:

- 1) History is divided into specific dispensations where God dispenses salvation to men through different covenants in different ways. Classic Dispensationalism defined seven dispensations. Progressive Dispensationalism has narrowed this field down to four.
- 2) A dichotomy between the church and Israel. A literal Israel will inherit the covenant promises of God on the day of the Lord. The church (made up of both Gentiles and Jews) is spiritually ingrafted into Israel and benefits from the covenant promises made to Israel.
- 3) There are two comings of Christ in the second advent (with the first advent being His birth, life, death, and resurrection). The first appearance of Christ during the second advent is a hidden, secret spiritual (but imminent) event with Christ meeting both the dead in Christ (church only) and the living (church only) saints in the air prior to the tribulation (i.e. pre-tribulation “rapture”). The Lord retreats to heaven with his church (where He presumably consummates a “marriage” with church-only saints) and then returns seven years later to resurrect the Old Testament saints and tribulation saints (excluded from the “marriage”) on the last day immediately before the day of the Lord.

The fact that some form of the pre-tribulation “rapture” theory did not fully emerge prior to 1830 is not proof that the theory is wrong, but it should raise a spiritual red flag in spite of the current popularity of that theory among American evangelicals today.

**Error is error, though, no matter who has repeated it or over how long a period of time.**

A great deal of information is available on the internet and in books, and I will report only the highlights. The interested disciple should do his/her own research once the red flag has been raised in his/her spirit, and a search for “origins of Dispensationalism” will get the reader started on an interesting but disturbing journey.

### The origins of dispensational theology

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), the primary founder of the Plymouth Brethren, is considered to be the father of Dispensationalism because it is he who developed Dispensationalism into a theology, including a “secret rapture”, which he first revealed at the Powerscourt Conference (prophecy conference) in 1832.

Dr. Ice of the Pre-Trib Research Center, a group organized by Dr. Tim LaHaye and Dr. Ice to defend the rapidly growing criticisms of dispensational theology and the pre-tribulation “rapture” theory, states that Darby’s own writings show that Darby, whose basic theology was sound, came up with the pre-tribulation theory during a convalescence period of deep meditation (i.e. a special revelation from “God”).

A biographer and contemporary of Darby’s, Max Weremchuk, reported further, that Darby found Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and Revelation to be problematical and confusing in regard to his developing dispensational theology and pre-trib “rapture” theory, and Weremchuk stated, “I still feel his final Church/Israel distinction and pre-trib rapture views were a reaction, a sought for alternative, almost as if he tried to be ‘original’.”

The true origins of the dispensational school of thought, though, can be traced back to a Jesuit priest, Francisco Ribera (1537-1591), and later to Manuel Lacunza (1731-1801), a Jesuit whose writings were intended to counteract the Protestant reform movement’s interpretation of the Book of Revelation, which identified the Pope as the Antichrist and the Roman Catholic Church as the whore of Babylon.

Lacunza’s works were translated into English by Edward Irving (1792-1834) in 1827, but Irving was duped by Lacunza, a Roman Catholic and a Jesuit, who fraudulently published his works under the name Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, a supposed converted Jewish rabbi.

Irving’s erroneous teachings concerning the person of Jesus Christ and his interpretation of the book of Revelation (based on Lacunza’s fraudulent writings), eventually led to his conviction by the Church of Scotland for heresy. And it was Irving’s heretical works that influenced John N. Darby as his dispensational theology and a pre-tribulation “rapture” theory took shape.

Dr. Ice claims that Irving’s works only added to and complimented Darby’s own developing theological conclusions, but it was at the Powerscourt Conference in 1832, five years after Irving’s works were published, that Darby publicly revealed his pre-tribulation “rapture” theory, and by that time he was definitely influenced by Irving’s writings.

The modern adoption of dispensational theology has been strongly influenced by Cyrus Scofield, a dubious theologian with no formal training, through his Scofield Study Bible, Charles Ryrie and his Ryrie Study Bible, and, more recently, by Dr. John Walvoord, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary, and J. Dwight Pentecost, Professor Emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary, and a longtime member of the Plymouth Brethren (founded by John N. Darby), both of whom espoused dispensational theology in its entirety, including a pre-tribulation “rapture” theory. Dr. Walvoord’s numerous books on eschatology from the dispensational viewpoint have heavily influenced the modern adoption of the many variations and distinctives of Dispensationalism among protestants, and both his and J. Dwight Pentecost’s books on theology and eschatology are still being used to train seminary students at Dallas Theological Seminary and others.

Things to Come by Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, also influenced my early views on biblical eschatology, but he, like many others, could only assign a general meaning to the detailed and very specific parable of the ten virgins, and, like Darby, Pentecost wasn’t sure what to make of Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21, but suggested that this prophetic passage given to His disciples primarily concerned their immediate future and the future of Jewish believers during the tribulation. (See “The Olivet Prophecy”)

It does seem strange, though, that the Lord would respond to the disciples’ question concerning the signs of the time and the end of the age with a multitude of details, including the fact that future believers would read about it in the New Testament, and, yet, forget to mention the secret “rapture” of those who would come after them.

These influences and others have now effected numerous evangelical denominations and fellowships from Southern Baptist to Charismatic, though not all within these denominations and fellowships adhere to dispensational theology or a pre-tribulation “rapture” theory. Some even accept the pre-tribulation “rapture” theory without accepting the other dispensational distinctives, but a pre-tribulation “rapture” cannot take place unless all the distinctives of dispensational theology are correct.

The “middle ground” (of appeasement and religious political expediency) that some have taken in order to avoid the controversy and division is to discount scriptural prophecy entirely and emphasize only that we ought always to be ready.

It is true that we ought always to be ready, but to ignore the, as yet, unfulfilled biblical prophecies related to the church age is contrary to the Lord’s own instruction to His disciples in Matthew 24 and 25, Luke 21, and Mark 13.

***See I have warned you beforehand, Matthew 24:25*** (emphasis is the author’s)

We are warned, therefore, to be aware of the signs of the times, even though we do not know the day or the hour. But the signs of the times are a specific warning to the saints of those times. Are we, then, going to ignore the warning signs He gave us because we are afraid to enter into controversy?

And, if the truth is available with clarity, do we not want to know it and allow the Spirit of Truth to confirm it?

As I studied the origins and doctrine of Dispensationalism and the proof texts for a pre-tribulation “rapture” of the church I literally had a knot in my stomach and thought I was going to throw up as I discovered and confirmed one refutation after another, line upon line and precept upon precept until, after months of study, meditation, and prayer, the shocking truth was fully confirmed in my heart and mind.

I had previously discovered one amazing error of scriptural interpretation repeated by almost the entire modern evangelical church, a seemingly small error, but one that made the prophetic parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-9) indecipherable so that it could only be given a generalized interpretation of maintaining our readiness for the Lord’s return. And, with that and the stronghold of dispensational theology pulled down in my mind, I had round pegs to put in round holes and square pegs to put into square holes. Matthew 24, and the incredibly detailed parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 was now crystal clear and made perfect sense to me as it blended perfectly with the prophetic passages in Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Joel, James, etc. But it would not be good news for much of the church. (Which is, perhaps, the reason why evangelical protestants have so eagerly adopted dispensational theology.)

In spite of the joy I experienced in having this stronghold of doctrinal error and scriptural mis-interpretation eliminated in my soul, I was deeply concerned. The majority of evangelical western Christians today believe in a pre-tribulation “rapture” even if they do not adhere to the entirety of dispensational theology. Dr. Tim LaHaye, Hal Lindsey, Chuck Smith, Charles Swindoll, John F. MacArthur, David Jeremiah, and even, Chuck Missler, whose works I have come to greatly admire, all, presumably, godly men, are a few of the better known authors and ministers in this lineup, with LaHaye and his “Left Behind” series making him the most famous of these.

