



# THE RAPTURE

SIGNS OF JESUS' SOON RETURN  
MATTHEW 24:36-44

Now we turn our attention to what many believe to be the next event in the prophetic timeline.

The war in the middle east and the looming escalation of that war leave no other prophecies to be fulfilled.  
See Isaiah 17 and Psalm 83

Psalm 83:

1 Do not keep silent, O God!

Do not hold Your peace,

And do not be still, O God!

2 For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;

And those who hate You have lifted up their head.

3 They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,

And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.

4 They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation,  
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more."

5 For they have consulted together with one consent;

They form a confederacy against You:

<sup>6</sup>The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;  
Moab and the Hagarites;  
<sup>7</sup>Gabal, Ammon, and Amalek;  
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;  
<sup>8</sup>Assyria also has joined with them;  
They have helped the children of Lot. *Selah*

For notes:

- [Google Docs](#)
- [garyburney.com](http://garyburney.com)
- Community Bible Class AR/Mo tab

**NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR – MATTHEW 24:**

**36 “BUT OF THAT DAY AND HOUR NO ONE KNOWS, NOT EVEN THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, BUT MY FATHER ONLY. 37 BUT AS THE DAYS OF NOAH WERE, SO ALSO WILL THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE. 38 FOR AS IN THE DAYS BEFORE THE FLOOD, THEY WERE EATING AND DRINKING, MARRYING AND GIVING IN MARRIAGE, UNTIL THE DAY THAT NOAH ENTERED THE ARK, 39 AND DID NOT KNOW UNTIL THE FLOOD CAME AND TOOK THEM ALL AWAY, SO ALSO WILL THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE.**

The **perfect tense** in Greek is used to describe a **completed action** that has produced **results** which are still in effect up to the present. It combines two key ideas:

**1. Completed Action:** The perfect tense indicates that an action has been **fully accomplished** in the past.

**2. Continuing Results:** Despite the action being completed, its effects or consequences **persist** into the present.

**40 THEN TWO MEN WILL BE IN THE FIELD: ONE WILL BE TAKEN AND THE OTHER LEFT. 41 TWO WOMEN WILL BE GRINDING AT THE MILL: ONE WILL BE TAKEN AND THE OTHER LEFT. 42 WATCH THEREFORE, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT HOUR YOUR LORD IS COMING. 43 BUT KNOW THIS, THAT IF THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE HAD KNOWN WHAT HOUR THE THIEF WOULD COME, HE WOULD HAVE WATCHED AND NOT ALLOWED HIS HOUSE TO BE BROKEN INTO. 44 THEREFORE YOU ALSO BE READY, FOR THE SON OF MAN IS COMING AT AN HOUR YOU DO NOT EXPECT**

Compare this with what Jesus taught in the preceding verses (24:15-31)

There will be a time when a date can be determined for the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

# 4 VIEWS OF REVELATION

- **Idealist View**
- **Historicist View**
- **Preterist View**
- **Futurist View**

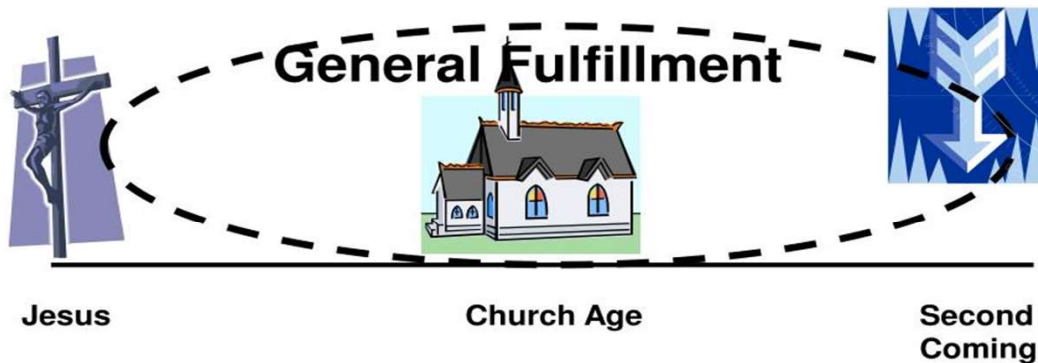
## **The Four Views of Revelation**

In the Methodist tradition we believe that there are multiple ways to interpret Scripture, and Revelation is no exception. Rev. Daniel Humbert has outlined below four of the most popular understandings of the book of Revelation to help you read this book with more holistic comprehension. [CLICK HERE](#) to read more about the signs and symbols found in Revelation and the meanings behind them.

*Gary's note – This article is written by a Methodist pastor. Methodists hold the view that scripture is subject to individual interpretation.*

<https://www.tmumc.org/stories/posts/the-four-views-of-revelation>

# Idealist View of Revelation



Idealists believe that Revelation will be fulfilled throughout church history, but that the symbols are a general picture of the warfare between good & evil, God & Satan, not referring only to single events.

## The Idealist View

What Is It? The idealist view does not take a literal historical or futuristic fulfillment but sees the entire book as a symbolic presentation of the battle between good and evil.

According to this view: The symbols in Revelation are not tied to specific events but point to themes throughout church history. The seals, bowls, and trumpets speak repeatedly to the events of human history in every age and give believers of all ages an exhortation to remain faithful in the face of suffering. The battles in Revelation are viewed as spiritual warfare manifested in the persecution of Christians or



wars in general that have occurred in history. The beast from the sea may be identified as the satanically inspired political opposition to the church in any age. The beast from the land represents pagan, or corrupt, religion to Christianity. Catastrophes represent God's displeasure with sinful man; however, sinful mankind goes through these catastrophes while still refusing to turn and repent. God ultimately triumphs in the end.

More About This View: The allegorical approach to Revelation was introduced by ancient church father Origen (AD 185-254) and made prominent by Augustine (AD 354-420). Many combine this view with their own. Preterist-Idealist views are very common. Less common but existing is Futurist-Idealist. Most scholars hold at least a partial idealist view or an Idealist/Preterist view with a late date (AD 95).

