

## Introduction

### Overview and Approach

- The analysis was based solely on the interpretation of scripture.
  - A literal approach was used.
    - If the meaning is clear with a literal reading, do not apply symbolism.
  - Scripture is used to support scripture in validating interpretation.
  - Commentaries and other outside sources only used when interpretation was unclear.
- The Olivet Discourse is used as the outline to build the timeline.

### Pre-Tribulation

- The time leading up to the tribulation period will be like the time of Noah in that the earth will be so full of corruption and violence that He will put an end to it.
  - Olivet Discourse
    - “As the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. They didn’t know until the flood came and swept them all away.” (Matthew 24:37-39)
  - The days of Noah
    - “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.” (Genesis 6:5-6)
- Jesus describes the “birth pains” that will be signs that the end of the age is near.

- “Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.’” (Matthew 24:4-8).
- As with childbirth, these labor pains will get closer together and more severe as humanity gets closer to the start of the tribulation period.
- There are four major events remaining that lead up to the start of the tribulation period
  - The rapture of the church
  - An Arab-Israeli war
  - The Gog and Magog war
  - The rise of a global government along with the harlot religion.

### **The Rapture**

- Scripture portrays Christ’s interaction with the church using the imagery of Jewish weddings.
  - Scripture portrays Christ as the bridegroom and the church as His bride.
  - There are three phases to a Jewish wedding
    - 1<sup>st</sup>: The groom prepares a place for the bride.
      - “My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:2-3)

- Individuals living in the church age come to salvation and become part of the bride of Christ while Christ (the bridegroom) is in heaven preparing a place for the bride to live in His father's house.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: The groom comes to claim his bride and it is unknown exactly when the groom will arrive
  - Just as a Jewish bride is unaware of the exact time her groom would come for her, so the church is unaware of the exact time that Jesus will come, though it is an imminent event (i.e. nothing prevents it).
    - The day or hour of the rapture event is only known by the Father and that not even the Son nor the angels in heaven know when this will occur. (Matthew 24:36-51)
    - Jesus emphasizes this point with the Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-13).
  - This is the rapture, where Jesus is seen coming for His bride in the air prior to the tribulation.

- “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming 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 4:13-17)
- 3<sup>rd</sup>: The wedding feast occurs
  - This is seen as the Marriage Supper of the lamb.
    - “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” (Revelation 19:7)
  - The marriage supper of the lamb takes place just prior to Christ’s second coming where He comes with His bride to defeat the Antichrist and then to reign for a thousand years (Revelation 19:11-20:6).
- Just as ancient Jewish grooms paid a purchase price to establish the marriage covenant, Jesus paid the price for our redemption.


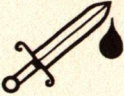




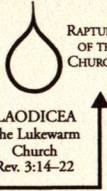
- “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Just as a Jewish bride was declared sanctified or set apart in waiting for her groom, so the church is declared sanctified and set apart for Christ.
  - “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:25-27)
- We will be instantly transformed and given resurrection bodies
  - “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, ***the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*** For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)
  - “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as ***we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.***” (Romans 8:22-23)
  - “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, ***will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.***” (Philippians 3:20-21)

- “But we know that when Christ appears, *we shall be like him*, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2-3)
- Believers that have been raptured are then judged at the Bema Seat of Christ
  - Where “each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12)
  - So that “each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)
  - This is not a judgment of sins, which have been paid for *by faith* in Jesus’ finished work on the cross, but rather God rewarding believers for their lives.
    - “For we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.” (Romans 3:28)
    - “Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)
- A pre-tribulation rapture is best supported by scripture if the Bible is interpreted literally and consistently.
  - Scripture assures us that the church is not appointed to wrath
    - “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.” (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)
    - “Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath.” (Romans 5:9)
  - God protects His people before judgment falls

- “If he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.” (2 Peter 2:5-9)
- Those that oppose this theory cite that there are believers during the tribulation.
  - There will be believers during the tribulation, but they will come to Christ after the rapture and they may become believers for several reasons
    - Because of the rapture
    - As a result of the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7)
    - As a result of the ministry of the two witnesses (Rev. 11)
    - After reading Christian literature, including Bibles left by those raptured
- Scripture does not mention the church in Revelation chapters 4-21.
  - It also never uses the word ‘church’ in a passage relating to the tribulation period.
  - This means that it is absent from scripture during the entire tribulation period.
- The rapture is a signless event that is imminent, and nothing must be prophetically fulfilled before the rapture can occur.
  - A pre-tribulation rapture is the only theory that supports the teaching that the rapture is imminent and that the timing is not known.