How could I, a complete unknown of no particular importance or influence in the body of Christ, come to a conclusion contrary to the conclusion of these great men?

Not easily, I grant you, but perhaps my anonymity (having no great ministerial or denominational investment in a false doctrine and erroneous interpretations of scripture) is a blessing.

And, I am not alone. There are others like me, including the following:

Jay Adams, Randy Alcorn, Henry Alford, Matthew Arnold, Augustine (A.D. 354-430) Roger Bacon (A.D. 1214-1274), J. Sidlow Baxter, Allistair Begg, Corrie Ten Bloom, David Brainerd, F. F. Bruce, John Bunyan, John Calvin, B. H. Carroll, William Cowper, Cyprian (A.D. 200-258), Didache (A.D. 100), John Gill, Robert Gundry, Hank Hanegraaff, Carl F. H. Henry, William Hendriksen, Matthew Henry, Herschell Hobbs, Hippolytus (A.D. 160-240), Irenaeus (A.D. 140-202), Adoniram Judson, John Knox, George Eldon Ladd, Hugh Latimer, C. S. Lewis, J. B. Lightfoot, Harold Lindsell, C. S. Lovett, Martin Luther, Walter Martin, Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-160), Dave McPherson, Jack McAlister, Alexander McLaren, Albert Mohler, Russell Moore, John Warwick Montgomery, Doug Moo, G. Campbell Morgan, H. C. G. Moule, George Mueller, Andrew Murray, Sir Isaac Newton, John Newton, Harold J. Ockenga, J. Edwin Orr, Ian Paisley, John Piper, Bernard Ramm, Paul Rees, A. T. Robertson, Pat Robertson, Marv Rosenthal, Oswald J. Smith, R. C. Sproul, Charles Spurgeon, John R. W. Stott, A. H. Strong, Merrell Tenny, J. H. Thayer, Tertulian (A.D. 150-220), B. B. Warfield, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, John Wesley, George Whitefield, William Wilberforce, David Wilkerson, and Ulrich Zwingli.

### The Distinctives of Dispensational Theology

The dispensational distinctive that God is dealing separately with Israel and the church, particularly in end time events, causes those who hold this view to distort biblical prophecy, especially Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, Luke 21, and the book of Revelation. Therefore, it is important to examine and refute this distinctive before we examine the distinctive of a pre-tribulation, church only resurrection-“rapture”.

The major interpretational problem for the dispensational distinctive that God is dealing with Israel and the church separately, is Paul’s teaching concerning the “mystery” of the “body of Christ”:

***When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs... (with the Jews)..., members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Ephesians 3:4-6 ESV (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)***

***And if they... (Jews)... do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in... (to the body of Christ)..., for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree... (Christ)..., how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! Romans 11:23-24 NIV (inserts are the author’s)***

What scripture reveals is that Jews and Gentiles are one body in Christ, and, we must assume that this includes all the saints of all time from Adam through the millennial reign who are now, or will be, “in Christ”, the mediator of the new covenant written in His blood. There

are no distinctions between Jew and Gentile, male and female, bondservant or free in Christ, and there is only one redemptive covenant (progressively revealed) for all time, from Adam all the way through eternity.

***For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:26-29 NASB***(emphasis is the author's)

The church does not replace national Israel. We are spiritual Jews in Christ, but we do not replace national Israel. (Galatians 3 and Romans 2:28,29). National Israel consists of those who are Jews racially. Spiritual Israel is now, neither Jew nor Gentile, but all those who are in Christ. Nor is the church grafted into Israel. Israel is not the olive tree. There is only one olive tree, Jesus Christ, and we Gentiles, who were not the natural branches, have been grafted into the natural olive tree (Christ). At the death and resurrection of Christ and the end of the temple worship and sacrifice system, the unbelieving Jews were debauched from the olive tree, and, from that point forward, the natural but debauched branches (Jews) can only be grafted back into the olive tree (Christ) by grace through faith the same as the Gentiles. Thus the Jews and Gentiles and every name written in the Lamb's Book of Life is, or will be, in Christ, the olive tree.

Christ is more than the church. As the olive tree He includes the church just as He includes the Old Testament saints prior to Abraham (OT saints who were neither Jew nor Gentile), the Old Testament saints of Israel prior to His resurrection (the natural branches), the Jews who are included in the church (natural branches grafted back into the olive tree), and, ultimately, the millennial saints.

The old covenant promises for national Israel will now be fulfilled only in Christ. The old covenant promises were not cancelled. Instead, the promises will be fulfilled in Him, who is now the mediator of the new covenant.

Now, all the promises of God, including the promises to national Israel, are "yes" in Christ. There are no separate promises to national Israel apart from Jesus Christ who will live and reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem for one thousand years.

***For as many as are the promises of God ... (this means "all", including the, as yet, unfulfilled covenant promises to national Israel)... , in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 1:20 NASB*** (insert and emphasis is the author's)

What was cancelled at the death of Jesus, the Christ, on the cross, was the old covenant institution of a temple sacrifice system, which was merely a "shadow" of the salvation to come under the new covenant in Christ. The old covenant saints were justified by their faith in God, but their justification was not complete until Jesus, the Messiah (Christ), fulfilled all the old covenant law and prophecies as the Son of Man and was then sacrificed for the sins of all men as the Lamb of God without spot or blemish.

What happened immediately after His death, according to Luke 16:19-31, Luke 23:42-43, and Ephesians 4:7-9, is that Jesus went into the paradise portion of Hades (region of the dead) and revealed Himself to the saints who had come to faith in God under the old covenants. These then were released from "prison" and accompanied the Lord to the paradise of God.

These old covenant saints, who were thus made to be participants in the new covenant, along with new covenant saints who are “dead” in Christ, will be resurrected in glory on “the last day”.

The word “dispensation”, as it is used by dispensational theologians means a system of dispensing salvation, and to claim that God has dispensed salvation differently through the ages is not only wrong but heretical.

There is now and always has been only one redemptive covenant. The promise of that covenant was given to Adam (Genesis 3:21), and it has been progressively revealed through the ages. But it is the same covenant, written in the blood of Jesus Christ since before the creation. Those who responded to God by faith prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ were accounted as being “righteous” through their obedient faith responses to God, but their salvation was not complete until Jesus revealed Himself to them in the Paradise portion of Hades (Ephesians 4:9,10).

God’s purpose in establishing a chosen nation was to produce a royal lineage for the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, Jesus Christ, but all the covenants and all the promises of God have their completion and fulfillment in Him.

Therefore, there is only one redemptive covenant, progressively revealed, from Adam all the way through the millennium.

Saints	Salvation	Covenants
Adam to Abraham – neither Jew nor Gentile	Righteousness accounted to men through faith in God until Christ revealed Himself to them in Paradise	The Adamic covenant, a blood covenant pointing to the new covenant in Christ
Abraham to the resurrection of Jesus Christ – Jews and Gentiles	Righteousness accounted to men through faith in God until Christ revealed Himself to them in Paradise. Salvation <u>not</u> limited to the Jews.	The Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic law, and the prophets pointing to the new covenant in Christ
Resurrection of Jesus Christ to the resurrection of all the saints on the last day	Righteousness only accounted to men through faith in Jesus Christ	The new covenant.
Millennium saints	Righteousness only accounted to men through faith in Jesus Christ.	The new covenant.

I came face to face with the heretical teaching that God’s redemptive plan for Jews is separate from His redemptive plan for Gentiles when a Charismatic group in San Angelo, Texas and a group of messianic Jews from Fort Worth whose ministry was called, “Prophecy Round-Up”, invited Gershon Salomon, leader of the “Israel Faithful and Temple Mount Movement”, to speak in San Angelo.

