

## Problems with the Prewrath Rapture Position

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

### The Prewrath Position Presented



Many Christians think of End Time prophecy as a gigantic intimidating puzzle which is difficult to piece together and impossible to figure out. But every puzzle can be resolved if you approach it the right way. The prophetic puzzle of the timing of the Rapture is not difficult to understand. However, there are various views that have muddied the prophetic waters in relation to the timing of the Rapture. The prewrath Rapture is one of these views.

Actually, pretribulationism is also a prewrath view and so are the other Rapture views. The real issue is about the timing of the Rapture. All the views believe we are exempt from the wrath of God. When does God's wrath start and what's the nature of the protection from the wrath?

- ✓ Pretribbers start God's wrath at the beginning of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.
- ✓ Midtribbers start God's wrath at the middle of the Tribulation, and it occurs during the last 3.5 years.
- ✓ Prewrathers start God's wrath at the seventh seal (three fourths of the way through the Tribulation Period).
- ✓ Posttribbers like Robert Gundry start God's wrath during a concentrated time right at the end of the Tribulation in the bowl judgments and Armageddon, claiming they will be raptured before this time of judgment or display of God's wrath.

The point is that Rosenthal's name for his viewpoint (Pre-Wrath) does not distinguish it from the Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib, and even Post-Trib views. All four are actually prewrath views. So, in some respect Rosenthal's view is not novel at all. However, in other ways it breeds exegetical confusion.

The "Pre-Wrath" name is vague because it does not on the surface give a clue as to when the Rapture occurs in relation to the Tribulation. The name of the Pre-Trib

view signifies a belief that the Rapture will occur before (pre) the Tribulation begins. The name of the Mid-Trib view clearly indicates a belief that the Rapture will occur in the middle of the Tribulation. The name of the Post-Trib view puts the Rapture after (post) the Tribulation. But the name “Pre-Wrath” gives no indication of when the Rapture will occur with relation to the Tribulation. After studying their findings, one can conclude that the “Pre-Wrath” view is actually the “Three-Quarters Tribulation Rapture” viewpoint because it teaches that the Rapture will occur three-quarters of the way through the Tribulation, or shortly thereafter.

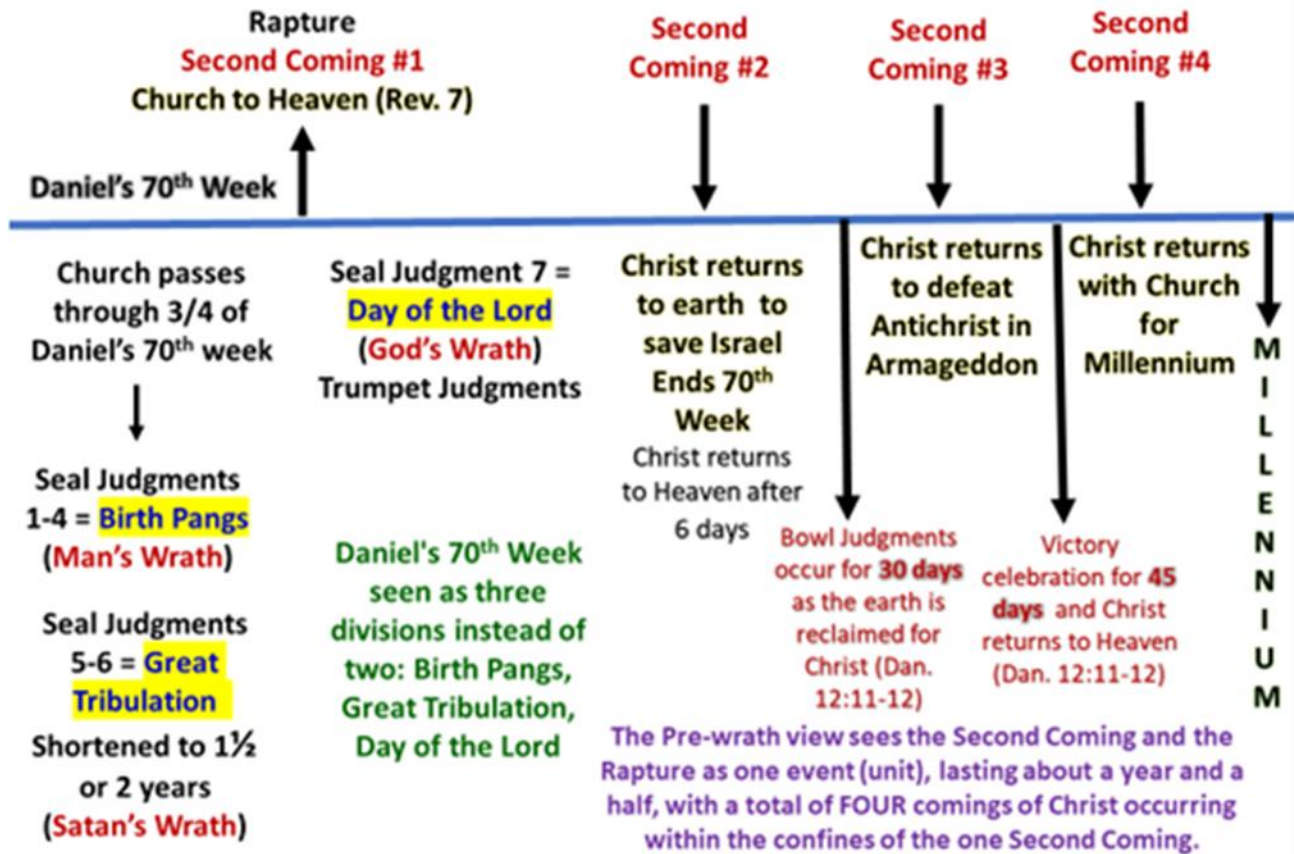
In this study I want to expose the major errors that are being propagated by prewrathers since the heydays of Robert Van Kampen and Marvin Rosenthal. Rosenthal presented the prewrath position in his book entitled, “The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church” which was published in 1990. Although Rosenthal was the first to publish on this subject, he had been deeply influenced into his new position by his friend, Bob Van Kampen, who later wrote his own books on the subject. Van Kampen’s main book, *The Sign*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) has been printed in three editions (1992, 1999 and 2000). I will interact with the major errors presented in Rosenthal’s well-known book by rebutting and correcting them with the Book, the Scriptures (Rom. 4:3). If we resolve the major errors in Rosenthal’s book, then the other errant conclusions will be of no consequence. They will be seen to be a pile on of additional errors to cover up the major ones. One error leads to another and so on.

What is the prewrath view of the Rapture? Where did this position originate from and what does it teach regarding the timing of the Rapture? Today the prewrath position may have certain variations to it, but I will argue against the conclusions of the original inventors of this theory (Robert Van Kampen, Marv Rosenthal) and their untenable and unbiblical prophetic conclusions regarding the timing of the Rapture which is presented in a chart on the next page.

Several things should be noted on the prewrath chart. The Rapture occurs in connection with the seventh seal and there are actually four comings of Christ which according to the prewrath position are said to be a multifaceted event viewed as only one coming. Seals 1-4 reference the first 3.5 years whereas seals 5-6 reference the shortened Great Tribulation Period. The Day of the Lord (God’s wrath) covers the period of the seventh seal and trumpet judgments but not the bowl judgments for they are an expression of wrath that occurs outside the Day of the Lord.

# Pre-wrath Rapture

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The prewrath Rapture is a variation of the midtribulational view. It is actually a spinoff from the midtribulational and posttribulational teaching that concludes the Church is caught up to Heaven before the “great day of ... wrath” (God’s wrath) comes to earth as allegedly indicated in the future announcement of Revelation 6:17. The prewrathers hang their hat on Revelation 6:16-17. According to this position, the Church will pass through the first 3.5 years and a significant part of the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (Dan. 9:27) before being removed from the earth, as announced by the approaching of God’s wrath in Revelation 6:17

George Zeller makes some important contributions at this point:

- “The Pre-Wrath view is not a pre-tribulational view because it insists that the Church will be present on earth during most of the seven years of Daniel’s 70th week (all except for the last phase which this view calls the Day of the Lord).

- The Pre-Wrath view is not a mid-tribulational view because it insists that the Rapture will occur after the midpoint of the final seven years, somewhere around the middle of the last 3½ years.
- The Pre-Wrath view is a post-tribulational view in the sense that it teaches that the Rapture will occur after the Great Tribulation. However, this view redefines the Great Tribulation period in a way that is unusual. Instead of saying that the Great Tribulation ends at the same time Daniel's 70th week ends (at the end of this 7-year period), this view says that the Great Tribulation ends just prior to the Day of the Lord which they say takes place a significant time prior to the end of Daniel's 70th week. Thus this view is post-tribulational but not post-"Daniel's 70th week." This view teaches that the Rapture will take place toward the end of Daniel's 70th week but not at the end."

According to the prewrath view, "after the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29) is a reference to the Great Tribulation but not the ending of the seven years of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (*my additional comment*).

Zeller goes on to say:

- "The Pre-Wrath view is a pre-wrath, pre-"Day of the Lord" view because it teaches that the Rapture will take place immediately prior to the Day of the Lord which is the time when God pours out His wrath upon the earth.
- In summary, this view rejects the pre-tribulational view because it says that the Rapture will not take place prior to Daniel's 70th week; it rejects the mid-tribulational view because it says that the Rapture will take place a significant but unknown period of time after the middle of Daniel's 70th week; and this view rejects the post-tribulational view because it places the Rapture not at the end of Daniel's 70th week, but at a significant period of time before the end."

To simplify, this view teaches that the Church will be taken in the Rapture three fourths of the way through what pretribulationists term as the Tribulation Period, allegedly before God's wrath begins. It teaches we will be Raptured at the end of a shortened version of the Great Tribulation but before the Day of the Lord begins (the time of God's wrath). This view holds that there are three distinct and identifiable periods of time: the Beginning of Sorrows, the Great Tribulation, and

the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord begins with the trumpet judgments of the Tribulation Period and is the specific period when God's wrath is experienced on earth. The previous time periods involve only the wrath of man and Satan.

The prewrath theory suggests the Church will pass through the first two divisions of the Tribulation Period (Beginning of Sorrows and Great Tribulation) and then be raptured before the third division of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week begins which is called the Day of the Lord. The Church will be raptured during the last quarter of the seven years between the sixth and seventh seal, prior to God's wrath being poured out upon the earth in the trumpet judgments.

Only the final one fourth of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is considered to be the Day of the Lord, the time when God's wrath is experienced on earth. The other three fourths is seen as the trials and tribulations of life that Christians must endure which would include Antichrist's judgments against the Church. According to Rosenthal, three fourths of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week does not pertain to God's wrath. Of course, this is a mere assumption and cannot be proven from Scripture.

The prewrath rapturism view was developed in the 1970's and popularized by a man named Robert Van Kampen. Marvin Rosenthal took up Van Kampen's errant theory of the Rapture and published his book entitled "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church." Back in the day, he sent a copy of his book to my home free of charge. This book is filled with unbiblical findings as Rosenthal finds prooftexts for his theory and creates a prophetic world salad of confusion.