- “Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” (1 Corinthians 1:7)
- “They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)
- “while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13)
- The account of Noah also supports a pre-tribulation rapture.
  - Prior to the flood, Noah’s grandfather Enoch was raptured.
    - “Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. And after the birth of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. So Enoch’s life lasted 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him.” (Genesis 5:21-24).
  - Years later, Noah went through the flood (Genesis 7).
  - This not only supports a pre-tribulation rapture, but that it also supports a time gap between the rapture and the start of the tribulation period.
- The chronology of the book of Revelation shows the rapture happening prior to the tribulation period.
  - The book of Revelation begins with letters that Jesus wrote to seven churches.
    - In addition to being relevant to these specific churches, they also have prophetic meaning.
    - The letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 represent the churches throughout the church age.



| THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |  |  |  |  |   |  |  |
|   | EPHESUS<br>The Apostolic Church<br>Rev. 2:1-7                                     | SMYRNA<br>The Persecuted Church<br>Rev. 2:8-11                                    | PERGAMUM<br>The Indulged Church<br>Rev. 2:12-17                                   | THYATIRA<br>The Pagan Church<br>Rev. 2:18-29                                      | SARDIS<br>The Dead Church<br>Rev. 3:1-6   | PHILADELPHIA<br>The Church Christ Loved<br>Rev. 3:7-13                              | LAODICEA<br>The Lukewarm Church<br>Rev. 3:14-22                                     |
|   | A.D. 30-100   | A.D. 100-312  | A.D. 312-606  | A.D. 606-Tribulation  | A.D. 1520-Tribulation<br>Protestant Reformation                                     | A.D. 1750-Rapture   | A.D. 1900-Tribulation   |
| COMMENDATION<br>I know your . . .       | Good works, labor, patience.<br>Hated Nicolaitians.                               | Works, tribulation, poverty.  | Works.<br>Held fast my name.<br>Has not denied my faith.                          | Good works, love, service, faith, patience.                                       | Works.<br>A name that you live.   | Works. Missions.<br>Little strength. Kept my word. Not denied my name.              | Not one word!   |
| CONDEMNATION                            | You have left your first love.  | Not one word!   | You have false teachers of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.                            | You allow Jezebel to teach idolatry and compromise.                               | You are dead.<br>Works not complete.  | Not one word!   | You are lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.                       |
| COUNSEL<br>I counsel you. . .           | Remember from where you are fallen and repent.                                    | Fear not.<br>Be faithful.   | Repent.   | Hold fast what you have until I come.   | Watch. Strengthen the things that remain. Remember, hold fast and repent.           | Hold fast what you have.  | Buy gold tried by fire and white raiment. Anoint your eyes. Be zealous and repent.  |
| CHALLENGE<br>To him that overcomes. . . | Will give to eat of the tree of life  | Will not be hurt by the second death.   | Will give hidden manna and a white stone.   | Will give millennial leadership and the Morning Star.                             | Will be clothed in white raiment. I will not blot his name out of the book of life. | Will make him a pillar and write upon him the name of God and My new name.          | Will grant to sit with me on my throne.   |

- Chapters 4 and 5 represent the church in heaven.
  - Revelation 4:1 represents the rapture event.
    - “After this I looked, and there in heaven was an open door. The first voice that I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’”
  - This occurs prior to the opening of the seals that start the tribulation period in chapter 6.
- Jesus’ letter to the church in Philadelphia is representative of the evangelical Christian church.
  - “Because you have kept My command to endure, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come over the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” (Revelation 3:10)