I understand Christian interest in the Temple Mount Movement, an Israeli group preparing to restore Solomon’s temple and begin temple worship and sacrifices again, because it points to the nearness of the fulfillment of prophecies related to the end times.

However, when the leader of Prophecy Round-Up asked Christians in attendance for donations to assist the Temple Mount Movement, I protested and admonished the Christians present for becoming a stumbling block, both to the Prophecy Round-Up group and to Gershon Salomon, by supporting this movement (and the theology of a dual system of salvation).

I then followed up with several conversations and letter exchanges with the leader of the Prophecy Round-Up group until he confessed, defensively and unrepentantly, that his dual salvation doctrine, which he was reluctant to openly profess because of men like me, was based entirely on Romans 11:25, 26.

***For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,***

***"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,  
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." Romans 11:25-26 NASB***

His claim was that the Jews who believe in God and faithfully follow the commandments of the law and the prophets will ultimately be redeemed on the day of the Lord even though a few predestined Jews have been allowed to have faith in Christ.

This, of course, is a denial of Romans 11:23,24, previously quoted and prefacing Romans 11:25,26. And these "faithful" will only be saved if they receive Christ by faith before they die or somehow survive the entire tribulation when the Jews flee to the wilderness after the Antichrist declares himself to be "God" in the rebuilt temple.

The preaching of the two prophets, Elijah and Enoch, on the streets of Jerusalem during the last half of the tribulation, is the preaching of Christ crucified, exactly as we are instructed to preach it now. Nor does the presence of these prophets in Israel preclude that the church entire has been removed from the world at that time.

In addition, the angel of God preaches Christ, and Him crucified, to the entire world after the two prophets are killed.

***And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel ... (the only gospel from beginning to end)... to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; Revelation 14:6 NASB (insert and emphasis is the author's)***

All Israel who survive the tribulation without taking the mark of the beast will be saved on the day of the Lord, but those who have rejected Him and died prior to the day of the Lord are lost.

This unfortunately includes Gershon Salomon and members of the Temple Mount and Israel Faithful Movement who do not receive Christ by grace through faith and do not survive the tribulation.

Therefore, the dispensational distinctive of God's separate plans of redemption for the Jews and for Gentiles is a heresy of the first order, and a HUGE stumbling block for the Jews.

This presentation was not meant to be exhaustive. It is only meant to bring dispensational doctrine and its distinctives into question. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the Berean reader to do his/her own research on the origins and distinctives of dispensational doctrine,

because it is only possible to imagine a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints if the first two distinctives are entirely correct.

Yet, when the reader examines the theory of a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” he/she will be shocked by the discovery that there is not one single piece of valid direct or indirect scriptural evidence to support the theory of a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints.

And, following that discovery, when fully confirmed in the believer’s heart and mind, will come a release from the stronghold of dispensational theology and its distinctives that will be like opening a door into a room filled with light.

### The pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints

The Dispensational distinctive of a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints has lulled the Laodicean church (the church whose “lukewarmness” is defined by the Lord as a blending of truth with error) into a spiritual stupor of false expectation.

Of course we want to believe the lie. But the Lord, who has warned us in scripture to be aware of the signs of the times, is bringing the truth to light.

“God has not destined us for wrath!” we hear the preacher exclaim as he comforts us with a scripture reference that both he and we believe to be a proof text for the pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of the church.

The scripture itself (1 Thessalonians 5:9) is correct. We are not destined for wrath. But the application of this scripture as a proof text that we, the church, will not be present during any part of the “tribulation” is grossly invalid and does not comply with any acceptable exegesis of scripture.

The word translated as “wrath” in this passage is the Greek word transliterated as *thymos* (Strong’s #2472), and it refers to the retributive wrath of God. But “tribulation” as in “the great tribulation” is the Greek word transliterated as *thilipsis* (Strong’s #2347) and it means pressure (as in being squeezed literally and figuratively), affliction, anguish, persecution, and, trouble.

“Wrath” and “tribulation” are not the same thing, scripturally or otherwise.

If we are to be absent from the “tribulation”, what will we then make of the Lord’s own words when He said, **“In this world you will have tribulation...(thilipsis)...”**?

In the book of Revelation the retributive wrath (*thymos*) of God does not take place until after the opening of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1), which is after the “revealing” of the Antichrist when he declares himself to be “God” in the temple and after the great falling away.

The first six seals are “tribulation”, a time of severe testing intended to produce repentance, and it is during the first six seals of tribulation that an uncountable number of saints from every nation, tribe, and tongue are saved and many are martyred (Revelation 7:9-17). But this is not God’s “wrath”. This is a time of squeezing, a time of trouble, resulting in the great last days harvest of souls.

What? You didn’t know there was a difference between the two words, or that their specific applications were so important and so grossly mis-used?

This is just the tip of the iceberg, and what the reader will learn, if he/she is like the Bereans, whom Paul said were “noble” because they examined the scriptures to see if what he was saying was true, is going to do more than merely settle the question.

Not all pre-tribulation “rapture” theorists adhere to the same interpretations of various “proof texts” used to formulate the various schools of thought concerning a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture”, and a thorough examination of each would be exhaustive. And one of the many signs of false doctrine is that it keeps changing in response to legitimate criticisms like a virus mutating to counteract injections of antibiotics.

Many variations of the pre-trib “rapture” theory exist, but it would be exhaustive to cover them all. Therefore I will examine Dr. Tim LaHaye’s “proof texts” in this commentary, because he is the most famous, recognizable, and outspoken of those who hold to the various dispensational, pre-tribulation “rapture” theories.

My criticism of Dr. LaHaye’s exegesis of the scriptures concerning the resurrection-“rapture” may seem harsh, but the examination of his particular proof texts and conclusions related to a pre-trib “rapture” are not personal. As one who agreed with his position at one time, I empathize with him, and I recognize that his “investment” in the erroneous doctrine of Dispensationalism and its accompanying distinctive of a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints is extremely heavy (and a bondage difficult to overcome).

He has developed a huge multi-million dollar ministry around it, and, in the sense that he has helped draw public attention to the fact that the end times are upon us, his ministry is a positive one. However, the ultimate negative impact on believers who have adopted his “expert” opinion without conducting their own Spirit-guided exegesis of scripture, outweighs any positive impact his ministry has had.

It should be noted that Dr. LaHaye and other supporters of dispensational doctrine and a pre-tribulation, church only “rapture” theory have founded a “Pre-Trib Research Center” to defend their beliefs from men like me.

I naturally examined the research center’s teachings in detail (as should the reader), but it is not necessary to deal with all the error being defended by Dr. Tim LaHaye and others. An examination of the primary distinctives will collapse this gigantic balloon of hot air with an audible “whoosh” in the spirit and soul of any believer who wants to know the Truth (deliberate capital “T”).

The complexity of the doctrine with all its twisted proof texts and various schools of thought makes it difficult for most believers to thoroughly evaluate or refute, which is typical of all false teaching. But an evaluation of the key elements is all that is needed to unravel this complicated, erroneous theory.

Therefore, I will not address every error and every proof text being used by LaHaye and others. I have examined them, but I do not want to exhaust the reader with too much evidence. I trust that the Spirit of Truth will lead the disciple whose balloon of pre-trib “rapture” belief has been ruptured, to follow up like a noble Berean with the rest.

And I will remind the reader that the Lord defines the Laodicean type of church as the church that blends truth with error. **Dispensationalism and its distinctives, including the pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints, is one of the greatest sources of error in the protestant evangelical churches today.** See [Who Are The Laodiceans?](#)

An excerpt from his book, Charting the End Times, a modern version of Clarence Larkin’s Dispensational Truth (one of my favorite books in earlier years), will quickly demonstrate the weakness of the dispensational pre-tribulation “rapture” position and Dr. LaHaye’s numerous errors of interpretation.