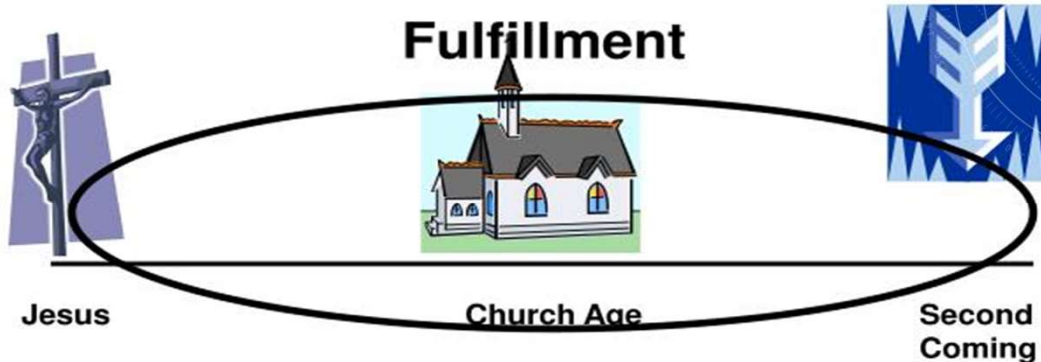
The Positive aspects this view: It avoids the difficulty of harmonizing specific passages with specific fulfillments, which has plagued the historicist, futurist and preterist views. Makes the book of Revelation applicable and relevant for all periods of church history, especially to those suffering persecution.

The Critical aspects of this view: The book of Revelation itself claims to be predicting events that must shortly come to pass (1:1). Reading spiritual meanings into the text could lead to random personal interpretations, based solely on a person's opinion, not Scripture.

*Gary's Note: Taught primarily by UMC (United Methodist Church)*

<https://www.tmumc.org/stories/posts/the-four-views-of-revelation>

# Historical View of Revelation



Those holding the historical view believe that Revelation is fulfilled fairly uniformly over church history.

## The Historicist View

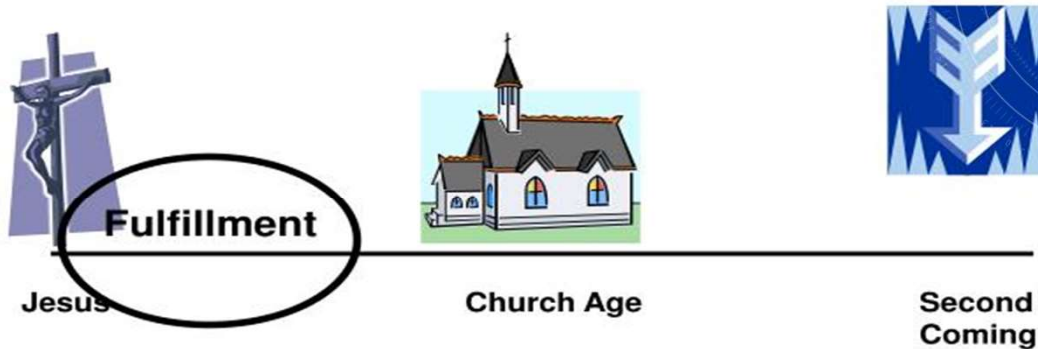
What Is It? A running account of the whole of church history written in advance, from the time of John to the return of Christ.

According to this view: The Seven Seals and the Four Horsemen represent the decline of the Roman Empire, the 144,000 represent the spread of Christianity, the locust invasion is the rise of Islam, and the Beast is the Roman Catholic Church and the Papal system. Other events highlighted in this view is the Protestant Reformation, The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era.

The Positive aspects this view: This view has its roots

in the Reformation and all reformers were Historicists. (John Knox, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, C. H. Spurgeon). Can point to striking historical parallels to the prophecies in Revelation. As a running history, Revelation is relevant to all church ages. The Critical aspects of this view: The Historicist view was a reactionary response against the Roman Catholic Church and may have prejudices built into it. Those who hold it do not agree on the interpretation of many details. Though the dominate view in the Protestant church for 500 years, it has not had much of a following since the late 1800's.

# Preterist View of Revelation



Preterists believe that all or nearly all of Revelation was fulfilled in the first century or the first few centuries after the time of Christ's ministry on earth.

## The Preterist View

What Is It? The preterist view sees Revelation as largely fulfilled in actual events that have now already happened.

More About This View: Preterist comes from the Latin "Preter, which means "past." One school of this view called Full Preterism, which sees the entire prophecy of Revelation as being fulfilled in AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem [the view of J.S. Russell, David Chilton, Don K. Preston]. Another school of this view called Partial Preterism, [the view of RC Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, Hank Hanegraaff, and Gary Demar], which is a more orthodox view and sees most of the book as being

fulfilled in AD 70 except for the Second Coming, Final Judgment, General Resurrection and New Heavens/New Earth.

According to this view: Most preterists fix the events in Revelation with fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and possibly, of Rome later on. According to this view, the 'Biblical Last Days' were not the last days of human history but the last days of the Old Covenant Age. This view sees the coming of Christ as a 'coming in judgment' and a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies in Matthew 24.

Revelation's focus of attention is this: God will soon judge the first-century Jews for rejecting and crucifying his Son, their Messiah. John states his theme in his introduction at Revelation 1:7, just after he declares the nearness of the events (1:1, 3), a theme that is directly relevant to the first-century circumstances.

The Seven Sealed Scroll in chapter 5 is a bill of divorce against unfaithful Israel, containing the judgments to come upon them (which corresponds to the scroll of lament and woe in Ezekiel 2:9-10), leading to the Marriage of the Lamb (Christ and the Church). The seals, trumpets, and bowls in Revelation describe the Roman war with the Jews that lead to the destruction of Jerusalem. The sevenfold nature of the judgments on Israel recalls the covenantal curse God threatens on Israel in the Old Testament: "If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over" (Lev. 26:18).

The martyrs in Revelation are those who Jesus said their

blood would be avenged upon his contemporary generation (Matthew 23:34-39). According to this view, Babylon is seen as Jerusalem who Jesus pronounces judgment upon in the preceding scripture reference. The “great city” mentioned in Revelation 11:8 (also 14:8, 18:10) is the city “spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, *where also our Lord was crucified.*” Jerusalem is also pictured in Revelation as the Harlot (unfaithful Israel) riding a Beast.