Marv Rosenthal apparently had an ax to grind with those who embrace pretribulationism and his book represents his strong personality but weak position claiming that people of "average intelligence" would naturally believe in his theory on the Rapture (pp. 30-31). He seems to intimidate people into accepting his view. He writes, "If I am wrong, ten thousand angels arguing my cause would not make it right, and I will have played the fool" (pp. 35). Well, he said it, not me.

Although I do not doubt the sincerity, conviction, and emotion of Rosenthal when writing his book, I do have problems concerning his hermeneutics, exegesis, and how he handles the evidence from the Scriptures. Putting all emotions aside, we must arrive at a Biblical conclusion regarding the timing of the Rapture. In fact, sincerity and conviction alone do not necessarily mean a teaching is in accordance

with the truth. Although Rosenthal concludes there “simply is no explicit exegetical evidence” for a pretribulation Rapture (p. 280), he fails in his own exegesis by mixing the Rapture with the Second Coming, mixing the Church with Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, and building a prewrath case on exegetical gymnastics and fallacies, assumptions, presuppositions, inconsistencies, and linguistic errors.

At one point Rosenthal resorts to what seems like self-glorification by claiming that a proper understanding of the book of Revelation has escaped Bible students “to this very hour.” The implication is that only his view and book (written in 1990) will unlock the mystery of the timing of the Rapture and the Day of the Lord as outlined in the book of Revelation. Of course, there is a basic understanding and substantial agreement among pretribulationists as to the meaning of the book of Revelation. The book is not a mystery to everyone else, and only revealed to Marvin Rosenthal.

Rosenthal also thinks that the Church generation that enters Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week with the prospect of being raptured before God’s wrath begins is “a catalyst for holy living” (p. 19). However, it’s the hope of the imminent return of Christ that has a purifying effect on our lives (1 John 3:2-3) – not entering the Tribulation Period and facing Antichrist, starvation, war, pestilence, and probable death.

Rosenthal suggests in his book that the Church will only experience man’s and Satan’s wrath during three quarters of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week but not God’s wrath which only occurs during the last quarter. This is a very bizarre conclusion. In other words, the Church will pass through approximately five years of the Tribulation Period which deals with man’s wrath (primarily experienced with Antichrist’s judgments on the world = Seal Judgments 1-4) and Satan’s wrath (primarily experienced during the Great Tribulation – Seals 5-6) but the Church will be raptured before God’s wrath begins with the seventh seal out of which the trumpet judgments flow (the expressions of God’s wrath). The cosmic disturbances associated with the sixth seal will signal the approach of the Day of the Lord (God’s wrath).

Essentially, this view teaches that the Church will be rescued from what Rosenthal calls God’s wrath (the Day of the Lord) which only begins three quarters of the way through the Tribulation Period with the trumpet judgments. The problem with this whole theory is that it’s unbiblical. The Biblical facts related to the Old Testament Day of the Lord do not align with Rosenthal’s theory for according to Old Testament prophecy the Day of the Lord (God’s wrath) is associated with the entirety of

Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week which would include the time of Beginning of Sorrows and the Great Tribulation that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24. More on this in the refutation section of the study.

This peculiar Rapture theory developed by Van Kampen and popularized by Rosenthal basically teaches that the first six seals are not the expression of God's wrath – only man's wrath or Satan's wrath. For this reason, the Church will remain on earth until the wrath of man and Satan is finished but be raptured before God's wrath begins three fourths of the way through Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, after experiencing the time of Antichrist's and Satan's wrath, but before the seventh seal and trumpet judgments which is the Day of the Lord and God's wrath. Therefore, this view is called a prewrath Rapture of the Church. God's New Testament saints are raptured on earth before God's wrath begins (five years into the Tribulation Period). Prewrathers must resort to strained characterizations and exegesis which relate to the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation, and the scope of God's wrath in order to avoid pretribulationism and support their Rapture view.

Below is a succinct summary of the prewrath position.

- ❖ According to the pre-wrath view, believers go through most of the Tribulation Period but not the time of God's wrath which occurs before the end of Danile's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The Church will endure man's fury and Satan's persecution during  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 70<sup>th</sup> week but will be spared God's wrath the last  $\frac{1}{4}$  of this prophetic time period. Between the sixth and seventh seal, before God pours out His trumpet judgments on the world, the Church will be raptured (Rev. 8:1).
- ❖ The prewrath Rapture theory views the trumpet judgments (Revelation 8-11) as the wrath of God from which the Church is exempt. However, the first six seal judgments (Revelation 6:1-17) are not considered the wrath of God; rather, they are viewed as "the wrath of the antichrist" (the wrath of man) or "the wrath of Satan." This is because there is no direct mention of God's wrath until after the sixth seal is broken (Revelation 6:17) which is said to be only a precursor to the beginning of the Day of the Lord in the 7<sup>th</sup> seal judgment. According to the prewrath Rapture theory, the Church will remain present on earth to experience the first six seals.

- ❖ Comparing Revelation chapter 6 with Matthew 24, the prewrath Rapture theorists identify the seal judgments 1-4 with Jesus' descriptions in Matthew 24:8 as "the beginning of sorrows" (birth pangs) and seal judgments 5-6 with the shortened version of "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21). In Matthew 24:29 and 30, following the birth pangs of distress (the shortened version of the Great Tribulation and third division of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) "the sign of the Son of Man" then appears in the sky, and it is at this same time (seal judgment 7), according to the prewrath Rapture theory, the event of the Rapture occurs. However, to arrive at this conclusion there must be a mixing of the separate events of the Rapture with the Second Coming and the false assumption that the cosmic signs of Revelation 6 are the same as mentioned in Matthew 24.
- ❖ This theory chops the single period of seven years ("one week" - Dan. 9:27) into compartmental segments that contain a combination of the wrath of man and Satan (seals 1-6) and the wrath of God (seal 7). As previously mentioned, the first six seal judgments are the wrath of the Antichrist, man, and Satan - not the judgment or wrath of God. The final seventh seal is God's wrath. According to this view, the Great Tribulation (seals 5-6) cannot even be part of God's wrath for they precede the Day of the Lord. Seals 1-4 (the first half of the Tribulation) and seals 5-6 which eventually bring us through three quarters through the Tribulation are not God's wrath, but the sixth seal is an indicator that the Day of the Lord is about to begin with the seventh seal and Rapture (Rev. 8:1).
- ❖ Division one (the first four seals) is the Beginning of Sorrows. This time division encompasses the first 3.5 of the Tribulation Period which are identified as the beginning of birth pangs in Matthew 24:4-8. Again, all six seals in the prewrath position do not contain God's wrath. They are said to be a combined expression of man's and Satan's wrath – not God's wrath.
- ❖ Division two (the fifth and sixth seals) comprise the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21). The Great Tribulation begins in the middle of the seven years but only lasts a short time (Matt. 24:22), perhaps a year and a half, instead of 3.5 years. The fifth and sixth seals do not contain God's wrath. They are a continuation of the expression of man's and Satan's wrath – not God's wrath. At the end of this shortened period of time (the Great Tribulation) Christ will



come and rapture His people (Matt. 24:29). The shortening of the Great Tribulation allows the prewrather to have both the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord in the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

- ❖ Division three (seventh seal) begins the Day of the Lord (Rev. 8:1). The sixth seal is sometimes viewed as a precursor sign that the Day of the Lord is about to begin with the seventh seal actually beginning the Day of the Lord, somewhere between the middle and end of the Tribulation Period. Seal six is seen as a transitional seal that leads into the expression of God's wrath that is only revealed in the seventh seal (the trumpet judgments) which are the final quarter of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The bowl judgments occur after the Second Coming and are not part of the specified Day of the Lord (God's wrath).
- ❖ The Church is seen in Heaven following its prewrath Rapture (Revelation 7:9-17). But the Church remains on earth during the first two divisions of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week which encompass the first six seals. This includes the first 3.5 years (the Beginning of Sorrows) and the Great Tribulation Period (part of the second 3.5 years) while man and Satan's wrath (not God's wrath) is unleashed on the world.
- ❖ God's wrath will not begin until the Day of the Lord begins (the third division of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) which is three quarters of the way through the Tribulation Period. The Church is raptured before the seventh seal begins (The Day of the Lord). Hence, the Church will experience a prewrath Rapture three fourths of the way through Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and therefore escape God's wrath.
- ❖ In summary, the seal judgments consist of the combined wrath of man, Antichrist, and Satan, but not the judgment or wrath of God. It is the prewrath position that Matthew 24:22, a reference to the days of the Great Tribulation Period being shortened, results in the Church being raptured in Matthew 24:30-31, ending its persecution from the Antichrist and Satan. In other words, at the end of the shortened Great Tribulation, between the sixth and seventh seal, Christ will come and rapture His people out of the world. It is then that the wrath of God will break forth as the Day of the Lord is unleashed on earth. This will occur only during the last quarter of the

Tribulation Period. God's wrath is seen for only about 1.75 years (21 months) before phase two of the Second Coming occurs which is then followed by the bowl judgments and phases three and four of Christ's Second Coming.

My friend George Zeller has given what I believe is the best succinct summary of this position while confirming Rosenthal's own viewpoint. Understanding the position will allow us to dissect and dismantle it and then replace it with the Biblical view of a prewrath/pretribulation Rapture.

DISSECT



Zeller writes:

"The Pre-Wrath Rapture theory is set forth in the book, The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church by Marvin Rosenthal (Thomas Nelson, 1990). This view may be summarized as follows:

"The Rapture of the Church is not an imminent event (p. 292). It cannot take place today. It is impossible for the Lord Jesus to come for His Church today. The Rapture cannot take place next week, next month or next year. Indeed the Rapture cannot take place for at least four or five years [at the very earliest]. The Rapture will occur immediately prior to the Day of the Lord and the Day of the Lord will begin with the opening of the seventh seal (pp. 18,60,176). The Rapture will occur on the very day the Day of the Lord begins (p. 117). It will occur at the very outset of the Day of the Lord (p. 210).

"Daniel's 70th week (a period of seven years) contains three distinct time periods (p. 233): (1) The first is the 'beginning of sorrows' which is the first 3½ years (p. 147). (2) The second is the 'Great Tribulation' which begins in the middle of the 70th week [at the beginning of the last 3½ years]. The Great Tribulation is also called 'the time of Jacob's trouble' (pp. 74, 206). The Great Tribulation is man's wrath against man, not God's wrath (p. 105). The Great Tribulation is "cut short" and made less than 3½ years (pp. 108,109,112). (3) The third time period of Daniel's 70th week is the Day of the Lord which is the time of God's wrath. The Day of the Lord begins with the opening of the 7th seal (p. 26).

"According to this view, the Day of the Lord must be clearly distinguished from the Great Tribulation. These two time periods are distinct and separate and do not overlap (p. 147). They both occur during the last 3½ years, beginning with the Great

Tribulation and followed immediately by the Day of the Lord. It is uncertain when the Great Tribulation ends and when the Day of the Lord begins because no man knows the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36). The Day of the Lord will commence sometime within the second half of the 70th week (p. 60).

“How long will the Day of the Lord last? It will end at the end of the 70th week. The uncertainty involves when it will begin. It will begin ‘long before the end of the 70th week’ (p. 153). The Day of the Lord will begin ‘a considerable period of time before the 70th week ends’ (p. 248). The Day of the Lord must be longer than five months because the 5th trumpet judgment alone is said to last five months (Rev. 9:1,5 and see p. 153) and the trumpet judgments take place during the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord will immediately follow the Rapture of the Church, which according to this theory is described in Matthew 24:31.