In Charting the End Times, LaHaye correctly explains that the message to the seven churches (Revelation 2 and 3) was to seven specific churches of that day, although there were at

least ten actual churches in existence at that time, and that this message was also to seven types of churches that demonstrate the characteristics of the original seven churches to whom the Lord spoke through John.

The order in which He addressed the churches, says LaHaye, seems to establish the order in which they would be predominant in church history. These churches, all in what is now the modern country of Turkey, do not exist today, but, at the very least, the three “types” of greatest interest are still present today in various places around the world. These are the Philadelphian church, whom the Lord promised to “keep from the hour of testing that will come on the whole world”, the Sardis church, and the Laodicean church.

The Philadelphia type of church was predominant in Europe and America in the 1700’s and early 1800’s, and, according to LaHaye, the Laodicean church, the lukewarm church that the Lord promises to spew out of His mouth, will be the final predominant type of church in this lineup.

The following is a quote from pages 48-49 of Charting the End Times by Dr. Tim LaHaye:

“The apostles repeatedly warned believers to be on guard against doctrinal defection or apostasy. That we have so much defection today is a clear sign that we are in the end times.

“Even though the New Testament doesn’t give specific prophecies concerning the church age, we have three sets of passages that paint a general picture of the course of this age. All three indicate that apostasy will characterize Christendom during the time that the rapture takes place.”

His chart of the seven types of churches in historic order, immediately above the aforementioned excerpt, points downward like a General Motors profit and loss statement prior to the Obama bailout, and the headline reads, “Continual Growth and Increasing Apostasy”.

Most modern evangelical believers will nod their heads in agreement as they read the chart and the text, but pay attention to his primary assertions:

1. The New Testament doesn’t give any specific prophecies concerning the church age;
2. Apostasy will characterize Christendom during the time that the rapture takes place.

It is extremely interesting that LaHaye can say the New Testament does not give any specific prophecies concerning the church age (from the day of Pentecost until the resurrection) and in another section of the text actually claim the prophecy of Paul, given in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 as a specific proof text for the pre-tribulation “rapture” of the church.

The specific prophetic passages in the New Testament directly related to the church age are so numerous that an exhaustive list would overwhelm the reader. Therefore, I will highlight just a few of the indisputable specific prophetic passages relating directly to the church in the end times:

1. Matthew 24:1-2 – Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple, which occurred in 70AD, during the church age (and, as will be demonstrated, the entirety of this chapter relates to the church) – repeated in Mark 13 and Luke 21; this prophecy also included the signs of the times at the end of the church age; Matthew 24:3-51; Mark 13:5-37; Luke 21:8-36, the very passages that confounded Darby, the popularizer of

- dispensational theology, and, that apparently still confounds Dr. Tim LaHaye. (See “The Olivet Prophecy”);
2. Joel 2:28-29 – Peter quoted this prophetic passage as being partially fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, the beginning of the church age;
  3. James 5:7,8 – James prophesies that there will be both an early and a latter rain on the church prior to the day of the Lord;
  4. Revelation 2 and 3 – In contradiction of his own statement, LaHaye points out that this message to the seven churches was a specific prophetic revelation of the historic predominance of the seven types of churches as well as a specific prophetic revelation of judgment on those who do not repent;
  5. Revelation 3:10 – the Lord specifically prophesies that the Philadelphian type of church will be protected from experiencing the wrath of God during the “time of Jacob’s trouble”, though not necessarily in absentia;
  6. Matthew 25:1-13 – the parable of the ten virgins (which will be revealed as one of the most specific prophetic passages in the New Testament) supported by numerous Old Testament and New Testament passages;
  7. Ephesians 4:11-15 – Paul prophesies the maturing and unity of the church, attaining to the “full measure” of Jesus Christ, which did not happen in his lifetime, nor has it happened, yet. But, because it is the purpose of the Lord to bring His church to maturity and fullness in the world, it will happen.

Dispensational theology views everything in the book of Revelation after chapter 3 as being irrelevant for the church, but they ignore the fact that the entire Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to the apostle, John, for the church.

**"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." Revelation 22:16 NASB** (emphasis is the author's)

In spite of LaHaye's dis-acknowledgment of the existence of biblical prophecies specifically related to the church, he does claim that biblical prophecy reveals a pre-tribulation “rapture” of the church, which he says will be made up primarily of the Laodicean type of believers. Yet, he ignores the prophetic promise made to the Laodicean church if they do not repent of their blending of truth with error.

***So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.* Revelation 3:16 NASB** (emphasis is the author's)

The Lord's promise to the Laodicean church is that He WILL spit them out of His mouth unless they repent of their their blending of truth with error, and, yet, it is this church that LaHaye says the Lord will take up in the “rapture.” based on a promise made only to the Philadelphian type of church.

This should, just by context, raise a spiritual red flag in the reader's mind.

**And, if I believed it, my despair would be inconsolable.**

On page 106 of Charting End Times, LaHaye gives his succinct synopsis of the pre-trib “rapture” theory as follows:

“1. *The Pre-Tribulation View* - Christ comes in fulfillment of His own promise in Revelation 3:10 to keep His church from ‘the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (KJV).’ This is the prevailing view and the one held by the authors of this book.”

It is interesting that he should pick this particular distinctive of the pre-trib “rapture” theory as his prima facie evidence. He has already stated that the Lord will be coming back for a defeated, worldly, lukewarm church, the church that He threatens to spew out of his mouth, the church that has blended truth with error, the church from which there will be a massive apostasy too horrible to imagine, and the reason the Lord is coming back to carry this sorry excuse for a church back to His father’s house in glory is His promise to the Philadelphian church, the church that exemplified His unity, His glory, and His love.

Is LaHaye serious?

LaHaye’s explanation for this convoluted argument is that the literal Philadelphian church no longer exists and that this promise to a now non-existent church is, therefore, magically and mysteriously transformed into a promise to the “universal church”.

Readers poring over LaHaye’s book in a stupor of reverential awe could not possibly miss this, but they do. The promise was made to a literal church at the time of John’s revelation, and it was given to them and no other church existing at the time, because of their extreme faithfulness in a time of persecution.

Not even the church at Smyrna, for whom the Lord had no criticisms, received this promise. It follows then that if the promise did not apply to any of the other six literal churches at the time, then it would not apply to any of the six other “types” of church present at the time of the tribulation, much less to the “universal church” that primarily exhibits the characteristics of the Laodicean and Sardis churches.

The fact that there were at least ten churches in existence at the time of this prophetic utterance by the Lord indicates that the weight of the message, though it did apply specifically to seven literal churches at that time, was made primarily and prophetically to seven characteristic “types” of the church throughout the ages just as LaHaye correctly claims.

The promise, then, is to the Philadelphian “type” of church.

The Laodicean church (LaHaye’s “universal church”), though, is in deep trouble. They have no such promise.

***Since you ... (the literal church at Philadelphia)... have kept my command to endure... (persecution by the synagogue of Satan)... patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. Revelation 3:10 NIV*** (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)

LaHaye couples this promise (which he erroneously claims as a “universal” promise) with the promise that we, the church, are not “appointed” or “destined” for wrath. (1 Thessalonians 5:9) However, LaHaye, like many pre-trib “rapture” theorists use this passage inappropriately.

***For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*** 1 Thessalonians 5:9,10 KJV

As a writer I am acutely aware of sentence structure. The specific wrath spoken of here in this sentence is the wrath of eternal judgment, not the retributive wrath of God's judgment on a fallen, unbelieving world. And those who are not "appointed" or "destined" for eternal wrath are those who have received Jesus Christ by faith, regardless of which type of church they participated in.