The Beast in this view is seen as the Roman Emperor Nero (specifically) and the Roman Empire (generally). A first-century spelling of Nero Caesar’s name, written in Hebrew characters, adds up to the exact value of six hundred sixty-six (666). The Emperors of the Roman Empire in the first century also line up with the prophecy in Revelation 17:10-11. The first seven Caesars of Rome are Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, and Galba. The first five of these “have fallen” (they are dead); the sixth one “is” (Nero is alive). The seventh will come and “remain a little while”: The emperor following Nero’s thirteen-year rule was Galba, who reigned only seven months.

The Positive aspects this view: It takes literally and makes the most sense of the ‘time statement’ passages like 1:1, 3, 19 and 22:10 which speak of a near/soon fulfillment. Preterism makes the book relevant to the original readers (like most epistles). It also agrees with Jesus’ Olivet discourse (Matt. 24, Luke 21). This view agrees impressively with the history of the Jewish War

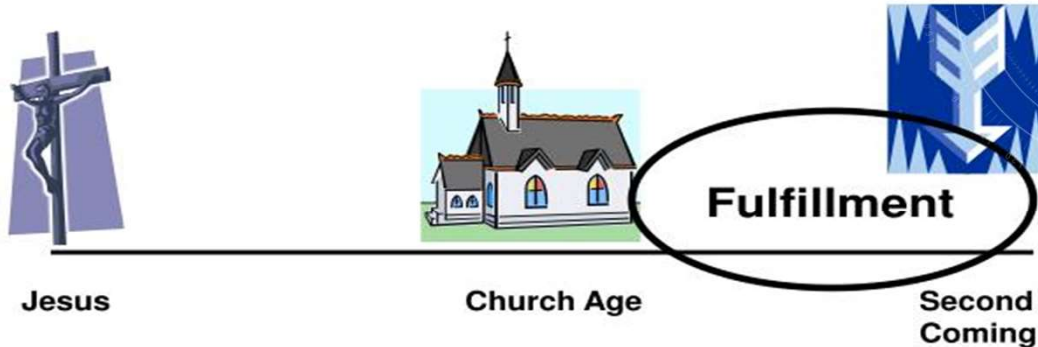
recorded by Josephus. It also renders the emperor passages like 13:18 and 17:10 intelligible.

The Critical aspects of this view: Requires a date of writing prior to AD 70, which is defensible but debated and not widely held today. The historical view of the seven churches don't perfectly fit a pre-AD 70 culture. Critics say this view renders the book irrelevant to the church today since the events would have already been fulfilled in the past. Full Preterism denies the creedal, historical beliefs of the church (the second coming of Christ, event of the final judgement, and resurrection). Also denies a future for national Israel as an independent people of God.

<https://www.tmumc.org/stories/posts/the-four-views-of-revelation>



# Futurist View of Revelation



Futurists believe that nearly all of Revelation is to be fulfilled near the end of church history, just before and around Jesus' second coming.

## The Futurist View

What Is It? The futurist view sees everything beginning with chapter four and onward as yet to be fulfilled in our future.

According to this view: Futurist divide the book of Revelation into three sections based on 1:19: “what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later.” Chapter 1 describes the past (“what you have seen”), Chapters 2-3 describe the present (“what is now”), and the rest of the book describes future events (“what will take place later”). Futurists argue that a consistently literal or plain interpretation is to be applied in understanding the book of Revelation. Chapter 4:1 is

the rapture of the church to heaven. Chapters 4-19 refer to a period known as the seven-year tribulation (Dan. 9:27). During this time, God's judgments are poured out upon mankind as they are revealed in the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Chapter 13 describes a literal future world empire headed by a political leader called the Antichrist, which is pictured by a Beast. Chapter 19 refers to Christ's second coming and the battle of Armageddon. This is followed by a literal thousand-year rule of Christ upon the earth in chapter 20. Chapters 21-22 are events that follow the millennium: the creation of a new heaven and a new earth and the arrival of the heavenly city upon the earth.

Origins of this View: In the mid-1500's a Catholic Jesuit, Francisco Ribera proposed the futurist view of Revelation to take the heat off of the Pope in response to the Reformers Historicist View who claimed the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church was the Anti-Christ and Beast.

Dispensationalism is a futurist system of belief that arose to prominence in the 1830's with John Nelson Darby and popularized by C.I. Scofield in his Scofield Reference Bible and believes the church will be raptured from the earth at the beginning of chapter 4 and will not be on earth during the seven-year great tribulation on the earth. Often termed, Dispensationalism, it is a system of belief founded upon certain guiding beliefs (see below). The futurist view is widely popular among evangelical Christians today. One of the most popular versions on

futurist teaching is dispensational theology, promoted by schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary and Moody Bible Institute. Theologians such as Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, and Dwight Pentecost are noted scholars of this position. Tim LaHaye made this theology popular in the culture with his end times series of novels, Left Behind. Other prominent popular adherers to this view are John Hagee, Jack Van Impe, David Jeremiah, Perry Stone.

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November 4, 2021

## Futurist View of Revelation

### FIVE KEY TEACHINGS:

1. **Distinction between 2 covenant people – Israel and the church.**
2. **Gap of thousands of years in Daniel 9 prophecy**
3. **Church raptured prior to tribulation**
4. **Kingdom was delayed by Jewish rejection**
5. **Temple must be rebuilt.**

### Key Teachings of the Futurist/Dispensational View:

1. A distinction between two covenant people: Israel and the church. God set aside Israel to work through the church. But will one day restore Israel and His covenant with them to fulfill to them all of the unfulfilled Old Testament Promises.
2. The Dispensational View is dependent upon the interpretation of Daniel 9 that sees a 'gap' of thousands of years in Daniel's prophecy. This gap postpones the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy thousands of years into the future.
3. The church will be taken up from the earth prior to a

seven-year tribulation called a 'pre-tribulational rapture (or 'mid-' or 'post-' tribulational rapture) in order for God to remove the church from the earth and restore the nation.

4. The Kingdom was delayed. The Jews rejected Jesus' offer of the kingdom so the kingdom offer was withdrawn from Israel and Jesus will physically return to earth and set up a 1000-year kingdom to reign from David's throne in Jerusalem.

5. Israel must rebuild the temple, reinstate the priesthood, and reinstitute animal sacrifices. The antichrist will make a seven-year peace treaty with Israel but break it in the middle of the tribulation when he walks into the temple and causes the sacrifices to cease.