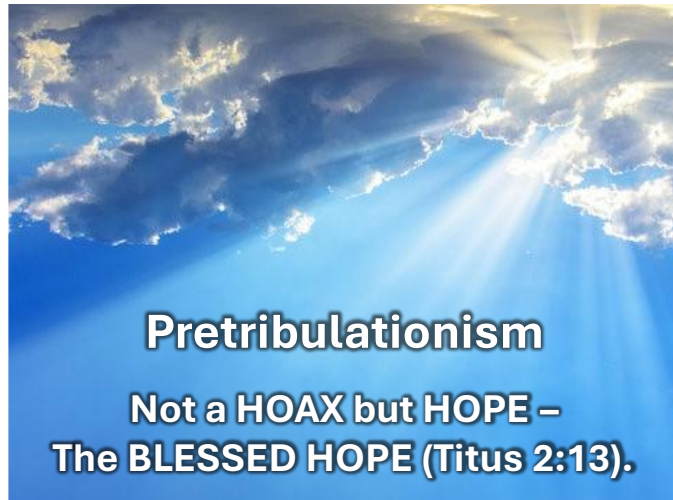
“The Church will be on earth when the Antichrist makes a treaty with Israel which marks the beginning of the 70th week. The Church must enter the 70th week (p. 19, 137). The Church must pass through all of the first 3½ years. Indeed, the Church must be on earth during a significant part of the second half of the 70th week (p. 138). The Church must be on earth during the entire period called the Great Tribulation (‘the time of Jacob’s trouble’) and will not be Raptured until after the Great Tribulation is over, but immediately prior to the Day of the Lord.

“Thus Church saints must be on earth to decide if they will accept the mark of Antichrist (p. 36) and they must be willing to suffer and die for Christ, if necessary, under the persecution of the Antichrist (p. 34). The true Church will be on earth when the Antichrist is personally present, empowered by Satan (Rev. 13:4), demanding that the world bow down and worship him (p. 137). Thus the Church will be present on earth "during a significant part of the 70th week of Daniel" (p. 138). The great multitude from every nation described in Revelation 7 is the raptured Church (p. 184-185).

“The first four seal judgments (Rev. 6) take place during the ‘beginning of sorrows’ and the 5th seal takes place during the Great Tribulation (p. 147, and see Rosenthal’s chart published in Zion’s Hope, 1990). During the Day of the Lord the trumpet judgments take place, but not the bowl judgments (p. 147). The bowl judgments are not poured out until after the 70th week of Daniel during the 30 additional days mentioned in Daniel 12:11. The seal judgments involve the wrath

of unregenerate men whereas the trumpet and bowl judgments involve the wrath of God (pp. 34-35, 145). The Day of the Lord is not the time of God's wrath in its totality because the Day of the Lord includes the trumpet judgments but not the bowl judgments. The bowl judgments take place after the Day of the Lord during the 30 days which follow Daniel's 70th week. Thus, the seal judgments and the bowl judgments are not part of the Day of the Lord; only the trumpet judgments take place during this time. [I have a letter on file from Marvin J. Rosenthal (April 11, 1991) confirming that I have presented his position accurately.]"

In contrast to the prewrath Rapture is a pretribulation Rapture. A pretribulation Rapture is not a hoax but is described as the blessed hope (Titus 2:13). It is straightforward and simple to understand as outlined in the Scriptural teaching of God's prophetic word. Unlike the prewrath view, the Biblical position of pretribulationism believes Christ's return in the Rapture is an imminent event that cannot be fixed to occur

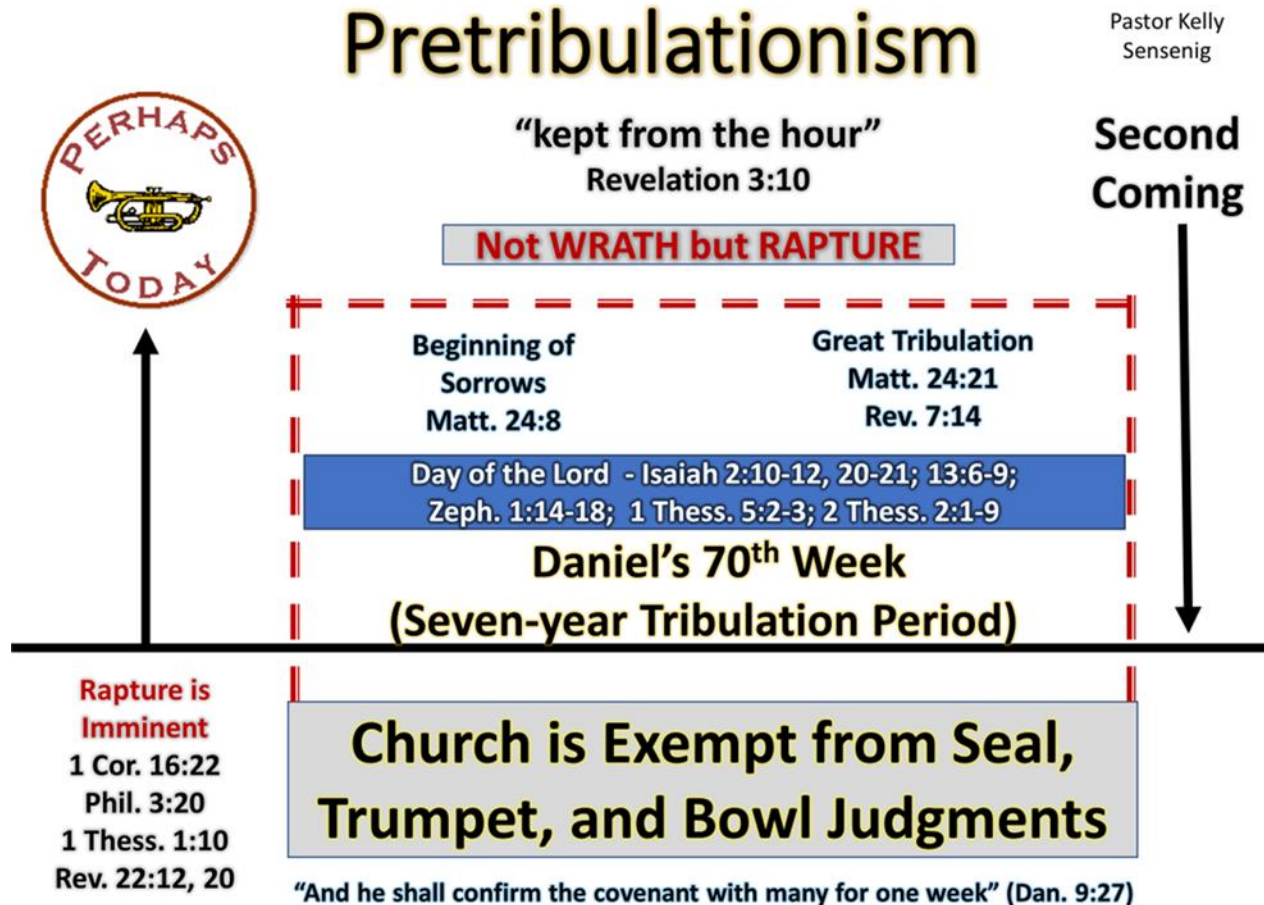


during the period of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 16:22). The entire premise of the prewrath position is faulty and found wanting when considering the obvious Scriptural fact that Jesus can come today! Prewrathers are forced to sing, "Jesus can't come today." This is because they must wait for Jesus to return in the Rapture during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the Tribulation Period).

Prewrathers must conclude that the only hope they have is to enter Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and maybe survive until the Rapture but more likely starve through famine, die through warfare, be killed by wild animals, or likely face martyrdom at the hands of the apostate church (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:8-17; 17:6) or decapitation/martyrdom through the terroristic regime of the Antichrist (Rev. 20:4). This does not sound like hope to me! It sounds like hopelessness!

What difference does it make whether we accept the pretribulation or the prewrath viewpoint? To Van Kampen, the stakes are great. He says, "your view of end times may determine whether you, your children, or your grandchildren

survive the onslaught of Antichrist or die at his hands" (Rapture, p. 131). The prewrather steals the blessed hope from the Church. It's not wrath but Rapture. This is what pretribulationism teaches.



If the Rapture is to be prewrath it must be pretribulationism, which of course, is the teaching of Scripture (Rev. 3:10). Pretribulationism believes there is a seven-year Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15) of lesser and greater tribulation (birth pangs) as Jesus taught (Matt. 24:8, 21). However, the prewrathers attempt to dismiss three quarters of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week from being part of the Day of the Lord and therefore must shorten the Great Tribulation to about 1.75 years and add the Day of the Lord (21 months) as a separate third division of time. The prewrather concludes that Church saints living during the first six seals are experiencing the same tribulations and trials that we face today. However, pretribulationism does not parallel present-day tribulations with the specific tribulations the saints will face during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week as Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:9, 21).

Jesus prophesied there was coming upon earth a distinct time period of lesser and greater tribulation (birth pangs) that would occur during the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (Matt. 24:15), the seven years, which would result in great afflictions upon His people. This specific period was identified by Jesus as “the tribulation” (Matt. 24:29); hence, the Tribulation Period, along with the imagery of birth pangs was associated with the prophetic Old Testament texts that spoke of the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:6–9; Joel 2:1-2; Jer. 30:6–7; 1 Thess. 5:2–3).

Unlike pretribulationism, prewrath rapturism also creates hyper distinctions between man’s versus God’s wrath or Satan’s versus God’s wrath. Pretribulationism does not create three divisions of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week but follows the two divisions Jesus mentions. It does not shorten time periods such as the Great Tribulation and the duration of the Day of the Lord to the last quarter of Daniel’s prophesied seven years (Dan. 9:27). Pretribulationism clearly sees the Great Tribulation as being part of the Day of the Lord (God’s wrath). How can the Day of the Lord (God’s wrath) be less severe than the Great Tribulation that precedes it, the time of greatest distress to come upon earth? It makes no sense.

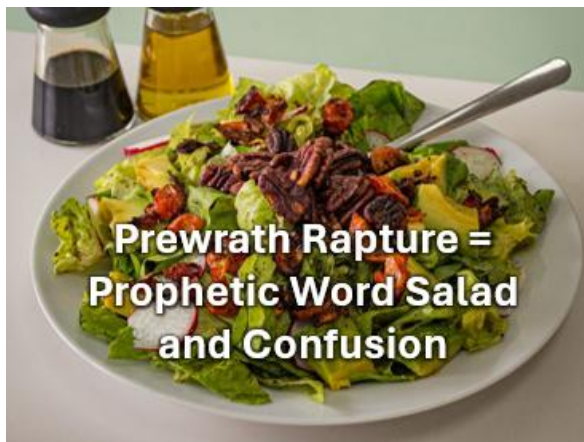
Furthermore, pretribulationism does not place the Church in a prophecy given to Israel (“seventy weeks are determined upon thy people” – Dan. 9:24). Nor does it mix the Church with Tribulation saints by claiming the Rapture of the Church is described in Revelation 7:9-17, while ignoring the fact that the Church as Christ’s Bride is never mentioned in Revelation 6-18. Instead, the Church is found in Heaven throughout the entire period of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (Rev. 19:4-9).