In addition, pre-tribulation "rapture" theorists use the words "tribulation" and "wrath" interchangeably. However, as we have already noted, **tribulation** and **wrath** are not synonymous, and they are not the same word in scripture. We are subject to tribulation in this world, but we are not subject to the judgment of God's wrath.

Even the literal Philadelphian church was subject to tribulation, and the Philadelphian "type" of church is subject to tribulation, too.

After Jesus described the "tribulation" during the "end of the age" in Mathew 24:13 He states: "He that endures to the end will be saved" (KJV).

In Revelation 3:11,12, Philadelphian believers are then encouraged by the Lord to continue to endure trials and tribulations in order to "overcome" such trials, "holding fast", "firmly fixed" to become a "victor" and receive the "crown" of eternal life.

***But he who stands firm...***(through tribulation)... ***to the end will be saved.*** Matthew 24:13 NIV (insert and emphasis is the author's)

The Philadelphian church is the only type of church to receive a promise of special protection during the outpouring of God's wrath ("the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world") The assumption that they will not be present during some part of the tribulation is, therefore, totally incorrect.

Likewise, the claim that this promise made to the Philadelphian church only is now a promise to the "universal church" is not only erroneous, but an obviously foolish eisegesis (reading meaning into) of scripture.

The biblical use of the word "hour" can mean sixty minutes, or it can symbolize a short period of time when compared with another symbolic time frame such as "week". It can also mean the specific time of an event, such as "12 noon".

"Hour" in this passage is not likely to mean the "week" of tribulation as it is described elsewhere. That would be a mixed metaphor. It is most likely to mean the appointed time of the pouring out of God's wrath after the opening of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1).

There is nothing in the passage to suggest removal prior to the opening of the seventh seal, and there is definitely nothing to suggest that this promise has anything to do with the "universal church", much less the Laodicean church.

So there you have it. If the "universal" church is not characteristic of the Philadelphian church at the time of the tribulation there is no promise. If the "universal" church is characteristic of the Philadelphian church at that time then LaHaye is wrong about the strongly negative future of the church, and God can surely "keep" them from experiencing the "hour" of His wrath just as He will "keep" a remnant of Israel from experiencing the "hour" of His wrath as they are protected and preserved in the wilderness by the archangel, Michael.

We must remember, too, that martyrdom is not an experience of God's wrath. In some cases, even in the Philadelphian church, it may be the specific will of God, and those who experience martyrdom in faith are blessed.

***He was given power...***(authority by God)... ***to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.***  
Revelation 13:7 NIV (emphasis and inserts are the author's)

The second coming of Christ has been taught historically, prior to the emergence of dispensational theology in the 1800's, as a single event, with all the resurrections occurring as follows:

1. The resurrection of Christ, the "first fruits" (Romans 6:9);
2. The resurrection of the two witnesses who are restored to "the breath of life" and then raptured (which likely occurs at the same time as the rapture of all the saints);
3. The resurrection of all the saints from Adam through the tribulation, and the "rapture" of living saints on the last day immediately prior to the day of the Lord;
4. The resurrection of all unredeemed unbelievers at the end of the Millennium.

LaHaye divides the resurrections as follows:

1. The resurrection of Christ, the "Firstfruits" (Romans 6:9);
2. The resurrection-"rapture" of the Church (only) prior to the entire seven year tribulation period;
3. The resurrection of Old Testament saints and martyred tribulation saints on the last day;
4. The resurrection of Millennium saints at the end of the Millennium;
5. The resurrection of all unredeemed unbelievers at the end of the Millennium.

Some defenders of the pre-trib "rapture" position claim that there have been many resurrections, and, therefore, the number of resurrections is not an issue. Among these they include Enoch, Elijah, Lazarus, the two witnesses in Revelation, etc.

Elijah and Enoch (who will be the "two witnesses"), though, were simply taken up to heaven in their natural bodies and will be returned to Earth during the tribulation in their natural bodies. They will be killed, and, three and a half days later, raised again to life. Then they will be "raptured". The possibility even exists that their "rapture" will take place at the same time as the "rapture" of all living saints at the end of the tribulation.

The "rapture" of Elijah and Enoch, though, is demonstrated in scripture to take place at a specific time, but the supposed "rapture" of Christian believers before the tribulation is a "secret" event, not specifically designated in scripture.

Lazarus and others in scripture were not "raptured" but raised from death to life, and they eventually died again. Theirs is a future resurrection to eternal life in the glorious body on the last day at the end of the tribulation.

One item of interest in the LaHaye model is that Christian believers from the day of Pentecost forward will be resurrected before any of the Old Testament saints.

So...for some reason, God decides that the church "saints" have dibs on first to rise, and poor old Moses, Abraham and the other Old Testament saints have to wait another seven years just because they weren't part of the "church", even though they were included "in Christ", the olive tree, on the day He revealed Himself to them in the paradise portion of Hades, which occurred before any of the 120 upper room believers were included in Christ. (First is last and last is first?)

By way of explanation, the Lord declared His disciples to be “clean” while He was with them, meaning that they were justified by their faith in exactly the same way Old Testament believers were justified, and they received the Spirit as Old Testament believers when Jesus breathed on them. But they did not receive the baptism of the Spirit until the day of Pentecost. Therefore, they were included in Christ after the Old Testament saints.

Nor does this satisfy the distinctive of God having a separate plan for Jews and Gentiles, because all those who were justified by faith in God prior to Abraham were not Jews or Gentiles. The distinction of “Jew” and “Gentile” did not take place until Abraham. Prior to Abraham there were no “Jews” or “Gentiles.” So, if they were excluded from the special resurrection of the church because God is dealing separately with the Jews, are these non-Jew, non-church saints going to have their own resurrection, too? That would then make LaHaye’s model to include six resurrections.

Show me the scripture.

It should be noted here that the “coming” (advent) of the Lord on the last day to resurrect the living and dead saints is the Greek word transliterated as *parousia* (Strong’s #3952). This word, also used to describe His physical return to Mount Olivet (the site where He prophesied the signs of His coming) signifies, not merely His momentary coming for the saints immediately prior to the resurrection-“rapture”, but His continuous presence with them from the resurrection to His return to Mount Olivet, to the wedding supper of the Lamb, through the millennium, and through all eternity.

This *parousia* is seen as a single event in scripture.

***And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. Hebrews 9:26,27 NASB*** (emphasis is the author’s)

There is no second secret appearance for some special group of church only saints followed by a third appearance for the rest of those who eagerly await Him.

His *parousia* this second time is a single, continuous event, and, according to Acts 3:19-21, the *parousia* of Jesus cannot occur until the “period of restoration of all things”. He cannot, therefore, come and go and come again.

The “restoration of all things” is a general reference to the establishment of His millennial kingdom and the fulfillment of God’s promises. And He cannot come before “the restoration of all things”, which begins with the last day, not with some secret event seven years earlier.

Once He comes, He comes. From the gathering of all the saints through the entire Millennium is a single *parousia*.

***Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. Acts 3:19-21 NASB*** (emphasis is the author’s)

Nor can we count His coming in the sky and then retreating back to heaven with the defeated, worldly, lukewarm church for seven years as a part of the same *parousia* as the day of the Lord.

Why not?

LaHaye has that answer. LaHaye claims that He (Jesus Christ, as the church and as the Holy Spirit that indwells the church) has to be taken out of the way before the Antichrist can be “revealed”. (Examined later in this commentary). So, in LaHaye’s model He comes (*parousia*) to meet His defeated, worldly, lukewarm church in the air then retreats to heaven where He, as the church or as the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way (end of *parousia*) so that the Antichrist can be revealed. Then He comes again (new *parousia*) to resurrect the Old Testament saints and the tribulation saints. That makes three advents, and scripture only acknowledges two.