- This confirms that the church is not destined to take part of the tribulation.
- Reasons against other timing for the rapture
  - Pre-Wrath
    - The pre-wrath rapture theory says that the rapture occurs before the “great day of . . . wrath” (Revelation 6:17)
      - This view states that the Bible indicates that the church will not experience the wrath of God and that since the word wrath does not appear in Revelation until after the sixth seal, God’s wrath must not be poured out until the seventh seal, so the rapture must take place between the sixth and seventh seals.
      - The pre-wrath rapture theory views the first six seal judgments (Revelation 6) as the wrath of Satan, while the trumpet and the bowl judgments (Revelation 7–16) as the wrath of God, from which the church is exempted (1 Thessalonians 5:9).
      - However, all of the judgments (seal, trumpet, bowl) are divine judgments from God that are instruments of God’s wrath which increase in intensity.
      - Scripture shows that it is the Lamb who opens the seals. No other man is found worthy to open them.

- “But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals...’ I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals.” (Revelation 5:3-5, 6:1)
- Mid-Tribulation
  - The primary reference for this timing is 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 because it references the last trumpet, which is the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment, as the timing for the event.
    - “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)
    - While the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment occurs at the midpoint of the tribulation (Rev. 11:15-19), it is a harbinger of judgment for the wicked, not a call of grace to God’s elect. Therefore, it has nothing to do with the rapture
  - It is also argued that while 1 Thessalonians 5:9 confirms that the church will be delivered from wrath, and that this occurs in the second half of the tribulation
    - “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)
    - However, the entire tribulation period is characterized by wrath.

- “That day will be a day of wrath—a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness... Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord’s wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.” (Zephaniah 1:15,18)
  - “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?” (Revelation 6:17)
- Post-Tribulation
    - The primary support for this theory is Jesus stating that He would not return until after the Great Tribulation.
      - “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again... Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:21-30).
      - Supporting scripture for this timing discusses the saints who became believers during the tribulation, were martyred, and then resurrected at the end of the tribulation period.
        - “It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.” (Revelation 13:7)

- “And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:4)
- However, scripture is clear that those who believe in Christ are not under condemnation and will never experience the wrath of God.
  - “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:1-2)
  - If believers go through the tribulation period, they will experience the wrath of God in contradiction of Romans 8:1 simply because many judgments, such as the earthquakes, falling stars, and famines, will affect the saved and unsaved equally.
- This theory conflates the rapture with Christ’s second coming.
  - The rapture involves Christ coming *for* His saints in the air prior to the tribulation, whereas at the second coming He will come *with* His saints to the earth to reign for a thousand years.
    - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 is the primary reference in support of the rapture.
    - Revelation 19:11-14 describes the second coming of Christ.

- “Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and He judges and makes war in righteousness. His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on His head. He had a name written that no one knows except Himself. He wore a robe stained with blood, and His name is the Word of God. The armies that were in heaven followed Him on white horses, wearing pure white linen.”
- Matthew 24:37-40 also supposedly supports a post-tribulation rapture
  - “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.”
  - Matthew 24:36 makes it clear that the time of the rapture is unknown, but the timing of the end of the tribulation is certainly known
    - “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”  
(Matthew 24:36)
  - The timing of the end of the tribulation is certainly known

- The tribulation begins with the signing of the peace agreement between the antichrist and the Jews and ends seven years later
- “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” (Daniel 9:27)
- The partial rapture view is based on the parable of the ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25:1-13 where five were prepared and five were unprepared.
  - This is interpreted to mean that only faithful and watchful Christians will be raptured, while the unfaithful Christians will be left behind to suffer the tribulation period.
  - This theory misinterprets the parable by assuming that the bridesmaids left behind were symbolic of believers when they represented unbelievers.
  - It goes against scripture, which teaches that when people believe, they are saved and that the rapture will apply to them universally (1 Corinthians 15:50-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), regardless of their maturity or obedience.
    - “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