In addition, pretribulationism does not conclude that there are four separate Second Comings of Christ lumped into one event. Nor does it merge multiple future events together as the prewrath rapturists do, which could not possibly occur at the same time because of the contexts and events being described. For instance, prewrathers place the Rapture of the Church in the context of the Second Coming of Christ to earth (Matthew 24:29–31). They blend the events associated with the Second Coming with the Rapture by making the saints go up to Heaven while at the same time portraying Christ coming down to earth to begin judging it as the King. Christ supposedly maintains His parousia or presence on earth as Judge while the saints are in Heaven. This contradicts the promise of John 14:1-3 where Christ is said to be with His Church during the seven years and wrongly (not rightly) divides the prophetic truth of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15).



The truth of pretribulationism eschatology is very Scriptural and simple. It teaches that Christ returns *for* His saints in the Rapture which is a single stand-alone event (1 Thess. 4:13-18). It then confirms (as Jesus does) that there will be a seven-year Tribulation Period on earth which encompasses the Old Testament description of the Day of the Lord (occurring 18 times in the OT), which is a time when God’s wrath is displayed over the earth and fulfilled in the final “one week” (seven-year) prophecy of Daniel’s 9:27. The Day of the Lord is then followed by the single event of the Second Coming of Christ to earth *with* His saints to rule during the Millennium.

### The Prewrath Errors Refuted



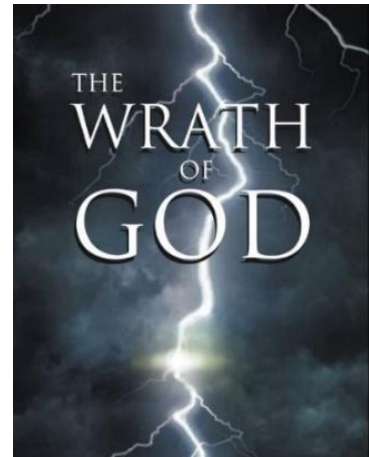
Although Rosenthal suggests that his presuppositional assumptions within his prewrath position are built on some kind of “unassailable” superstructure, his arguments can be broken down and easily refuted. Facts are stubborn things! There are many errors to refute in Rosenthal’s prophetic world salad of confusion that he has created. The simplicity of the Church being raptured to escape the seven-year Tribulation Period as taught in Scripture is

turned into unbiblical and eisegetical conclusions related to the Old Testament Day of the Lord, the word tribulation, the work of the Holy Spirit, the teaching of Jesus and Paul on this subject, the number of divisions of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, mixing the Rapture with the Second Coming, creating four separate returns of Christ as different times, failing to mention the promise of John 14, and not making a clear distinctions between Israel’s program versus the Church.

- 1. The first six seals are a clear representation and manifestation of God’s wrath – not merely the wrath of man and Satan.**

Prewrath rapturism denies that the first six seal judgments which are ordained by God are part of His divine wrath. A major flaw in the prewrath Rapture theory is its teaching that the first seal judgments are not an expression of God’s wrath.

However, since all six seal judgments begin the same way, with the breaking of the seal by the Lamb, one should not be surprised that Revelation 6:16-17 provides an accurate summary of all six judgments as “the wrath of the Lamb,” and “the great day of his wrath.” This cannot be the wrath of man or Satan as prewrathers erroneously suggest. All the seals involve God’s wrath. Only a midtribber or prewrather with an axe to grind would come to another conclusion.



Rosenthal states:

“The use of the word wrath in revelation does not occur until the Day of the Lord's wrath begins (Rev. 6:17), not with the beginning of the 70th week. The reason is clear God's wrath does not start until the opening of the seventh seal” (p. 172).

Rosenthal then makes this exaggerated claim based upon preconceived bias:

“Nor can it be demonstrated that the opening of the seals reflects an outpouring of God's wrath. Not until the opening of the 6th seal, which initiates cosmic disturbance, does God begin to actively intervene in the affairs of men. With the opening of the seventh seal His wrath is about to commence (pp. 140-141).

Rosenthal again operates on the basis of assumptions and his presupposition is that the wrath of Revelation 6:16-17 is a precursor reference to the seventh seal, when contextually it is to be taken with the sixth seal. Since this is exegetically true, this blows a hole in his theory that God’s wrath only begins in the seventh seal, and since this is true, God’s wrath was already in place during the first six seals. What he condemns pretribulationists of doing (seeing God’s wrath in the previous seals) he does himself by confirming that the sixth seal is a precursor to God’s wrath and “With the opening of the seventh seal His wrath is about to commence.”

In other words, it is God’s wrath during the sixth seal but it’s not God’s wrath until the seventh seal. But how can the sixth seal be a precursor or initiation to God’s wrath but not actually be God’s wrath until the opening of the seventh seal? There is no logic in this statement. Rosenthal wants to make chapter seven and the seventh seal retroactive to chapter 6 and the sixth seal. If this is true, then it is also possible to make it retroactive to the first seal. The verb “has come” in Revelation 6:17 is aorist indicative which is referring to a previous arrival of the wrath, not



something that is about to take place as Rosenthal asserts to press an unfounded argument that God's wrath is only related to the seventh seal. More on this in our next point.

The proposition of Rosenthal is that a shortened version of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) begins with the seventh seal. Until the seventh seal it's only the wrath of man. But this is an artificial dichotomy and faulty conclusion drawn from a bias premise. Rosenthal's and the prewrathers entire argument collapses as they attempt to keep the wrath of God away from the first six seals. This is because grammatically, prophetically, and contextually God's wrath is taking place in the sixth seal.

Why is Rosenthal's conclusion of God's wrath beginning only during the seventh seal an errant conclusion? It's because Scripture shows that it is the Lamb who opens the seals with the natural understanding that God's wrath is being expressed in the seal judgments (Revelation 5:5; 6:1). No other man is found worthy to open them (Rev. 5:3-4). Therefore, this is not a scene of man's judgments, but God's wrath and judgment upon mankind. The Tribulation Period begins when Jesus opens the first seal, and from this point on, the wrath of God is meted out on a sinful world.

Rosenthal insists that the word "wrath" does not appear until the sixth seal (Rev. 6:16) which is seen as introductory to what is about to come in the seventh seal (the wrath of God). Therefore, the first five seals, including the sixth, cannot be an expression of God's wrath. Of course, this is an erroneous conclusion. The word wrath does not appear in Genesis chapter six, but no person would ever doubt that the global Flood was an expression of God's wrath. The words Trinity, incarnation, and Rapture do not appear in the Bible, but they are teachings which are clearly represented in the various contexts of Scripture.

The whole premise of the prewrath argument is unbiblical, unwarranted, and in error. This is because it reasons that that the first six seals do not actually represent God's wrath being meted out on the world. But the Scriptures clearly confirm that the Lamb has taken the scroll, or the title deed to planet earth, and is unleashing the judgments which will lead to His Second Coming and the restored earthly theocracy (the Millennial Kingdom).

Revelation 5:1

“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book (*scroll*) written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.”

Revelation 5:5

“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David (*Jesus who is heir to the Davidic throne during the Millennium*), hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”

Revelation 5:9

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

The book or scroll was the title deed of the earth and only Jesus Christ has the authority to open the sealed scroll and bring the wrath of God upon the earth, paving the way for His Second Coming, and essentially purifying and preparing the earth for His millennial reign. Only a student wearing prewrath eyeglasses and possessing prophetic bias would conclude these seals are not an expression of God’s wrath. God, the Father has “committed all judgment unto the Son” (Jn. 5:22). This is why Christ is the only one worthy to take the scroll from the Father’s hand in Heaven to open it “and to loose the seals” (Rev. 5). Revelation 6 then shows the Son’s judgment over the earth while opening each individual seal.

- ✓ “And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals” (Revelation 6:1).
- ✓ “And when he had opened the second seal” (Revelation 6:3).
- ✓ “And when he had opened the third seal” (Revelation 6:5).
- ✓ “And when he had opened the fourth seal” (Revelation 6:7).
- ✓ “And when he had opened the fifth seal” (Revelation 6:9).
- ✓ “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal” (Revelation 6:12).

The fact that the Lamb (Jesus Christ) is opening all seven seals (not Satan, Antichrist, or rebellious mankind) speaks of Christ’s sovereignty and control over everything that occurs during the seven-year Tribulation Period including the workings of Antichrist and Satan who are given power by God to express wrath upon the earth for “power was given to him” (Rev. 6:2) and “power was given unto them” (Rev.

6:8). In other words, God can express His wrath through evil rulers and angelic beings which would include Antichrist and the work of Satan.

Rosenthal argues (p. 142) that if all seven seals are expressions of God's wrath, then with the breaking of the first seal God would be the One responsible for the rise of Antichrist and a false religious system. In other words, Rosenthal is suggesting that God cannot take the rap or blame for the emergence of Antichrist's entrance and persecution of humanity. This is a glaring omission of what the Bible actually teaches. God is responsible for placing kings and rulers on earthly thrones for "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25) and "the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will" (Dan. 5:21).

Rosenthal also argues that God's house would be divided and opposing itself if Christ were to turn loose the dominant ruler (the Antichrist) of the 70<sup>th</sup> week who will be energized by Satan. Of course, this is an uninformed analogy and conclusion when reflecting on the sovereignty of God. Was God's house divided and opposing itself when God turned over his righteous servant Job to be attacked by Satan (Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6)? Of course not! When God raised up Pharaoh who severely abused Israel (Exod. 9:16; Rom. 9:17) was God opposing His plan and purpose in the world? Not at all.

God in His sovereignty and for His own providential purpose will raise up the Antichrist, a dictatorial tyrant, who in the prophetic word is termed as a "foolish" and "idol" shepherd (Zech. 11:15-17) which will bring His wrath upon His ancient people Israel. The Bible views rulers as executors of God's wrath (Rom. 13:4) and such will be the case with Antichrist, so that in the darkest time in Israel's history they will repent and return to their true Messiah (Zech. 12:2, 10-13:1).

Isaiah 45:7 speaks of God's sovereign hand over all things that occur on earth: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*." Job 9:24 informs us that "the earth is given into the hand of the wicked" to fulfill God's sovereign purpose which was also true of the wicked man Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17). What about the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions? God warned about His coming wrath upon the nation through these armies (Deut. 28:36-37). Assyria was known as the rod of God's anger (Isa. 10:5) to accomplish the expression of God's wrath. The same was true of Babylon (Hab. 1:12-2:20).

Paul Feinberg comments on this:

"To identify the wrath of God simply with His direct intervention is to overlook the fact that primary and secondary agency both belong to God. Would anyone deny that the Northern Kingdom had been judged by God because Assyria conquered her? Did the Southern Kingdom escape the wrath of God for her sin because the instrument of judgment was Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon? Surely the answer is no. Then why should anyone think that because the early seals and trumpets relate to famine and war as well as natural phenomena that they cannot and are not expressions of the wrath of God?" [The Rapture by Archer, Feinberg, Moo and Reiter, see pp. 61-63.]