Confusing? You betcha if you’re trying to manipulate scripture to prove a pre-trib resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints.

John, in Revelation 20:4-6, calls the resurrection of all the righteous saints of God, living and dead, including tribulation saints, with the dead saints being resurrected first, the “first resurrection”. John also states that these (all those whose names have been written in the Lamb’s Book of Life) will live and reign with Christ 1000 years. Therefore, this “first resurrection” must contain all the saints of God from Adam through the tribulation, but not the millennium saints.

***Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*** Revelation 20:6 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)

The only day of the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the “rapture” of living saints is referred to scripturally as “the last day.”

1. **John 6:39**

*"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on **the last day**." ("All" means all. Even the Old Testament saints have seen Christ as He presented Himself to them in the paradise portion of Hades.)*

2. **John 6:40**

*"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on **the last day**." ("Everyone" means everyone.)*

3. **John 6:44**

*"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on **the last day**."*

4. **John 6:40**

*"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on **the last day**." ("Everyone" means everyone.)*

It is apparent here that all of those who are **in Christ** will be resurrected, both those who are still alive, and those who are dead, on “the last day”. Everyone means everyone, living and dead, Old Testament and New Testament, at the same time, but sequentially, on “the last day”.

Paul, who was instructed in a direct revelation by the Lord concerning the resurrection-“rapture” of the saints gives us the order succinctly in 1 Corinthians 15:22,23:

***For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His...(parousia)... coming...***

Paul makes three distinct claims:

1. “All” believers of all time will be made alive “in Christ”. Therefore, every saint from Adam forward will be “in Christ” at the resurrection-“rapture” of the saints;
2. The first resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the “first fruits”;
3. The next (and only) are all those who are Christ’s at His coming (i.e. on “the last day”).

In 1 Corinthians Paul also states that the resurrection-“rapture” will take place at the last trumpet, and in Revelation 11:15, immediately after the two witnesses are raptured, the seventh and last trumpet is sounded, which is an indication that the resurrection-“rapture” of all the saints, living and dead, including the two witnesses takes place at the seventh trumpet.

***Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51,52 NASB*** (emphasis is the author’s)

Paul, who also wrote the primary proof text used to describe a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17), describes only one all-inclusive resurrection-“rapture” of the saints.

Some Dispensationalists use the term “in Christ” as pertaining only to the church. In 1 Corinthians 15:22,23 above we see the phrase, *For as in Adam all die, so also **in Christ all** will be made alive*. The “all” in this case is a reference to all the saints from Adam forward, not just all the saints in the church. Therefore, the term “in Christ” does not refer only to the church, and to make the dispensational claim that it does is both spiritual arrogance and spiritual ignorance.

The church has a special function and a special gift. It is our commission to BE the manifestation of Christ in the world until the end of this present age, and we are the first recipients of the promise of His Spirit living in us and manifesting through us by grace through faith. But we are not the only ones to be included “in Christ” or the only ones to be grafted into the olive tree. All the saints of all time have the distinction of being “in Christ”, and all the saints of all time are grafted into the olive tree.

It is also clear that the resurrection-“rapture” of all the saints living and dead will take place after the tribulation.

***Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*** Matthew 24:29-31 KJV (emphasis is the author's)

***But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven...***(those still alive on earth and those who are in the paradise of God in heaven awaiting their complete redemption as sons of God)... Mark 13:24-26 NASB (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

From the “four winds” is a metaphor for everywhere, “from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.” The idea is that this resurrection is all-inclusive. How can this be anything but a resurrection-“rapture” of all living and dead saints on the last day?

Note the following:

1. This event takes place after the entire “tribulation” but prior to the judgment portion of the day of the Lord;
2. It is a visible, not invisible “secret” event;
3. It causes the tribes of the earth to “mourn”, meaning that they recognize what is happening and what is about to happen to them (i.e. judgment and wrath);
4. All of the “elect” are gathered in the same event.
5. The “gathering” takes place on earth (“from the four winds” or “farthest end of the earth”) and in heaven (i.e. the dead in Christ).

***According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming...(*parousia*)... of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*** 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 NIV (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

The coming (*parousia*) of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection (rapture) of the living saints who have endured to the end (i.e. until “the last day”), all take place on “the last day.”

In Revelation, the key book of prophecy concerning the end times, the “saints” are still on earth during the tribulation, and God allows many to be martyred for the faith. These are not the 144,000 “sealed ones”. These are Christian believers all around the world.

***Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4 NASB***

These tribulation saints appear in another time specific passage immediately after the sealing of the 144,000 further identifying them as not being associated in any way with the 144,000.

***After these things... (after six seals of the scroll of God's judgment have been opened and the 144,000 are sealed for protection)... I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever Amen."***

***Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?"***

***I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7:9-14 NASB (emphasis is the author's)***

Note the following:

1. These from every nation are tribulation saints, but these are not all the saints;
2. The emphasis on there being a vast number of martyred tribulation saints indicates the exciting presence of a massive revival during the tribulation unlike anything the church has experienced prior to the tribulation;
3. The event takes place after the opening of the first six seals of "tribulation", but "after these things" may mean after all the events of the tribulation or merely the events prior to the opening of the seventh seal which begins the wrath of God.

The fact that this description is of tribulation saints only, prior to the last day, suggests the greater possibility that these are martyred tribulation saints present in heaven, but not, yet, resurrected, on the last day.

Some pre-trib "rapture" theorists rightfully concerned with this evidence of a massive number of tribulation saints martyred during the first half of Daniel's seventieth week, which we traditionally call "the tribulation", have attributed their evangelization to the 144,000. Otherwise, pre-tribbers would have to admit that the church is definitely present during the tribulation.

There is no indication that the 144,000 are commissioned to go out and evangelize the world, whether as literal Jews of spiritual Jews. Whoever they are, they have a very special function in the millennial kingdom, but there are two very good reasons why the 144,000 will not evangelize the world during the tribulation.

The first is that they will not have the time or freedom to disperse themselves to every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. If they are literal Jews the Antichrist will definitely be aware of them, and he will attempt to hinder them in any way possible.

Secondly, if they are spiritual Jews then they are the church, and it is the church's commission to evangelize the world, even to the end of the age.

***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*** (“with you until” when?)  
Matthew 28:19-20 NASB (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

**The CHURCH'S commission lasts until the end of the age.** And as you read that passage again you will begin to know in your spirit that the church is not only present during the tribulation but that the extreme persecution experienced during the tribulation is going to produce not only a massive revival but a massive evangelization of the world that fulfills the Lord's commission for the church and glorifies Him exactly as He prophesied.

***After these things...***(after six seals of the scroll of God's judgment have been opened and the 144,000 are sealed for protection)... ***I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup>saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever Amen."***

***Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?"***

***I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*** Revelation 7:9-14 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

***"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."***

John 17:22,23 NASB

It is clear that Christian believers will be present at a time after the Antichrist declares himself to be “God”, a time during which anyone who has not received the mark of the beast will not be able to participate in the world economy, and a time in which those who refuse to take the mark and to worship the Antichrist as “God” are subject to execution. But those who are martyred for their faith are called “blessed” by the Lord.

Pre-tribbers will, of course, claim that the “rapture” is the end of the age and that the tribulation is part of the Old Testament “seventy weeks” of Daniel. The two primary problems with that interpretation, of course, are 1) that God is obviously and gloriously dealing with Gentiles from every nation, tribe, and tongue all the way through the tribulation, and 2) scripture only reveals one resurrection-“rapture” of saints, living and dead.