The Positive aspects this view: This view is the most widely held and taught view in our modern time (the past 50 years or so). It is also the most "popular" view among Christians today spawning countless books and movies. The futurist view claims to take the events of Revelation more 'literally' than any other view. Adherents to this view often harmonize current events with the events in the book of Revelation. This view shows a total completion of God's plan for the future of humanity and the earth.

The Critical aspects of this view: As covered earlier, the complete system of dispensationalism is a relatively new system of belief with views not held throughout the history of the church (Gap is Daniel's prophecy, pre-tribulational rapture, modern restoration of Israel). This

view renders the book mostly irrelevant to the original audience since it was not to be fulfilled for thousands of years in the future (it struggles to explain the imminent time statements), and it also renders most of the book irrelevant to modern Christians since the Christians are raptured at 4:1 and will not be on earth during these events. This view demands a revival of many first century realities (restoration of Israel, rebuilt temple, reinstated priesthood and sacrifices, a revived roman empire and a world ruler.) This view also overemphasizes the importance of national Israel in God's plan and underemphasizes the importance of the church and New Covenant realities.

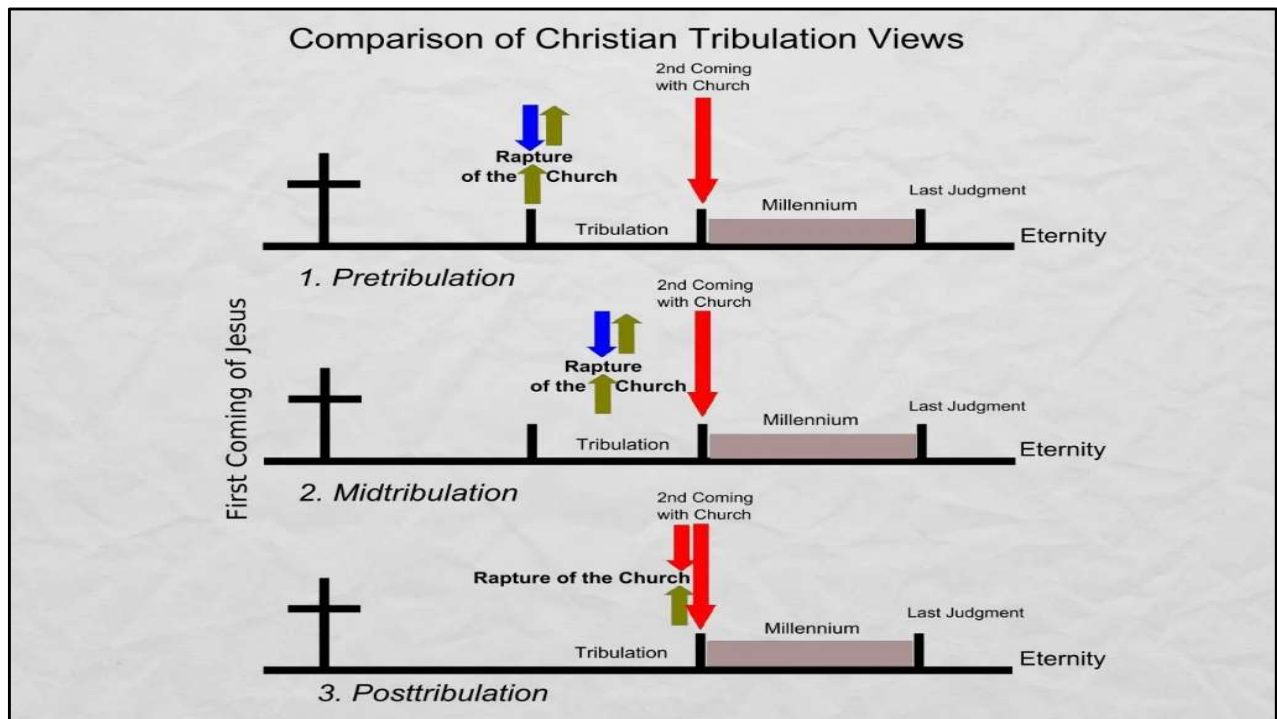
While an emphasis is placed on a literal interpretation, it fails to recognize the symbolic character of apocalyptic literature. This view lends more toward prophetic speculation than prophetic interpretation, affectionately called, 'Newspaper Exegesis'. Historically, comparing prophesy with current events has been disastrous.

*Gary's note: I do not agree with the author's final comments. We must take current events seriously. The sum total of these events so prophecy being fulfilled.*

*The author seems to totally ignore his previous statement "This view demands a revival of many first century realities (restoration of Israel, rebuilt temple, reinstated priesthood and sacrifices, a revived roman empire and a world ruler.)" Specifically the first 4 of the six things he listed – Israel has been restored as a nation, plans are ready for the rebuilding of the temple, the priesthood has already been reinstated, and the sacrificial system is being rehearsed awaiting the red heifer. It isn't difficult to believe that the remaining 2 things will be fulfilled, especially with the current world situation.*

<https://www.tmumc.org/stories/posts/the-four-views-of-revelation>

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Among those that do believe there will be a rapture, there is diverse opinions as to when that rapture will occur.

These tend to all agree on the following:

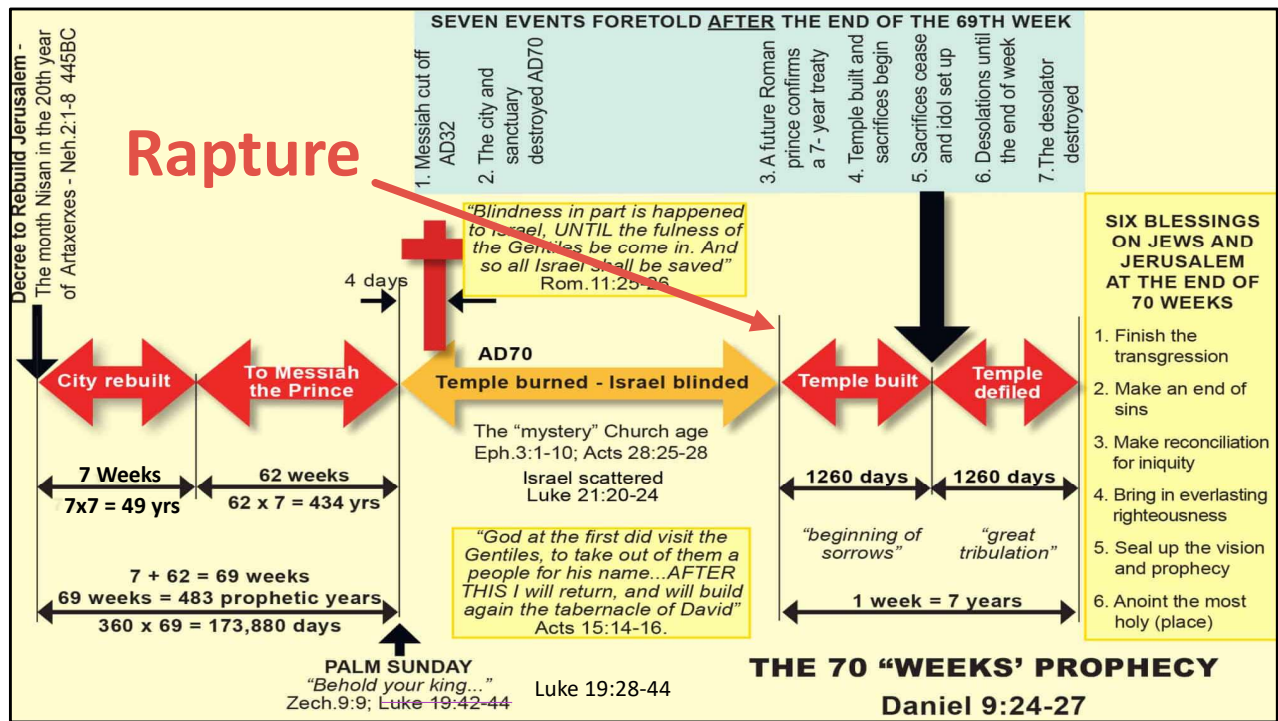
1. There will be a future time of tribulation.
2. After that time of trouble, Jesus will return to establish His kingdom.
3. Believers will be translated from their mortal state to an immortal one – there will be a rapture (John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

So, the question among these believers is when will this rapture happen?

There are three main views concerning the timing of the rapture.

1. Pretribulation – places the rapture before the tribulation (this is my view)
2. Mid-tribulation – places the rapture at or near the midpoint of the tribulation.
3. Post-tribulation – places the rapture at the end of the tribulation.





Daniel 9:24-27

"Seventy [a] weeks are determined  
For your people and for your holy city,  
To finish the transgression,  
[b] To make an end of sins,  
To make reconciliation for iniquity,  
To bring in everlasting righteousness,  
To seal up vision and prophecy,  
And to anoint [c] the Most Holy.  
25 "Know therefore and understand,  
That from the going forth of the command  
To restore and build Jerusalem  
Until Messiah the Prince,  
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;  
The [d] street shall be built again, and the [e] wall,  
Even in troublesome times.  
26 "And after the sixty-two weeks  
Messiah shall [f] be cut off, but not for Himself;  
And the people of the prince who is to come

Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.  
The end of it *shall be* with a flood,  
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.  
27 Then he shall confirm a [g]covenant with many for one week;  
But in the middle of the week  
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.  
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,  
Even until the consummation, which is determined,  
Is poured out on the [h]desolate.”

# THE RAPTURE

1. **John 14:1-3**
2. **1 Corinthians 15:50-57**
3. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**
4. **Matthew 24:36-44**

David Jeremiah reminds us “...Paul gained his understanding of the Rapture via special revelation from God – he called it a ‘mystery’ in 1 Corinthians 15:51.

**One of the objections to the rapture is that the word rapture is not found anywhere in scripture.**

The next slide explains this.

# THE MEANING OF “RAPTURE”

1. **Rapture from Latin Vulgate translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (rapiemur from rapio)**
  - Translate Greek “harpazo” to catch up or carry away.

“The Greek harpazo occurs fourteen times in the New Testament with four variations of meaning, each of which contributes to our understanding of what Paul is describing in [1 Thessalonians 4:17].”

David Jeremiah - [What Is the Rapture? - David Jeremiah Blog](#)

# THE MEANING OF “HARPAZO”

## 1. “to carry off by force”

- Christ uses His power to remove living and deceased believers from the last enemy, death.

## THE MEANING OF “HARPAZO”

### 2. “to claim for oneself eagerly”

- Christ purchased us with His blood, and He will return to claim those that are His.

## THE MEANING OF “HARPAZO”

### 3. “to snatch away speedily”

- The rapture will occur “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52)



## THE MEANING OF “HARPAZO”

### 4. “to rescue from danger of destruction”

- Supports the idea that the rapture will save the church from experiencing the terrors of the 7-year Tribulation

# THE RAPTURE IS DIFFERENT FROM THE 2<sup>ND</sup> COMING.

1. Rapture sets in motion the end time events
  - 7 Year tribulation
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

# REASONS THE RAPTURE COULD HAPPEN TODAY

1. Rapture is a signless event
  - Doctrine of Imminency

No signs precede the Rapture.

Doctrine of imminency – it could happen at any moment

Nothing in God's prophetic program must take place as a prerequisite to the Rapture. Many things are happening and many things may happen, but nothing must happen.

There are many that teach that the doctrine of imminency is new to the church and was started by John Nelson Darby around 1830 and popularized by C.I. Scofield.

Below I am including an article by Thomas Ice that gives evidence that this doctrine was being taught in the church much earlier than that.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RAPTURE

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

One of the most often cited objections to pretribulationism

is that it is a new teaching in church history having only come on the scene in the 1830s. It is often argued that if the pre-trib rapture were biblical then it would have been taught earlier and throughout church history. In the last decade, individuals have found a number of pre-1830 references to a pre-trib rapture. Here is a summary of that evidence.

#### THE EARLY CHURCH

Since imminency is considered to be a crucial feature of pretribulationism by scholars such as John Walvoord,<sup>1</sup> it is significant that the Apostolic Fathers, though posttribulational, at the same time just as clearly taught the pretribulational feature of imminence. Since it was common in the early church to hold contradictory positions without even an awareness of inconsistency, it would not be surprising to learn that their era supports both views. Larry Crutchfield notes, "This belief in the imminent return of Christ within the context of ongoing persecution has prompted us to broadly label the views of the earliest fathers, 'imminent intratribulationism.

Expressions of imminency abound in the Apostolic Fathers.