Rosenthal vainly argues that the martyrs in Revelation 6:10 are calling for vengeance on earth dwellers and therefore this disproves once and for all that God's wrath was present on earth during the period of the seals. But this is a mere scheme of Rosenthal. He suggests that if the seals are God's wrath, then God is martyring His own people.

Rosenthal states:

"Because the breaking of the fifth seal instigates and depicts the martyrdom of God's people, to say that the fifth seal is the wrath of God is to make God responsible for the killing of His own people, who have been faithful to Him (pp. 142-143).

Again, Rosenthal assumes a problem that is not here. According to this reasoning, one could conclude that God is also murdering His saints who are being martyred throughout the earth by communists and terrorists. This is an empty strawman type of argument, misrepresenting pretribulationism as a debunked theory, then creating another argument designed to force his position on others. It's very clear that God's overall purpose which comes to pass on earth may sometimes involve the killing of innocent people. For instance, the death of the innocent (the abortion of babies) can be meshed together with God allowing the wicked to bring about His earthly purposes related to humanity. This can be seen in the crucifixion account.

Acts 2:23 is a case in point:

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

There is often an intertwining of God punishing the wicked and the wicked punishing the righteous. In other words, we find in Scripture that God can bring His purposes to pass in judging the ungodly and unsaved even though His own people might suffer from the hands of wicked sinners. God's people (tribulation saints) are martyred during the first four seals, and they are seen in Heaven during the fifth seal as disembodied souls. As God pours out His wrath upon the unsaved during the first four seals (war, death, famine and starvation, wild beasts) His own people become targets of those who are agents of Satan.

In essence, God in bringing about His wrath upon the unsaved (seals 1-4) allows His saints to be martyred and placed in Heaven (seal 5) to bring about His further purpose of sending even more wrath upon "them that dwell on earth" (Rev. 3:10). This is especially seen in the cry of the martyrs: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:11). So the wrath of God is related to the fifth seal in the sense that the martyrdom of God's saints would produce even more of God's wrath to be meted out against those who had killed them. In other words, the fifth is related to God's wrath by its guarantee of a further outpouring of God's wrath after the first five seals are completed.

Once again, Rosenthal must do all kinds of exegetical gymnastics to skirt around the obvious fact that the seals are a divine judgment of God. For instance, he argues that one must distinguish between God's *active* and *permissive* will and therefore implies that God's active will (the expression of His wrath) is not seen in the Seal Judgments. However, to assume that God's permissive will does not involve His active part in bringing about His purpose is misleading. This kind of reasoning is designed to limit God's involvement and overlook what the text of Scripture is clearly conveying. Rosenthal superimposes his interpretation on the first six seals and his conclusion becomes exegetically unsound.

To the contrary of Rosenthal's argument, God is actively moving in the events of every seal, opening them and therefore dispensing the judgments. God is also actively and directly bringing about sword, wild animals, famine, pestilence, and death (Rev. 6:8) which are familiar expressions of His wrath seen in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 14:21). Christians and children have died throughout the centuries while God periodically sends His judgments upon earth and nations

(Deut. 7:1-2), but this does not invalidate that the expression of His own wrath was not actively involved.

It's clear that God allows evil to occur under His sovereign control to accomplish His purposes and to glorify Himself even when man's wrath is involved (Ps. 76:10). To conclude that the wrath of man and Satan cannot coexist together with God's wrath is to deny what Scripture teaches. God sent His wrath upon Israel through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Although using the instrument of wicked nations, God was expressing His anger through them. The same is true with Antichrist and Satan during the Tribulation Period.

Sometimes God judged *directly* (the Genesis Flood, the overthrow of Sodom) and sometimes *indirectly* (Egypt, Babylon), but He is always active in both types of judgment, and responsible for both types, and both types of judgments are evidence of His wrath. It's very clear that all the judgments of Revelation 6-18 are the expression of God's wrath which are meted out upon an unbelieving world and which in the end will result in the Second Coming and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-7). The name of Jesus is signed on the scroll or title deed to planet earth (Rev. 5:1) out of which all the judgments fall (seal, trumpet, bowl) each one being the expression of God's wrath during the Day of the Lord. This indicates Jesus Christ is in charge, His wrath is being expressed toward the unsaved, and that He will purge the earth and establish His theocratic kingdom.

Once again, it's the Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ) who opens the seals which indicates Christ oversees all the seal judgments and that they are designed to express His anger and wrath toward mankind. Even the movements of Antichrist and the Devil are being governed by God as they raise havoc over the earth. As Luther once said, "Even the devil is God's devil." God rules over the kingdoms of men and is responsible for putting rulers on the throne to bring about His purposes which include the expression of His wrath (Dan. 2:21; 4:25; 5:17, 21).

And yet, Rosenthal minimizes God's sovereignty over the seals, Antichrist, and earth's judgments by concluding: "to attribute the emergence of Antichrist to God is obviously preposterous." No, it is actually preposterous that Rosenthal rejects the clear work of God's sovereignty over the earth during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week "for power was given to him that sat thereon" (Rev. 6:1) and "a crown was given unto him" (Rev. 6:2). Rosenthal's reasoning is flawed and unbiblical.

The authority given to Antichrist came from the Lamb upon the throne for nothing happens outside the providential hand and will of God. This means Jesus Christ oversees what Antichrist and Satan are allowed to do during the Tribulation Period. It means that God through war, famine, persecution, pestilence, death, etc. brings about His purposes on earth to punish the wicked (Isa. 13:11; Rev. 3:10). Yes, the wrath of man might in various ways be involved in bringing about God's purpose on earth but not at the exclusion of God's wrath. All the seal judgments originate from Heaven.

Rosenthal and prewrathers also argue that the warfare in the second seal, which obviously involves human activity, is totally the expression of man's wrath – not God's. In response to this weak argument, it's interesting to observe that the judgments related to the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse are repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament and they are seen originating from the direct hand of God as the expressions of His wrath. In other words, they are an act of God.

Ezekiel 14:21

“For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?”

The *sword* (Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:22, 25-26; 32:25; 2 Chron. 29:8-9; 36:16-17; Jer. 15:2-3; 16:4; 19:7; 44:12-13; Ezek. 5:12; 6:11-12; 7:14-15; 33:27; 38:19), *famine* (Lev. 26:26. Deut. 11:17), *wild animals* (Lev. 26:26. Deut. 32:24; Jer. 15:3; 16:4; Ezek. 5:17; 33:27; 39:4). and *pestilence* (Lev. 26:25; Numb. 11:22; 16:46; 25:6-11; Deut. 28:21-22, 27, 35, 59-61; Jer. 15:221:6-7; 44:12-13; Ezek. 15:12, 16-17; 38:22) are found in the Old Testament as expressions of God's wrath.

It's generally argued by prewrathers that the third seal of famine and the fourth seal of death is totally the wrath of man, the result of man's warfare. But again, many Scriptures reveal that famine and the result of death is an expression of God's wrath against rebellious mankind (Jer. 21:5-7. 9; 44:8, 11-13; Ezek. 5:11-17; 7:3, 8; 14-15). The same is true regarding warfare and death. It clearly represents the wrath of God as previously confirmed (Jer. 15:2-3; 16:4; 19:7; 44:12-13; Ezek. 5:12; 6:11-12; 7:14-15; 33:27; 38:19).

The argument for man's wrath behind the fifth seal (the martyrdom of God's saints) is that it makes the wrath of God responsible for the killing of His own people who

have been faithful to Him (pp. 142-143). It's also assumed that their cry for vengeance upon the evildoers (Rev.6:10) is proof positive that this seal only represents man's and Satan's wrath – not God's wrath. Again, this is a bait and switch argument designed to confuse and control the thinking process of people.

Revelation 6:10

“And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

One interesting fact is John did not actually see these saints martyred during the fifth seal but saw their disembodied souls in Heaven during this time. They were obviously martyred by the apostate church (Rev. 17:6; 18:24) which is fueled by Satanic and Antichrist activity (Dan. 7:21; Rev. 16:6) during the first four seals of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week which represent the first 3.5 years. However, it's assumed by prewrathers that man and Satan's wrath is totally responsible for their martyrdom since Christ would not be behind any plot to martyr His own saints.

Of course, when we study this section of Scripture, we can observe that their cry from the heavenly altar in Revelation 6:10 (“O Lord”) indicates that they believed in God's sovereign control over the timing of their death. They see God's purpose in their martyrdom. But more than this, the fifth seal is related to God's wrath because through their prayers directed toward God (“dost thou not judge”) guarantees the further outpouring of His wrath “on them that dwell on the earth” after the first four seals are completed.



Now reflect on this. To surmise as prewrathers do (“God would not martyr His own people”) is to conclude that God does not in His own providential and sovereign way oversee the martyrdom of His saints today through communist regimes and other terrorist groups. Psalm 116:5 implies God's sovereignty over what happens to His saints even during their time of death: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” One should not create a prewrath argument based on the exclusion of God's

absolute sovereignty by not allowing God's providential purpose to come to pass with His saints during a time when He is expressing wrath on earth. The Scripture



teaches that God is like a director of an orchestra moving all the events of history, today, and the future according to His overall sovereign plan (Ps. 115:3; 135:6) without being directly responsible for the evil actions of Satan and men. In the case of orchestrating Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, God can express His wrath toward unsaved mankind during the Day of the Lord ("them that dwell upon the earth" – Rev. 3:10 and "he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it" – Isa. 13:9) while at the same time bring about His purposes for His saints. People can walk and chew gum at the same time and God can bring about His purposes for both the wicked and His saints at the same time while He directs His wrath toward the unsaved on earth.

Rosenthal and prewrathers must bow the knee to the sovereignty of God even when through His providential ways He allows evil things to occur to His own people. Amos 3:6 says, "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done *it*?" God is sovereign over all events, including the death of His own Son, even though wicked men crucified Him (Acts 2:23). This means that God can bring about His purposes for His saints through the actions of evil people.

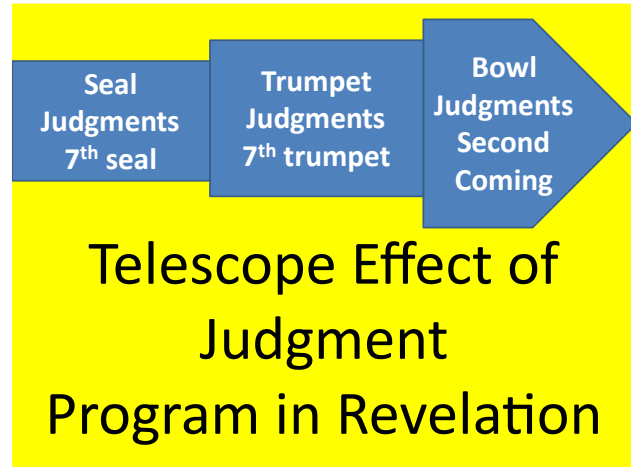
It's clear that these seals which come from Heaven and the Lamb are a direct expression of God's wrath as revealed in the Old Testament. They are not only man's wrath through the Antichrist and Satan. Ultimately, Christ is the origin and dispenser of God's wrath, which is unleashed upon the evildoers of planet earth during the seven-year Tribulation Period in the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. Everything that occurs during this eschatological time period ultimately flows from the hand of a sovereign God.