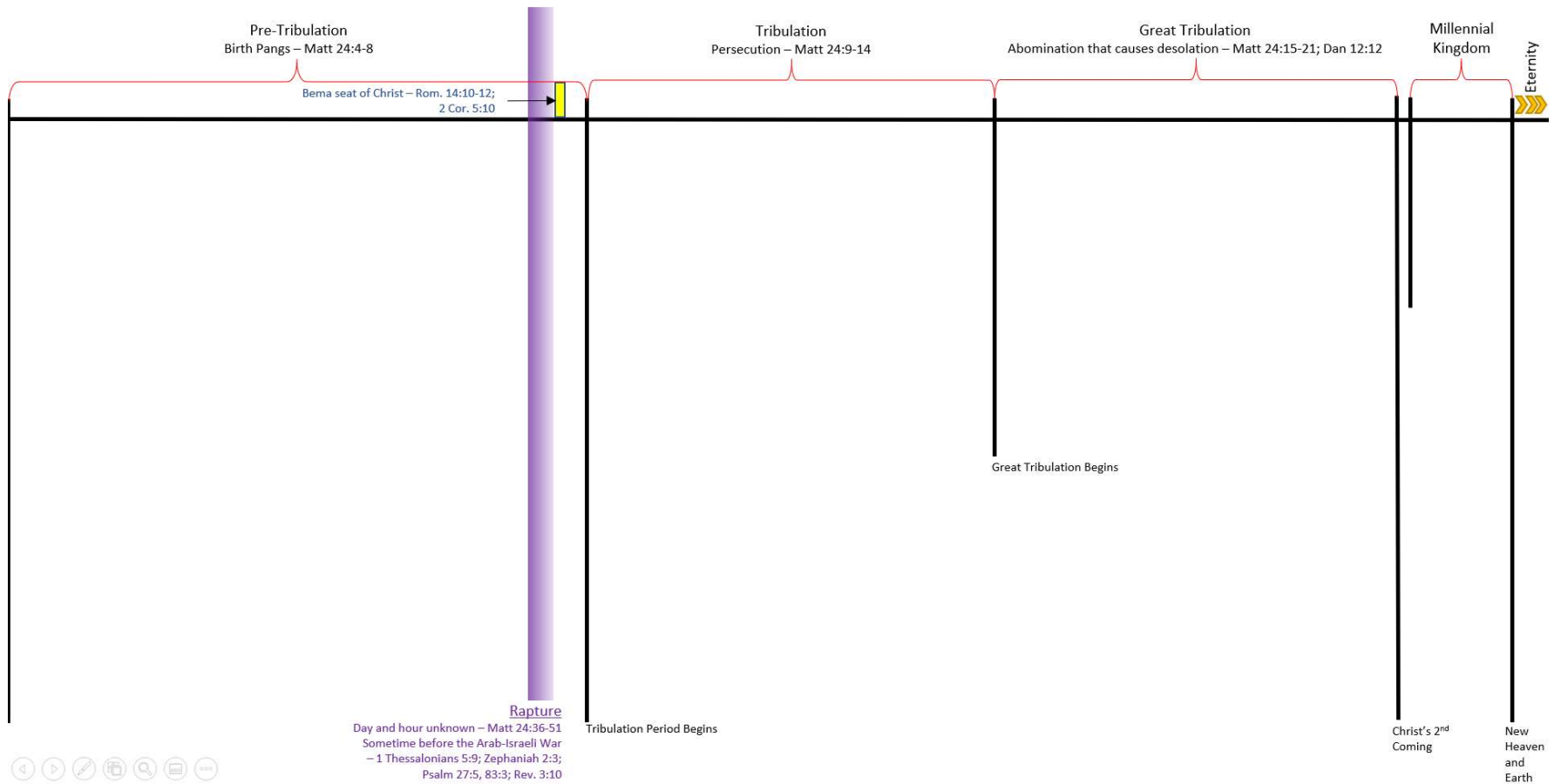


Figure 1: Timeline of End-Times Events