Clement of Rome,

Ignatius of Antioch, The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, and

The Shepherd of Hermas all speak of imminency.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, The Shepherd of Hermas speaks of the pretribulational concept of escaping the tribulation. You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly. <sup>4</sup> Evidence of pretribulationism surfaces during the early medieval period in a sermon some attribute to Ephraem the Syrian, but more likely the product of one scholars call Pseudo-Ephraem, entitled Sermon on The Last Times, The Antichrist, and The End of the World.<sup>5</sup> The sermon was written some time between the fourth and sixth century. The rapture statement reads as follows: Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may

draw us from  
the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? .  
For all the saints and  
elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to  
come, and are  
taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to  
overwhelm the world  
because of our sins.

This statement evidences a clear belief that all Christians will  
escape the tribulation  
through a gathering to the Lord and is stated early in the  
sermon. How else can this be  
understood other than as pretribulational? The later second  
coming of Christ to the  
earth with the saints is mentioned at the end of the sermon.

Pre-Trib Rapture — Ice — Page 2

## THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

By the fifth century A.D., the amillennialism of Origen and  
Augustine had won the  
day in the established Church—East and West. It is probable  
that some form of  
premillennialism persisted throughout the Middle Ages, but it  
existed primarily  
underground.

It is believed that sects like the Albigenses, Lombards, and the  
Waldenses were  
attracted to premillennialism, but little is know of the details  
of their beliefs since the  
Catholics destroyed their works when they were found. But

there was at least one who held to some form of pretribulationism, namely one named Brother Dolcino in 1304. Francis Gumerlock is the individual who advocates the Brother Dolcino rapture find and said in his book: "The Dolcinites held to a pre-tribulation rapture theory similar to that in modern dispensationalism."<sup>6</sup> The reason Gumerlock believes that Brother Dolcino and the Apostolic Brethren taught pretribulationism is found the following statement:

"Again, [Dolcino believed and preached and taught] that within those three years Dolcino himself and his followers will preach the coming of the Antichrist. And that the Antichrist was coming into this world within the bounds of the said three and a half years; and after he had come, then he [Dolcino and his followers would be transferred into Paradise, in which are Enoch and Elijah. And in this way they will be preserved unharmed from the persecution of Antichrist. And that then Enoch and Elijah themselves would descend on the earth for the purpose of preaching [against] Antichrist. Then they would be killed by him or by his servants, and thus

Antichrist would reign for a long time. But when the Antichrist is dead, Dolcino himself, who then would be the holy pope, and his preserved followers, will descend on the earth, and will preach the right faith of Christ to all, and will convert those who will be living then to the true faith of Jesus Christ." 7

#### THE REFORMATION CHURCH

After over a thousand years of suppression, premillennialism began to be revived as a result of at least four factors. By the late 1500s and the early 1600's, premillennialism began to return as a factor within mainstream Protestantism. With the flowering of biblical interpretation during the late Reformation Period, premillennial interpreters began to abound throughout Protestantism and so did the development of sub-issues like the rapture.

Some began to speak of the rapture. Paul Benware notes: Peter Jurieu in his book *Approaching Deliverance of the Church* (1687) taught that Christ would come in the air to rapture the saints and return to heaven before the battle of Armageddon. He spoke of a secret Rapture prior to His coming in glory and judgment at Armageddon. Philip Doddridge's



commentary on the New Testament (1738) and John Gill's commentary on the New Testament (1748) both use the term rapture and speak of it as imminent. It is clear that these men believed that this coming will precede Christ's descent to the earth and the time of judgment. The purpose was to preserve believers from the time of judgment. James Macknight (1763) and Thomas Scott (1792) taught that the righteous will be carried to heaven, where they will be secure until the time of judgment is over. 8 Frank Marotta, a brethren researcher, believes that Thomas Collier in 1674 makes reference to a pretribulational rapture, but rejects the view, 9 thus showing his awareness that such a view was being taught in the late seventeenth century. There is the interesting case of John Asgill, who wrote a book in 1700 about the possibility of translation (i.e. rapture) without seeing death.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the clearest reference to a pretrib rapture, if not the most developed system, before Darby comes from Baptist Morgan Edwards (founder of the Ivey League school, Brown University) who saw a distinct rapture three and a half years

before the start of the millennium. II The discovery of Edwards, who wrote about his pretrib beliefs in 1744 and later published them in 1788, is hard to dismiss.<sup>12</sup> He taught the following:

II. The distance between the first and second resurrection will be somewhat more than a thousand years.

I say, somewhat more—, because the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ's "appearing in the air" (I Thes. iv. 17); and this will be

about three years and a half before the millennium, as we shall see hereafter:

but will he and they abide in the air all that time? No: they will ascend to

paradise, or to some one of those many "mansions in the father's house'

(John xiv. 2), and disappear during the foresaid period of time. The design

of this retreat and disappearing will be to judge the risen and changed saints;

for "now the time is come that judgment must begin," and that will be "at the

house of God" (I Pet. iv. 17) .

(p. 7; The spelling of all Edwards quotes have been modernized.)

## CONCLUSION

I have heard from another scholar who is reading through

many Latin manuscripts of previously unpublished documents that he has found a number of previously unknown pre-trib rapture statements from pre-nineteenth century Christendom. He is planning on publishing his material in a few years. What these pre-Darby rapture statements prove, if nothing else, is that indeed others did see the rapture taught in Scripture similar to the way that pretribulationists in our own day teach. Thus, the argument that no one ever taught pretribulationism until J. N. Darby in 1830 is just not historically true and it is becoming increasingly clear with each passing year.

Maranatha!

#### ENDNOTES

1 John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 24-25.

2 Larry V. Crutchfield, "The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation in the Apostolic Fathers" in Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, editors, *When The Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), p. 103.

3 Crutchfield, "The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation in the Apostolic Fathers", pp. 88-101.

4 The Shepherd of Hermas 1.4.2.

Pre-Trib Rapture — Ice — Page 4

5 For more information on this matter see Timothy J. Demy and Thomas D. Ice, "The Rapture and an Early Medieval Citation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Vol. 152, No. 607; July-Sept. 1995), pp. 306-17.

6 Francis X. Gumerlock, *The Day and the Hour: A Chronicle of Christianity's Perennial Fascination with Predicting the End of the World* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2000), p. 80.

7

Gumerlock's translation of the Latin text in Gumerlock, "A Rapture Citation," pp. 354-55.

8 Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), pp. 197-98.