Rosenthal also tries to insist that angels must be involved in the wrath of God. In other words, he concludes that the wrath of God must be "angelically induced." However, there is no statement like this found in Scripture and his thesis is somewhat laughable. He reasons that since the first 5 seals do not involve angels. Therefore, these seals should not be considered part of the wrath of God. In other words, God's wrath can only begin with the seventh seal.

Of course, there is simply no basis for such a presupposition. The simple use of a concordance will show that when God poured out his wrath in history, angels were not always involved. The wrath of God upon Israel in Luke 21:23 was not angelically induced. Rosenthal's mention of 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-8 proves nothing, since this

text is speaking of the Second Coming of Christ when He returns with His angels. The issue is this. Our angels always involved in the wrath of God? The answer is a simple no. The seals may not be angelically induced but they are induced by Christ!

How should the student of the prophetic Word view God's judgments in the book of Revelation? Like the opening of a telescope, out of the seventh seal flows the trumpet judgments, and out of the seventh trumpet flows the bowl judgments. They become a unified witness of the expression of God's wrath during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The seven seals (Revelation 6:1-17, 8:1-5), seven trumpets (Revelation 8:6-13; 11:15-19), and seven bowls/vials (Revelation 16:1-21) are the three series of End Time judgments from God.



Rosenthal on his chart writes:

“Collectively, the trumpets and bowls are God’s final wrath on the unbelieving world – the last trump. God’s wrath begins with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 6:17; 8:1) and concludes with the opening of the seven bowls (Rev. 15:1; 16:1). ... The bowl judgments will be almost machine-gun-like in rapidity .... and lasting thirty days beyond the 70<sup>th</sup> week.”

Rosenthal believes that the bowl judgments occur in the 30-day period outside of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 12:11-12). Therefore, they are not part of the actual Day of the Lord even though Christ is judging the nations following the 70<sup>th</sup> week. The bowls are part of the “end of the age” judgments but not part of the Day of the Lord judgments for they expired with the ending of the 70<sup>th</sup> week.

The judgments get progressively worse and more devastating as the End Times progress. The seven seals, trumpets, and bowls are connected to one another like a telescope. The seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets (Revelation 8:1-6), and the seventh trumpet introduces the seven bowls (Revelation 11:15-19, 15:1-8). The last judgment in a given series flows into the next series of judgments. The entire seven-year Tribulation Period is seen as a continual flow of God’s wrath.

To state it simply, the seals are opened by the Lamb and therefore represent His wrath as He begins to take back the earth for God. The very foundation of this prewrath theory is built on sinking sand. It is weighed and found wanting. All the seal judgments represent the Lamb's wrath. They are not the mere expression of man's or Satan's wrath. John records that the sixth seal is an expression of the wrath of God as the earth dwellers will clearly recognize in the coming day when they proclaim: "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:17). This brings us to our next point. The explanation of Revelation 6:17.

## 2. John teaches that earth dwellers were already experiencing God's wrath in the sixth seal judgment (not man's or Satan's wrath).



Here is a newsflash. If during the sixth seal a worldwide earthquake occurs on both land and underneath the sea, when meteorite showers are falling from the sky accompanied by the eerie signs of the sun and moon changing their colors due to unimaginable tons of debris moving into the atmosphere, one would assume that the entire earth would know God's wrath was being displayed! We can scripturally confirm that the sixth seal will occur within the framework of the Day of the Lord (*not before*) as confirmed by the prophecy of Isaiah 2:10-22. It will not occur before the Day of the Lord as prewrathers suggest but during the Day of the Lord which is the expression of God's wrath.

Isaiah 2:10-11 prophetically declares:

"Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day."

Isaiah 2:12 confirms the timing of this prophecy:

"For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low."

Isaiah 2:20-21 uses similar language as the sixth seal and confirms that this prophecy which is part of the Day of the Lord is speaking of the same momentous day of Revelation 6:16-17: "In that day (*the Day of the Lord as stated in vs. 12*) a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one*

for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.”

It's clear that the sixth seal, along with the other five seals are all part of the Day of the Lord (the time God's wrath is poured out upon the earth). Prewrathers claim God's wrath begins following a worldwide catastrophic judgment, but the Bible declares the Day of the Lord actually begins when people are saying, "Peace and safety."

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

**“For yourselves (God's saints) know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night (unexpectedly and unannounced). For when they (unsaved earth dwellers who are left behind after the Rapture) shall say, Peace and safety (as the Tribulation Period begins with the first seal); then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”**

To claim, as Rosenthal does, that the first six seals are not the wrath of God but only the wrath of man and Satan is to try and force his position on the text. It is a severe case of eisegesis. As we have seen in our previous point, the seals are opened by the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse representing the four seal judgments are initiated by the Lamb (Rev. 6:1-7) who is associated with the heavenly scene (Rev. 5:1-6). Therefore, the content of the entire six seals come from Heaven and they become a reflection of the wrath of God being meted out on earth.



Revelation 6:12-17 reveals what occurs on earth during the sixth seal and what earth dwellers will say during this specific time of judgment. “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars (*meteorites*) of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind ...

“And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”



As a result of a worldwide earthquake, trillions of tons of debris will move into the atmospheric and stratospheric heaven and cause the sun and moon to be darkened and red in appearance. This may also be the result of volcanic activity which is triggered by the universal quake. The heaven will seem to disappear like a scroll being rolled up

as layers of debris and smoke enter the atmosphere and blanket out the atmospheric heaven. Meteorite showers will also bombard planet earth at the same time the other occurrences are happening causing death and great fear throughout the entire planet.

Nobody living on earth during this time will believe in Rosenthal’s prewrath theory! Nobody on earth could ever mistake this phenomenon as the wrath of man or Satan. They will properly assess the situation as the “wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16). In other words, they will not be waiting around for God’s wrath to begin in the seven seal, they will know that they are already in it. Even unsaved people will not believe in the prewrath theory! They will know these judgments are coming from the throne of the Lamb!

Since prewrath Rapturists do not believe God's wrath begins until the seventh seal, they must argue that the aorist tense is pointing to something in the future that is about to occur. This is why Rosenthal writes: "the phrase 'the great day of his wrath is come' refers not to a past event but to an event about to occur and that in concert with the opening of the seventh seal" (page 167). Trying to find a needle in a haystack, Rosenthal argues that if the verb is taken as a "constative" it then speaks of past action and includes the preceding seals. However, if it is a "dramatic aorist" it can refer to either past or future action.

With respect to Revelation 16:7, Rosenthal wants us to believe that God's wrath is only about to begin and that it had not been experienced on earth in the previous seal judgments, including the sixth seal. This is a ruse and gives a false impression of what John is teaching. Rosenthal cannot have the verb ("is come") refer to a present occurrence of God's wrath for this will not support his futuristic interpretation of God's wrath in the seventh seal. But is his futuristic interpretation of God's wrath linguistically justifiable?

One gets the idea when reading Rosenthal's book that he is trying to intimidate people into accepting his position by claiming the Greek grammar agrees with him and that pretibulationists have a problem with what he terms as "mountainous and unscalable." However, it's not unscalable! And his argument is not "both substantial and compelling" as he concludes. His statement that says, "There is no exegetical basis for making the sixth seal retroactive" is blatantly false. It can be easily debunked.

Greek grammarians do not agree with Rosenthal's conclusion that the verb is in the future tense. They agree that the aorist indicative refers to a previous arrival of God's wrath and not something that is about to take place in the future. Therefore, the assumption that the verb "is come" is in the future tense promotes the midtribulation or prewrath conclusion regarding the timing of the Rapture. However, this conclusion does not agree with the Greek word studies.

For instance, Dana and Mantey state this about the verb:

"It has no essential temporal significance, its time relations being found only in the indicative, where it is used as past, and hence augmented ... The aorist signifies nothing as to completeness, but simply presents the action as attained. It states the fact of the action or event without regard to its duration."

Robertson concurs:

“It is true that in the expression of past time in the indicative and with all the other moods, the aorist is the tense used as a matter of course” (A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1934) 831.

Daniel Wallace also states:

“In the indicative, the aorist usually indicates past time with reference to the time of speaking (thus, ‘absolute time’) ... Outside the indicative and participle, time is not a feature of the aorist” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1996), 555.

Spiros Zodhiates adds further comment:

“The Aorist Tense is used for simple, undefined action. In the indicative mood, the aorist tense can indicate punctiliar action (action that happens at a specific point in time) in the past. It must be distinguished from the Imperfect Tense which denotes continuous action in the past. With few exceptions, whenever the aorist tense is used in any mood other than the indicative, the verb does not have any temporal significance. In other words, it refers only to the reality of an event or action, not to the time when it took place” (Zodhiates, S., & Baker, W. (2000). *The complete word study Bible: King James Version (electronic edition, AMG Publishers)*.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues:

“There is no grammatical or contextual reason to make the usage in Revelation 6:17 future. It is only a theological necessity for Rosenthal. The context does not favor a future meaning. ... The seventh seal is not in the immediate context. Those speaking the text of 6:17 are, in context, responding to the cosmic convulsions of verses 12-14; for it the events of the sixth seal that cause the unbelieving world to flee to the mountains and cry that the wrath of God is come; and so the context favors a past and not a future reference.”

Paul Karleen concurs with Fruchtenbaum:

“If anything is true of Greek verbs, and particularly aorists, is that the direction of time reference must be determined by the usage in the context. But the author never allows the context to speak. Instead, he keeps repeating his view that the wrath starts after the sixth seal.”

Rober Thomas confirms Fruchtenbaum's and Karleen's conclusions when stating that for an aorist tense verb to refer to "something future or something about to happen, .... Some contextual feature must be present to indicate clearly these exceptional usages. No such feature exists in the context of the sixth seal, so these special uses are not options here" (Revelation 1-8, p. 460).

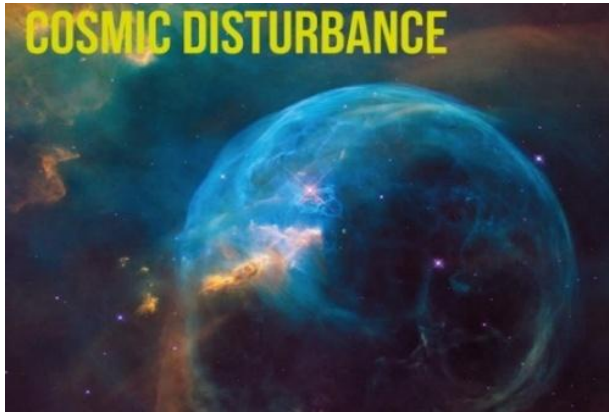
It's clear that John in the book of Revelation used the concept of God's wrath as presently occurring with specific events: "thy wrath is come" (Rev. 11:18); "hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7); "the time is come for thee to reap" (Rev. 14:15); and "in one hour is thy judgment come" (Rev. 18:10).

Thomas goes on to correctly observe what is happening in these verses: "The verb *ēlthen* ("has come") is aorist indicative, referring to a previous arrival of the wrath, not something that is about to take place. Men see the arrival of this day at least as early as the cosmic upheavals that characterize the sixth seal (6:12–14), but upon reflection they probably recognize it was already in effect with the death of one-fourth of the population (6:7–8), the worldwide famine (6:5–6), and the global warfare (6:3–4). The rapid sequence of all these events could not escape public notice, but the light of their true explanation does not dawn upon human consciousness until the severe phenomena of the sixth seal arrive. The cumulative effect of the events produces the inevitable conclusion about the presence of 'the great day of their wrath'" (Thomas, R. L.; 1992; *Revelation 1-7: an exegetical commentary*; pp. 457–458; Moody Publishers).