The tribulation is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, but so are many New Testament events. And, more importantly, the uncountable number of believers from every nation, tongue, and tribe who are saved during the tribulation, are saved by their faith in Christ, and in Him crucified.

There will be martyrs and there will be born-again survivors who hold fast to the faith through tribulations all the way to the “last day” (the first resurrection).

The resurrection of all those who are dead in Christ, from Adam all the way forward through the tribulation, and the “rapture” of saints still alive at that time, will take place on the “last day”, just prior to the judgments of the great and terrible “day of the Lord.”

This is the same “last day” that Jesus appears in the clouds as demonstrated in Matthew 24:29-31.

The fourth and final resurrection is the resurrection of all those whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and it occurs at the end of the 1000 years after the Lord puts down the final rebellion.

The Jews who survive the tribulation and come to faith in Christ on the day of the Lord will be regenerated at that time as natural born again men (...and so all Israel shall be saved...). Gentiles who survive the tribulation and are judged to be “sheep” (i.e. they aided God’s people during the tribulation without coming to faith at that time) will also be regenerated after the Bema judgment (Matthew 25:31-46).

These are those who will repopulate the Earth during the 1000 years.

The First Resurrection	The Last Resurrection
All of the saints, living and dead, with the dead saints being resurrected first	The rest of mankind
On the last day immediately prior to the day of the Lord	At the end of the millennium to face the great White Throne Judgment

According to the revelation of the Lord given to John, the “first resurrection” specifically includes tribulation saints. Therefore, it is not possible to place the resurrection of dead saints and the resurrection-“rapture” of living saints as described in 1 Thessalonians 20:4-6 prior to the tribulation. (See the Comparison Chart of Resurrection Passages at the end of this commentary).

Another scripture passage that has been mis-interpreted to agree with a pre-tribulation “rapture” theory is 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

***For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 2 Thessalonians 2:7 NASB***

The “mystery of lawlessness” is a reference to the Antichrist, and this passage appears to indicate that the Antichrist is restrained or prevented from a full manifestation of power and will until “he” (whoever or whatever “he” is) is “taken out of the way.” (Every interpretation of this passage uses a non-capitalized “he” in this passage. Does that give you a clue?)

Pre-trib “rapture” theorists interpret this to mean that Christ or the Holy Spirit indwelling the church will be taken out of the way before the Antichrist can be revealed.

We have already seen that the church is not out of the way at the time that the Antichrist declares himself to be God, which is the event Paul specifically identifies as the “revealing” of the Antichrist.

It should be noted, too, that it is this event (the “revealing” of Antichrist) that causes the Jews to flee to the wilderness.

But if pre-trib “rapture” theorists are saying that God, who is restraining or holding back the mystery of lawlessness, will continue to restrain or hold back until He (capitalized), God, is taken out of the way, a serious problem exists. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, the Son are inseparable. Where one is, the others are also. And if God, as the Son, Jesus Christ, indwelling believers as the Holy Spirit, is taken out of the way (i.e. believers “raptured”) prior to the tribulation then what about the two prophets, Elijah and Enoch, who preach Christ on the streets of Jerusalem after the Antichrist is revealed? Will they not have the Holy Spirit? Will they not also “restrain” the Antichrist as they are gifted with the power of supernatural fire to destroy those who attempt to destroy them? (Revelation 11:5)

There is, therefore, no time when God is not present during the tribulation.

Fortunately we do have a scriptural clue concerning the “he” (non-capitalized) that restrains the Antichrist.

***However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince. Daniel 10:21 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)***

The archangel, Michael, (the protector of Israel) removes his restraint, allowing Satan to possess the Antichrist. Then in the Antichrist’s orgy of unrestrained power he takes his seat in the temple and declares to the world that he is “God.”

This is the “revealing” of the Antichrist. The 144,000 and their followers know who he is. The church has known who he is, but at this point God releases His restraint and the Antichrist, possessed now by Satan, is “revealed” or “exposed” completely.

Keep in mind that Michael does not abandon Israel. The Jews who recognize that they have been deceived by the Antichrist and flee to the wilderness continue to be protected from Satan’s (Antichrist) wrath by Michael. God’s removal of the Antichrist’s restraint, though, is a necessary event prior to the outpouring of God’s (*orges*) wrath.

I have heard people say that it is unlikely that the church would be present after the Antichrist comes into power, because we would know who he is and tell the whole world.

Really? So what? Right now in the United States a majority of the population profess to be “Christian”. And, although almost the entire professing church in America believes that abortion is murder, we have been powerless to convince anyone else or to do anything about it.

We Christians have even helped to elect an anti-Israel president who is putting the sovereignty of the United States of America on the line as fast as he possibly can.

Why would we think that a deceived and godless world will believe what we say about the Antichrist, especially when it is he who will appear to restore peace and prosperity in the world? (Which also tells us that neither peace nor prosperity are in the world at the time of his rise to power.)

And what TV network would carry our story? Fox News will have long since vanished from the scene, and Christian television and radio will have been banned world wide.

In order to put the whole picture in perspective we will look at 2 Thessalonians 2:1-16 as a whole:

***Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ... (Paul relates our being “gathered together to him” with the general time of the day of the Lord, but not the specific day of the Lord) ... Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion ... (apostasy or falling away from the faith connected in some way with the man of lawlessness) ... comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.***

***Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what ... (the power of God through the archangel, Michael, the prince of Israel) ... is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his ... (appropriate) ... time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he ... (Michael) ... who now restrains it ... (the mystery of lawlessness) ... will do so until ... (he, the Antichrist, comes to be revealed, and) ... he ... (Michael) ... is out of the way. ... (It is not God that is taken out of the way, but God’s restraint) ... And then the lawless one will be revealed ... (exposed) ..., whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Ephesians 2:1-18 (ESV) (insert’s are the author’s)***

The “strong delusion” applies primarily to those who follow the Antichrist and take the mark of the beast. There will be both Gentiles and Jews who have not been justified, yet, by faith in Christ, but who will not take the mark of the beast. Many of these will survive the tribulation, and it will be these Jews and the “sheep” of the Gentiles who will enter into the Millennium when the Lord takes His place on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

There is a suggestion here that the apostate Christians who “did not love (cling to and obey after knowing) the truth”, will come under the same “strong delusion” accompanied by false signs and wonders that those who have never received the truth will be under. (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

The surviving Gentiles who are judged to be “sheep” and the surviving Jews will receive Christ and enter into the millennial kingdom “in Christ” as natural, but “born again” men, and God’s laws will be written on their hearts just as they have been written on ours (though some have difficulty in “seeing” them).

It is some of their offspring, though, that will eventually be involved in a final rebellion against the iron rod rule of Christ at the end of the millennium.

2 Thessalonians 2:3,4 specifically states that the resurrection will not come until both the apostasy and the revealing of the man of lawlessness takes place as he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being “God”.

***Let no one in any way deceive you, for it... (the resurrection)... will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4 NASB*** (emphasis is the author's)

This passage clearly identifies the time of the (one and only) resurrection as being after both the apostasy and the revealing of Antichrist, and the only way for pre-trib "rapture" theorists to get around it is to introduce an "extra" and "secret" (i.e. not shown anywhere in scripture) resurrection-"rapture" of dead (church only) saints and living (church) saints prior to tribulation with the resurrection of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 supposedly being the resurrection of Old Testament and tribulation saints. However, as you read that passage in context you will find that Paul, who assumed that he might be alive on the day of the Lord, included himself among those who would resurrected either as a living or as a dead saint on that day. He had no other expectation. Either he would still be alive on the last day and be "raptured", or he would dead in Christ and resurrected on the last day.