9

Frank Marotta, *Morgan Edwards: An Eighteenth Century Pretribulationist* (Morganville, N.J.: Present Truth Publishers, 1995), pp. 10-12.

10 The entire title of Asgill's work is as follows: An argument proving, that according to the covenant of Eternal Life revealed in the Scriptures, Man may be translated from hence into that Eternal Life, without passing through Death, although the Human Nature of Christ himself could not be thus translated till he had passed through Death.

11

Marotta, Morgan Edwards.

12

Morgan Edwards, Two Academical Exercised on Subjects  
Bearing the following  
Titles; Millennium, Last-Novelties (Philadelphia: self-  
published, 1788).

# REASONS THE RAPTURE COULD HAPPEN TODAY

## 2. Rapture is a surprise event

Matthew 24:36-39

# REASONS THE RAPTURE COULD HAPPEN TODAY

## 3. Rapture is a sudden event

1 Corthinians 15:52



# THE RAPTURE PRECEDES THE TRIBULATION

Revelation 4:1

Revelation 6:1

2 Thessalonians 2



# SIGNS PRECEDING THE TRIBULATION – 2 THESSALONIANS 2

## 1. Apostasy – verse 3

- Falling away – KJV
- Rebellion – ESV
- Departure

We can't definitively pinpoint the Rapture – there is no specific sign that when this happens the rapture will happen. Instead it is likened to the coming of a thief.

But there are indicators that the time is approaching, these are signs that the tribulation is very near.

Apostasy today:

[Deconstruction Christianity is a Christian phenomenon where people unpack, rethink and examine their belief systems<sup>1</sup>. It involves detangling beliefs that individuals have held onto for years or the faith traditions they grew up possessing<sup>2</sup>. Deconstruction Christianity may lead to dropping one's faith all together or may result in a stronger faith<sup>1</sup>. It may also mean examining whether the version of Christianity they are familiar with is consistent with the Bible<sup>2</sup>.](#)

Good article:

[What Does 'Deconstruction' Even Mean? | Desiring God](#)

## SIGNS PRECEDING THE TRIBULATION – 2 THESSALONIANS 2

2. Man of sin revealed – 2:3-4

- Antichrist – Revelation 6:1-2

# MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS AND THE RESTRAINER

## 1 Thessalonians 2:5-8

July/August 2019 [David M. Levy](#)

### **The Restrainer of Evil**

#### [2 Thessalonians 2:6-8](#)

While establishing the church in Thessalonica, the apostle Paul personally instructed believers concerning future prophecy. In fact, he went into great detail about the Rapture of the church and the Day of the Lord.

However, being severely persecuted for their faith, many Thessalonians wondered if they were already experiencing the Day of the Lord's wrath. False teachers apparently had fabricated reports about the event, causing disruption and anxiety in the church and spreading great fear among these young believers who did not understand clearly what Paul had taught. Consequently, they became confused concerning the timing of certain prophecies. Paul assured the Thessalonians the Day of the Lord could not come until three events occurred:

1. The "falling away [apostasy]" ([2 Th. 2:3](#))
2. The revelation of the Antichrist, "the man of sin [lawlessness]" (v. 3)
3. The removal of the one "who now restrains" (v. 7)

We examined the first two events in the [previous article](#). Now we'll look at the restrainer's ministry.

#### [The Restrainer Presented](#)

The apostle appealed to the Thessalonians based on what they already knew about

the restrainer: “And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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” (vv. 6–7).

The phrase *and now* draws attention to what the Thessalonians knew. The phrase *you know* speaks of their absolute knowledge concerning what Paul meant when he wrote of the restrainer.

The word *restrain* means “to withhold.” It is a neuter participle with a neuter article. Thus, the word does not refer to a person but, rather, to an abstract force or power that is holding back or holding down lawlessness in the world. However, verse 7 (“He who now restrains”) uses the masculine gender with a masculine article, referring to a person. Thus, in verse 6, Paul spoke of an impersonal principle or power of restraining, while in verse 7 he referred to a person who is restraining. Therefore, a person with extreme power is restraining both the man of lawlessness and evil in the world.

He is restraining so “he [the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist] may be revealed in his own time,” a time determined by God (v. 6). It should comfort us to know the evil in this world is completely under God’s sovereign control and is allowed for His purposes.

Even though the restrainer is working, “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” in the world (v. 7). The word *mystery* does not refer to a mysterious or baffling event but, rather, to a prophecy in the Old or New Testament that has not been revealed to mankind. A mystery in the Bible is something that was hidden in past ages but will be divinely revealed at God’s choosing.

The word *lawlessness* does not mean a general outbreak of criminal activity. It refers to the specific lawlessness connected with “the lawless one” (v. 8)— the man of sin, the Antichrist, who will be energized and controlled by Satan.

*So horrible will the Antichrist’s acts be once he is revealed that it would be impossible for humanity ever to understand the depths of his wickedness without God’s revelation.*

This man has not been revealed yet; but Satan, the spirit controlling his career, already has operatives in the world (cf. [1 Jn. 2:18–22](#)). The apostle John boldly declared that people who deviate from what he taught possess the spirit of Antichrist (4:3).

So horrible will the Antichrist’s acts be once he is revealed that it would be impossible for humanity ever to understand the depths of his wickedness without God’s revelation.

Paul indicated the restraining of lawlessness will end at a specific time: “He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way [midst]” ([2 Th. 2:7](#)), that is, until He is taken or disappears from the scene. When His work ends, the world will experience a Satanic onslaught of evil that will be unparalleled in world history.

#### [The Restrainer’s Position](#)

Since the apostle never identified the restrainer, today’s church does not know for certain who he is. Over the centuries, commentators have offered many views as to his identity. Suggestions have included Nero and other Roman emperors, the Roman

Empire, Israel, human government, law, Elijah, Michael the archangel, Satan, Jesus Christ, the gospel, the church, and the Holy Spirit.

The restrainer must be able to hold back the evil manifested by Satan, who is “the god of this age” ([2 Cor. 4:4](#)). He must be more than a human force or human being because Satan is a spiritual being who functions in a supernatural realm that cannot be restrained by humans on Earth.