It's also interesting that the other five times this verb is used by John in Revelation, none are futuristic. In examining the occurrences of this same expression in Revelation that involve the action of people (5:7; 7:13; 8:3; 17:1, 10; 21:9), we find that every one of them describes an event that occurs prior to the time of speaking. None is futuristic. This is important for the simple reason that you cannot build a prewrath Rapture theory on false evidence, improper hermeneutics, and skewed Greek grammar. The idea that God's wrath is still in the future (the seventh seal) to support a mid or prewrath Rapture during the Tribulation Period does not pass the Greek grammar test nor does it pass the "comment sense" test! It has a flawed linguistic foundation.

Rosenthal argues that the cosmic signs are a precursor to the Day of the Lord but do not occur during the actual Day of the Lord. They are not part of God's wrath. In





fact, Rosenthal lumps all mentioned cosmic disturbances in the prophetic Scriptures into one occurrence to try and support these occurrences as occurring outside the actual Day of the Lord (the expression of God's wrath). He claims these cosmic signs only occur in the sixth seal and introduce God's display of wrath in the seventh seal. By doing this he ignores the timing given in the various

texts on cosmic disturbances which clearly do occur *during* (and not before) the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah 13:9-10

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."

Joel 3:14 -15

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining."

The prophetic Scriptures speak for themselves. Cosmic signs occur throughout the Day of the Lord and are part of the entire seven years. There are various cosmic disturbances throughout the End Times, not just one. There are cosmic disturbances in connection with the third trumpet (Rev. 8:10-11), the fourth trumpet (Rev. 8:12), and the seventh bowl (Rev. 16:17-21). The texts stated above reveal the *broad view* and spectrum of the Day of the Lord which is a revelation of God's wrath that occurs throughout the seven years through cosmic intervention. But there is also a specific cosmic disturbance that will occur before the actual Second Coming of Christ to planet earth which is understood as a *narrow view* or aspect of the Day of the Lord, the specific demonstration of God's wrath that will occur at the Second Coming in conjunction with Israel's salvation.

Joel 2:30 -32

“And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come (the Second Coming). And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”

It is a mere assumption on Rosenthal's part that all these cosmic references are an “all in one” cosmic disturbance which takes place in the sixth seal. A cursory glance at the prophetic Scriptures will not allow the prewrather to place all these cosmic signs into the same bucket to support the theory that in Revelation 6 these cosmic signs occur outside the Day of the Lord. The Scriptures certainly do not reveal this. They actually teach the opposite. The cosmic disturbances will occur during the Day of the Lord which spans the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (the seven years). Therefore, Rosenthal's arguments are based on a presupposition being true, but the Scriptures knock down his own strawman argument.

The end game of Rosenthal is to prove the Church enters the Tribulation Period and is raptured before the seventh seal (the Day of the Lord) begins, which allegedly follows the cosmic signs (Matt. 24:29-30). Of course, the real point is that no passage actually connects the event of the Rapture with the Day of the Lord and cosmic signs, and Rosenthal has not produced any that do.

In addition, Rosenthal argues that the wrath of God was not noticed by anyone on earth until the sixth seal when they cry out in the midst of the cosmic convulsions: “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:17). By this statement he assumes that God’s wrath was not present during the previous seal judgments (only man’s wrath). However, these remarks come from pagan unbelievers who during the sixth seal recognize by the severity of the judgment that God’s wrath has come upon planet earth. Of course, their recognition of God’s wrath in the sixth seal does not negate His wrath from being present on earth through human agencies in the previous seal judgments.

Now think about this. Being unbelievers, these heathen people could not possibly be prophesying that God’s wrath was about to begin in the seventh seal as Rosenthal asserts! Rosenthal interprets the Bible on the word of heathen people

instead of the Word of God which clearly reveals that all the seal judgments are an expression of God's wrath. It's also interesting that Rosenthal denies that the sixth seal is an expression of God's wrath while at the same time he somehow confirms that the heathen Gentiles did properly assess that God's wrath has begun with the sixth seal. This is a self-contradiction for Rosenthal confirms that God's wrath only begins in the seventh seal. He cannot have it both ways.

At this point Rosenthal resorts to the intimidation factor once again for he concludes that any other view regarding the seals and God's wrath "is strained and unsubstantiated and not to be taken seriously by those who love and honor God's word." Of course, this type of rhetoric and conclusion is unwarranted and is a spiritual cop-out to try and intimidate others who disagree with him. In the end, Rosenthal never exegetically proves that the seventh seal is the beginning of God's wrath. He merely operates on the basis of presuppositions and assumptions that the sixth seal is looking ahead to the seventh seal and the beginning of God's wrath. He states that "when the seventh seal is opened, God's wrath will begin." (P. 173).

Rosenthal strains his interpretation by declaring that Revelation 6:17 aligns with the beginning of the Day of the Lord which is spoken of in Malachi 3:2. He concludes that the words "day of the lord, coming, and appearance are tied together and used interchangeably in anticipation of the opening of the seventh seal" (p. 170). Of course, this is faulty exegesis and presuppositional for he uses the word "undeniably" to affirm his findings. Once again, he is trying to force his position on the reader. Malach 3:2 is referring to the actual return of Christ in the Second Coming and not the beginning of the Day of the Lord, let alone the seventh seal. But to escape a pretribulational Rapture from seven years of tribulation Rosenthal must resort to linking words and passages together which are incongruous to one another. At this point, he is essentially playing word games.

So Rosenthal puts the Rapture at the seventh seal allowing pagan unbelievers to teach him about the End Times! He claims that their response to God's wrath during the sixth seal confirms that God's wrath and therefore the Day of the Lord was about begin in the seventh seal. It's interesting that the bowl judgments are specially termed the wrath of God ("the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth" - Rev. 16) and yet Rosenthal denies that these judgments are part of the Day of the Lord and God's wrath! Rosenthal's faulty conclusions are drawn from a faulty premise and he plays many word-games to try and prove his debunked points.



Now we can be sure of one thing. If the sky is falling these people were not viewing this as man's or Satan's wrath! If God's wrath actually begins in the seventh seal as taught by Rosenthal, then this could not be God's wrath. However, in this case mankind in his rebellion correctly analyzes the cosmic

and terrestrial disturbances as a part of the great End Time wrath that comes from the Lamb sitting on the throne, but their reaction should not be used to teach us when God's wrath begins. We must allow the prophetic Scriptures to reveal this to us. Rosenthal tries desperately hard to keep the wrath of God away from most of the seven years by interpreting passages with a preconceived bias and to prove the Church is raptured before the seventh seal begins.

The heathen people accurately assessed this was God's wrath during the sixth seal for why else would they seek to hide from God if it was not His wrath? They were not waiting for God's wrath to begin in the seventh seal. "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16).

To conclude that this was not an expression of God's wrath or that it was merely a precursor to God's wrath which begins in the seventh seal is to deny what the Scriptures are teaching. The people knew the wrath of the Lamb was present already during the sixth seal. If God's wrath is not presented until the seventh seal, then why are people scared to death and hiding during the sixth seal? One thing is certain, the people presented in Revelation 6:15-17 were not prewrathers!

We should remind ourselves of the author's own use of David Cooper's words: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense ..." (p. 176). Rosenthal would do well to follow his own advice! His position is cracked beyond repair contextually, linguistically, exegetically, and sensibly.

It's very clear that God's wrath had already arrived on earth long before the sounding of the seventh trumpet (midtribbers) and is not restricted to the trumpet judgments as prewrathers propose. The whole idea that the expression "his wrath is come" is only introducing or looking ahead to the future impending judgments of God's wrath in the trumpet judgments but has nothing to do with the seal

judgments is erroneous. When Christ breaks the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-14) and the catastrophic judgments are unleashed upon mankind, the only viable conclusion is that the sixth seal also includes God's wrath (as the previous five seals) and none of them were seen to be only the expression of unregenerate man's wrath or Satan's wrath as alleged by the prewrath position.

These people living during the Tribulation Period were not preannouncing that the wrath of the Lamb and Day of the Lord's judgment was only going to begin at the middle of the Tribulation (midtrib position) or about three quarters of the way through the Tribulation (prewrath position). This is assuming a whole lot of knowledge on the part of Gentile unbelievers! These unregenerate people certainly knew that God's wrath was being poured out upon them at the present time during the sixth seal and even before this time. They were not conjecturing that God's wrath was about to begin in the next seal judgment. Being unbelievers, they could not be prophesying about the seventh seal! They could not possibly know the prophetic outline of the Day of the Lord as presented by Rosenthal and the prewrathers!

Again, reflect on this. The sky will be falling! Meteorite showers will occur on a worldwide scale, every mountain on earth was shaken by a universal



earthquake and the submerged mountains (undersea mountains) which are spread throughout the vast oceans will also be moved causing worldwide tsunamis ("and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" - Rev. 6:14). At this point, the fear of people living on earth will be so great they would rather be killed by falling mountains than to face the wrath of the Lamb. How can any honest exegete of Scripture contribute the sixth seal to man or Satan's wrath and not God's wrath as the prewrathers do?

The prewrath Rapturist should agree with the assessment of the people and what John is clearly teaching. This is God's wrath, the wrath of the Lamb who sits upon the heavenly throne. They are correct in their assessment – not the prewrather who is trying to pigeonhole the first six seal judgments as occurring outside the realm of God's wrath. Instead, the prewrather concludes that God's wrath in the Day of the Lord will only be experienced during a 21-month period (the last quarter

of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) as the seventh seal is opened and the trumpet judgments are unleashed upon earth.

Once again, Rosenthal attempts to link Revelation 16:17 with Malachi 3:2 and assumes that "the day of his coming" and "when he appeareth" (Mal. 3:2) is the same time described in the sixth seal which is introducing the beginning of God's wrath during the seventh seal. However, Malachi refers to the actual event of the Second Coming and not the wrath being displayed before Christ's Second Coming. But Rosenthal reasons that the words "coming" and "appearing" are associated with the sixth seal which introduces the Day of the Lord in the seventh seal out of which the trumpet judgments flow.

Hence, out of thin air he assumes that the seventh seal is an expression of God's wrath linking it with the familiar Old Testament words of coming and appearance in Malachi 3:2. Of course, this is presuppositional. Rosenthal operates on the basis of certain assumptions and his conclusion becomes a form of Scripture twisting and mixing different passages of Scriptures. It's a clear example of the process of "illegitimate transfer" of one Bible text into another without examining the context.

This is because the Second Coming in Malachi 3:2 has nothing to do with the events associated with Revelation 6 and the seventh seal. There is no direct correlation between the two other than they are both expressions of God's wrath. As we will further confirm, the Day of the Lord is represented in all the seal judgments and in the event of the Second Coming. It is not narrowed down to only the seventh seal or trumpet judgments as prewrathers suggest.