If Paul expected to be included in a resurrection-"rapture" on the last day, then Paul expected the church to be resurrected or "raptured" on the last day as well (along with the Old Testament saints).

Therefore, Paul specifically states that the resurrection of both the living and the dead saints, (old and new testament) including himself, would take place after the apostasy and after the man of lawlessness is revealed.

Read that entire passage again, now, and let your Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, guide you into the truth:

***Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him... (inclusive of those who are already dead and those who are alive at the time)..., that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord... (meaning the entire general time of the day of the Lord)... has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4*** (emphasis and inserts are the author's)

Paul included himself, and all believers living and dead, in this resurrection that takes place after the apostasy and after the revealing of Antichrist, which he specifically identifies as being the event in which the Antichrist takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

It is generally accepted that the event of the Antichrist being "revealed" also initiates the opening of the seventh seal and the pouring out of God's wrath, also known as the "great tribulation."

It does not necessarily follow, however, that the resurrection-"rapture" takes place immediately after the Antichrist is revealed. The revealing of the Antichrist is a pivotal, hallmark event that everyone alive at the time will recognize, and the primary thrust of Paul's message is that until you see that sign, the resurrection-"rapture" of the saints is not imminent.

. And we, upon whom the fulfillment of the ages has come, should pay heed to Paul's paraphrased warning: ***Let no one in any way deceive you, for the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the resurrection-“rapture” of living saints will not come until the apostasy and the revealing of Antichrist comes first.***

Revelation 8:1 says that there will be “silence” in heaven about half an hour after the opening of the seventh seal. This “silence” indicates a period of time during which the Antichrist is allowed to have full expression before the wrath of God is poured out on the unbelieving world.

The Lord Himself reveals a remarkable sign given in response to the disciples' question about the signs of the times related to His appearing is found in Matthew 24:15, because it is this specific sign that tribulation saints will “see” immediately prior to the opening of the seventh seal.

***When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) KJV*** (emphasis is the author's)

The abomination of desolation is this event of Antichrist declaring himself to be “God” in the temple, as described in Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. Remember that the Lord is revealing this sign to His disciples who will participate in the upper room outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the day the church is born. This is not a message meant only for the Jews who would be “left behind” after the church is “raptured” away before the tribulation. It is a message to the church who will be present when that “sign” takes place.

And did you notice that this message will be received at that time by those who see the sign after having read about both the sign and the Lord's prophetic warning in scripture? And they will read about it, not merely in the book of Daniel, but in the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, the epistles of Paul, and Revelation.

### **What? You never noticed that?**

A popular dispensational message preached and repeated in numerous denominations and fellowships is, “The rapture can come at any moment. Therefore, be ready.”

Those who preach it, teach it, and repeat it are trying to motivate believers with the message of an imminent, secret return of Christ “at any time”, but the message is erroneous. The resurrection of the dead in Christ and “rapture” of living saints will not take place until the apostasy and the revealing of the man of lawlessness have taken place.

I might add that this erroneous message, unaccompanied by the power of God, has not sparked a latter day revival of the church even though the signs of the times are becoming evident to all. The false pre-trib “rapture” message does not have the effect that those who use it intend. Instead, it prepares the hearts and minds of American and western world evangelical believers for a HUGE disappointment, complete with anger and distrust toward all those in the church who have unknowingly misled them, and great angst about what lies ahead.

(The author strongly advises all readers to go to the Open Doors website to find out what is already happening in the top 50 nations that persecute Christians today.)

Better to preach the TRUTH that the **tribulation** is imminent and may come at any time , and, along with it, the danger of extreme trials, persecution, and the perversion of true doctrine

by false Christs and false prophets – which leads to the most dangerous of all threats to any believer in the church of Jesus Christ – apostasy.

The message of imminence is not lost here. What could possibly be more alarming, alerting, and actionable for the church than the imminence of the tribulation in which we will participate, either as “wise” virgins or as “foolish” virgins.

The Lord clearly instructed His church to be aware of the times and the seasons related to His return (*parousia*) even though we would not know the exact date. And those who are currently identified as participants in the Sardis “type” of church (the church that has a reputation for being alive but is not) and the lukewarm Laodicean church that the Lord threatens to spew out of His mouth, should be particularly warned.

*But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' 'And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"*

*"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away. Matthew 16:2-4 NASB*

In this passage the Lord was addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees who did not recognize the prophetically revealed signs of the times. He not only admonished them for not recognizing the prophetic signs of the times, but prophesied that “this generation” (those He was addressing) would not receive any sign but the sign of Jonah (His burial for three days, like Jonah’s three days in the belly of a whale, and His resurrection) which they still would not believe.

*But of the times and the seasons... (of which they were to be aware)..., brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. (“the day of the Lord” is distinct from “the last day”). For when they...(those who are in darkness)... shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day ... (the day of the Lord)... should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.... (And, therefore, will not be present on earth on the great and terrible “day of the Lord”, because all the saints of God from Adam all the way through the tribulation have been resurrected and “raptured” on the **last day**, which precedes “the day of the Lord”).*

*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.*

*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. For God hath not appointed us to wrath...(like those who are in darkness on the day of the Lord)..., but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 KJV (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)*

In this passage Paul is addressing the rumors and false teaching in the church at Thessalonica that the day of the Lord had already come, and he makes four important points:

1. The disciples were expected to be aware of “the times and the seasons” for the fulfillment of prophecy.
2. The day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night to those who are in darkness. However, that day will not catch the people of God by surprise like a thief in the night, thus resulting in loss.
3. “The day of the Lord” is a day of wrath to those in darkness. **And here is the promise:** we are not appointed to (or destined for) the wrath of God on the day of the Lord, like those who are in darkness, and He has not appointed us to the eternal wrath of the second death.
4. The brothers and sisters at Thessalonica were not in darkness but were children of the light and would, therefore, be with Him on that day after having been received by Him on “the last day”.

In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 the Lord gave His disciples the specific prophetic signs of the times that they (disciples of that time) would recognize to know that the day of the Lord was imminent. None of these signs nail down the exact date of His return (*parousia*), but, as we will see, they were intended as prophetic signs of the times to be recognized by the disciples upon whom the fulfillment of the age was to come.

***“See, I have warned you .in advance..”*** Matthew 24:25 (insert is the author’s)

### Comparison of Resurrection-“Rapture” Passages

Scripture	When	How	Who
Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-26 Luke 21:25-28	after the tribulation	in the clouds with angels with a trumpet call	all those who are dead in Christ in heaven all those who are still alive on earth
1 Thessalonians 4:13-17	at the coming of the Lord	in the clouds with a shout with angels with a trumpet call	the dead in Christ then the living in order
1 Corinthians 15:22,23	at the coming of the Lord	in order	those who are Christ’s
1 Corinthians 15:52,53	the resurrection	at the last trumpet in the twinkling of a moment	those who are asleep those who are alive
2 Thessalonians 2:1-16	at the coming of the Lord after the apostasy after the man of lawlessness is revealed	our being gathered together to Him	“brothers” (in Christ we are “brothers” to all others in Christ from Adam through the millennium)
John 6:39,40,44,54	on the last day	will be raised up	all who have believed
John 11:24	on the last day	the resurrection	Lazarus
Revelation 20:4-6	the first resurrection	come to life and reign with Christ	tribulation saints

**Points to observe:**

1. Paul and the synoptic gospels are speaking of the same single *parousia* event of the Lord.
2. It takes place in the clouds, with angels, with a trumpet call.
3. All those who are Christ’s, OT and NT believers alike, are resurrected in order. “All” means all, not just the church.
4. It takes place after the apostasy, after the man of lawlessness is revealed, on “the last day.”
5. The “resurrection” (of all the righteous) and “the last day” are obviously associated.