A popular position is that the church is the restrainer. True, the church is salt and light in the world. It does impact the world for good and restrains evil in many ways and in many areas of life. The church also dispels darkness and brings light to the world. But the church is not the ultimate restrainer of evil, as required by [2 Thessalonians 2:7](#). The restrainer must be more powerful than Satan. The Holy Spirit is the only Person who possesses the principle and power required to restrain Satan’s wickedness until a time determined by God.

The Holy Spirit’s restraining power is revealed in Genesis: God said, “My Spirit [Holy Spirit] shall not strive with man forever” ([Gen. 6:3](#)). One of the Spirit’s ministries was to restrain Satan while Noah built the ark before the flood came. Another example was when God allowed Satan to take Job’s health, possessions, and children but restrained him from taking Job’s life ([Job 1:6–2:6](#)). Satan’s ability to generate evil is completely controlled by God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, the Holy Spirit is the most qualified agent to restrain Satan’s villainy. As a member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent and possesses the power to restrain the evil of Satan and the Antichrist. The restrainer “will do so until He is taken out of the way [midst]” ([2 Th. 2:7](#)). At the Rapture of the church, the Holy Spirit’s restraining ministry will cease. Mark it well: This does not mean He will be removed from the world; it simply means His ministry of holding back evil will cease.

The Holy Spirit has always been omnipresent; He will never be removed from the world. He will be here to empower God’s servants for ministry during the seven years of Tribulation. A great multitude of people—who cannot be redeemed apart from the Holy Spirit’s ministry—will be saved during this time ([Rev. 7:1–17](#)).

#### [The Restrainer’s Power](#)

Paul provided a brief overview of both the Antichrist’s evil work and his demise at Jesus’ Second Coming: “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” ([2 Th. 2:8](#)).

The phrase *and then* refers to what happens once the restrainer stops holding back evil. At that time, the “lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed.” The reveal begins when “he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week” ([Dan. 9:27](#)). The “many” are Daniel’s people, the nation of Israel. The Antichrist will posture himself as a peacemaker, and many (not all) in Israel will accept him as such.

This landmark event broadcasts to the world that the “lawless one” has stepped onto the global stage. Wickedness will run rampant and unhindered around the world under the Antichrist’s brutal and demonic rule. He will claim to be God and demand to be worshiped, signifying that the time Paul was speaking about has arrived. The only

escape is faith in Jesus Christ. However, many who turn to Christ will be martyred for their commitment to Him ([Rev. 7:14](#)).

At the Lord's Second Coming, the Antichrist's true identity as Satan's demonic pawn will be divulged. He and his pernicious worldwide reign will be cut short by the Lord, who will swiftly "consume" or overthrow him "with the breath of His mouth" ([2 Th. 2:8](#)). He will not wage a prolonged war against the Antichrist. All of the Antichrist's strength and authority combined with the supernatural power of Satan and his demons will be no match for Jesus Christ. The Lord will defeat him in an instant. At His Second Coming, Christ will slay individuals and nations with His breath or spoken word (cf. [Job 4:9](#); [Rev. 19:15](#)). This powerful picture describes the ease with which Christ will overthrow His archenemy and decisively end the Antichrist's devilish rule.

Jesus Christ will destroy the man of sin "with the brightness [splendor] of His coming [appearance]" ([2 Th. 2:8](#)). *Consume*, or *destroy*, does not mean annihilate but, rather, make the "lawless one" immobile, inoperative, and powerless. The "brightness of His coming" speaks of Christ's splendor, which will accompany His appearance. Christ's radiant glory will shine in a worldwide manifestation unlike anything the universe has ever seen. Such glory will immediately destroy the Antichrist and his power.

The visible appearance of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, who is the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" ([Rev. 19:16](#)), will be so dazzling and overpowering that the lawless one's "kingdom" will immediately cease to exist.

What an awesome sight to behold! As believers, we will return with Him at His Second Coming to witness this spectacular event. Glory to God in the highest!

David M. Levy is a Bible teacher, author, former pastor, and the retired director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

# EVENTS OF THE RAPTURE 1

## THESSALONIANS 4:

1. V.16 – The Lord Descends
2. V. 16 – Dead in Christ rise first
3. V. 17 - Those who are alive will be caught up
4. V. 17 – Meet the Lord in the air
5. V. 17 – to be with the Lord forever

## POST-RAPTURE EVENTS

1. The Tribulation
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming
3. Millennium
4. Great White Throne
5. New Heaven and New Jerusalem



COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

Rapture

1.Christ Comes for His Own

- John 14:3
- 1 Thess. 4:17

Glorious Appearance

1.Christ comes with His Own

- Rev. 19:14

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

Rapture

2. He comes in the air

- 1 Thess. 4:17

Glorious Appearance

2. He comes to the earth

- Zech 14:4-5
- Acts 1:11

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

**Rapture**

3. He comes to claim His bride

- 1 Thess. 4:16-17

**Glorious Appearance**

3. He comes with His bride

- Rev. 19:6-14

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

**Rapture**

**4. Removal of believers**

- 1 Thess. 4:17

**Glorious Appearance**

**4. Manifestation of Christ**

**Malachi 4:1-2**

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

Rapture

5. Only His own see Him

- 1 Thess. 4:13-18

Glorious Appearance

5. Every eye shall see Him

- Rev. 1:7
- Matthew 24:30

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

**Rapture**

**6. Tribulation begins**

- 2 Thess. 1:6-9

**Glorious Appearance**

**6. Millennial Kingdom begins**

- Rev 20:1-7

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

## Rapture

7. Saved are delivered from wrath

- 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9
- Rev. 3:10

## Glorious Appearance

7. Unsaved experience the wrath of God

- Rev 6:12-17

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

Rapture

Glorious Appearance

8. No signs precede the rapture

8. Signs precede the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

- 1 Thess. 5:1-3

- Luke 21:11-28

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

**Rapture**

9. Focus: Lord and Church

- 1 Thess. 4:13-18

**Glorious Appearance**

9. Focus: Israel and kingdom

- Matt. 24

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COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

**Rapture**

10. World is deceived

- 2 Thess. 2:3-12

**Glorious Appearance**

10. [The Deceiver]

Satan is bound

- Rev. 20:1-2

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## HOW SHOULD THIS IMPACT OUR LIVES?

1. Live with Expectation – Titus 2:11-14
2. Live with dedication – 1 John 2:28
3. Live with preparation – Titus 2:14

Taken from David Jeremiah – see link:

[What Is the Rapture? - David Jeremiah Blog](#)