It is possible that the people living on earth during this climactic time (Rev. 6:12-17) might wrongly assess that the *narrow* aspect of the Day of the Lord is about to occur with the return of Jesus in His Second Coming (Joel 2:30; Matt. 24:29-30). However, John does not say that this is a picture of the Second Coming but part of the wrath of God that will be experienced during the middle of the Tribulation Period. The Second Coming will not occur until after the Tribulation has expired (Matt. 24:29). It's more acceptable to understand that the people living on earth during this specific time will fully understand that God's wrath has already been witnessed during the first five seal judgments and now is culminating in the sixth seal with universal meteorite showers and earthquakes occurring on both land and under the sea. God was shaking the world! Not man or Satan.

Another inconsistency of Rosenthal on the wrath of God is his understanding of the Luke 21:23 and 25.

In Luke 21:22-23 Jesus declares:

“For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written (Zech. 12:1-9; 14:1-11) may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people” (*the Jewish nation*).

Jesus goes on to say in Luke 21:25:

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring” (*through the catastrophic earthquakes and tsunamis*).

Rosenthal correctly concludes that the Olivet Discourse is in chronological order (p. 150). He then parallels Luke 21:25 to the sixth seal (p. 152) which is supposed to occur before the expression of God’s wrath. However, Luke 21:23-24 already mentions the day of God’s vengeance, wrath, and unprecedented divine judgment (“and wrath upon this people” – vs. 23) prior to verse 25 (the occurrence of the cosmic disturbances) which confirms God’s wrath occurs prior to the sixth seal. Furthermore, “wrath” is the normal word (*orgē*) that the author interprets elsewhere for God’s wrath.

This is a glaring inconsistency on his part and failed exegesis for the repeated and familiar phrase “the day of God’s vengeance” (Isa. 34:8; 35:4; 61:2; 63:4; Mic. 5:15) is being carried about *before* the sixth seal, occurring specifically throughout the entire Tribulation Period, including the time of Jacob’s distress (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1). In other words, God’s wrath describes His final, eschatological judgment which occurs throughout the entire seven years and is the equivalent to the familiar Old Testament term the Day of the Lord (Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5).

Why would anyone try and circumvent God’s wrath unless they are attempting to create a prophetic departure from Biblical pretribulationism and therefore avoid the clearly revealed facts of Scripture? No chain is stronger than its weakest link, so even a chain with many links isn’t necessarily





strong when it has a weak link. This is the case with the theory of prewrath rapturism. There is a weak link in the prophetic chain of the prewrath position when they conclude that God's wrath does not occur before the seventh seal, including the sixth seal as meteorites are plummeting to earth and the whole earth is reeling with a cataclysmic earthquake, when people are hiding from God and openly declaring the Lamb on the throne is judging them. If parts of the chain are broken, the underlying premise is false.

Unfortunately, not everything that people write or say about the Bible is true. This may be caused by wrongly interpreting the Scriptures, which at times can be difficult to understand. At other times people can impose their own preconceptions on Scripture or skip important information. Some writers have good intentions, but they are careless in their study (2 Tim. 2:15). Some are intentionally deceptive, some are naive, and others are inexperienced. Some mix a lot of truth with a little error and others a lot of error with a little truth. Remember that there are four basic components to Biblical interpretation:

- ✓ Gathering the facts
- ✓ Accuracy concerning language
- ✓ Attention to context
- ✓ Logical consistency.

I would never question the motives of Rosenthal in relation to his prewrath position and conclusions, but I must question his hermeneutics and accuracy in arriving at his conclusions. One example of this is found in our present point. Rosenthal concludes that when the apostle John reveals that the people during the sixth seal are hiding from God's wrath it is not an expression of His wrath (Rev. 6:16-17). Instead, they are merely giving a type of prophetic statement that the wrath of God is only going to arrive during the seventh seal. This is imposing his own preconceptions on the text and skipping important and obvious information. As we have seen so far, his conclusions do not pass the linguistic, language, and logic test which are words Rosenthal uses for his own argumentation. If the shoe fits, he must wear it. In writing his book, Rosenthal has entered a type of "prophetic spin zone" where he attempts to twist the clear facts, overlook obvious conclusions, and create strawman arguments to find support for his own





position. So the spin continues as we continue to review and create a Biblical rebuttal of prewrath rapturism.

**3. Jesus taught there will be a distinct seven-year Tribulation Period in which His saints would experience great distress, affliction and adversity, and this will occur during the period of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the seven years).**

Rosenthal does not believe that the entire seven years of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week should be regarded as the Tribulation Period. To prove his theory of an extra division of time in Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the Day of the Lord) he needs to get rid of seven years of "tribulation" for this disproves his theory. You cannot have the continuity of seven years of tribulation representing God's wrath in fulfillment of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week for this blows open his theory that God's wrath is only in the final quarter of the week.

Citing Matthew 24:21, 29 and Mark 13:19, 24, Rosenthal wrote: "Of the four times the Lord spoke of tribulation in prophetic context, He was speaking of the Great Tribulation, which begins in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week – precisely three and one-half years into it." Rosenthal is wrong in his analysis. This seems to be a blatant oversight of what Jesus was teaching and forcing his own position on the text.

The word "tribulation" (distress, affliction, adversity) applies to the entire period of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the seven years). When Jesus said, "after the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29) He was looking back to the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of lesser and greater birth pangs – not just the Great Tribulation. Rosenthal's contention with pretribulationists is that the Great Tribulation "begins in the middle of the seventieth week, but it does not run until the end of the seventieth week" (p. 109). Why did he come to this conclusion?

Ron Bigalke concludes:

"The reason that Rosenthal does not want to use the term 'tribulation period' is due to the fact that its usage will not support his threefold division of Daniel's seventieth week into the 'beginning of sorrows,' 'Great Tribulation,' and 'Day of the Lord.'"

In other words, Rosenthal must avoid viewing Daniel's seven years as a *unified* seven-year Tribulation Period of God's wrath and judgment for this would make the entire period the fulfillment of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath). For this reason, he inserts a third division of time to support his claim that God's wrath only begins after the Great Tribulation that Jesus spoke about. But the evidence does not support such a conclusion. Jesus taught there were only two divisions to the 70<sup>th</sup> week and not three. Furthermore, as we will confirm, the Old Testament reveals the entire period of birth pangs is represented as the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:6-9; Joel 2:1-2) – not merely 1.75 years or 21 months during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

Rosenthal concludes: "Based on that indisputable fact, to call the entire seven-year time frame the tribulation period is to coin a technical phrase and superimpose it upon the Scriptures, reading into the biblical text that which it does not itself declare." There he goes again, trying to intimidate people into accepting his position. Of course, in accusing pretribulationists of coining the phrase "Tribulation Period" and superimposing it upon Scripture, he shoots himself in the foot. This is because he coins the phrase "prewrath Rapture" which according to his own superimposing designation would also be a technical phrase not found in the Bible. Never once do we see Rosenthal's expression ("prewrath Rapture") found in Scripture. Of course, there are Biblical truths taught in Scripture that are not specifically named or defined, such as the Trinity or hypostatic union of Christ's two natures, but this does not invalidate these doctrinal truths. The same is true regarding the Tribulation Period.



## Thlipsis

Here is the point. Jesus used the word for "tribulation" (thlipsis) three times in the Olivet Discourse. It means distress, oppression, persecution, and adversity. In Matthew 24:9 it may be used to describe the first 3.5 years which Jesus spoke about as "the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8) and is translated as the word "afflicted." Some suggest the "distress" (thlipsis) occurs in the first half of Daniel's week since it precedes the abomination of desolation at the midpoint (Matt. 24:15).

#### Matthew 24:9 -14

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

It is possible that that the descriptions in Matthew 24:9-12 are a follow up from Matthew 24:8 and what will occur during the first 3.5 years and then concludes with those who are saved through the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom, and who actually physically survive the entire Tribulation Period and enter the Millennium (Matt. 24:13-14).

On the other hand, it is more probable that Matthew 24:9-14 describes what will occur during the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week with Matthew 24:15 looking back to the events described in verses 9-13. In other words, Jesus speaks of some horrific prophetic End Time events occurring in relation to the Jewish people in Matthew 24:9-13 which are connected with the revelation of the Antichrist claiming to be God and making a mockery out of the Jewish temple (Matt. 24:15). All of this is connected with what Jesus speaks of as Great Tribulation: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).

Lous A. Barbieri summarizes correctly:

“Jesus began His words (Matt. 24:9) with a time word, Then. At the middle point of the seven-year period preceding Christ's second coming, great distress will begin to be experienced by Israel. The Antichrist, who will have risen to power in the world and will have made a protective treaty with Israel, will break his agreement at that time (Dan. 9:27). He will bring great persecution on Israel (Dan. 7:25) and even establish his own center of worship in the temple in Jerusalem (2 Thes. 2:3–4). This will result in the death of many Jews (Matt. 24:9) and many people departing from the faith. Believing Jews will be betrayed by nonbelievers (v. 10), and many will be deceived by rising false prophets (cf. v. 5; Rev. 13:11–15). Wickedness will increase, causing the love of most people (for the Lord) to grow cold.

“Those who remain faithful to the Lord until the end of that period of time will be saved, that is, delivered (Matt. 24:13). This does not refer to a personal self-effort at endurance that results in one’s eternal salvation, but to physical deliverance of those who trust in the Savior during the Tribulation. They will enter the kingdom in physical bodies.”

That being said, there is definite and legitimate comparison between the birth pangs described by Christ and the first four seal judgments since they represent the same time.

Renald Showers points this out:

“A comparison of Christ’s description of the beginning of birth pangs in Matthew 24:5–7 with the first four seals of Revelation 6:1–8 indicates that the beginning of birth pangs and the first four seals are the same thing.”

<b>The Beginning of Birth Pangs (Matthew 24)</b>	<b>The First Four Seals (Revelation 6)</b>
False messiahs who will mislead many (v. 5)	<b>First seal:</b> Rider on white horse, a false messiah (v. 2)
Wars, rumors of wars, nation rising against nation (vv. 6–7)	<b>Second seal:</b> Rider on red horse takes away peace from earth (vv. 3–4)
Famines (v. 7)	<b>Third seal:</b> Rider on black horse holds balances, represents famine (vv. 5–6)
The occurrence of Death through famine, pestilences, and earthquakes (v. 7)	<b>Fourth seal:</b> Rider on pale horse, represents death through famine, pestilence, and wild beasts (vv. 7–8)

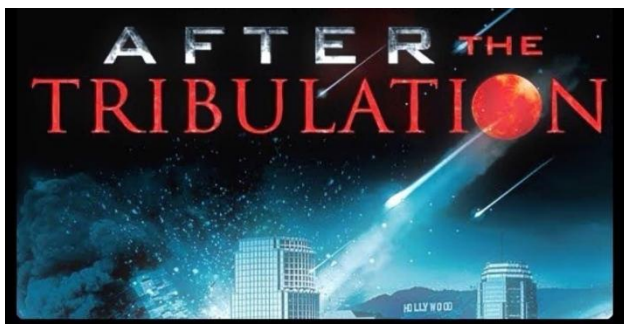
Please note that just because students of the prophetic Scriptures who hold to a pretribulation position don’t agree on a few finer and minor points does not mean the position as a whole is wrong. I say this because pretribulationists may differ on the exact timing of the seals, but this does not negate the fact that everything is occurring within the seven years and the time frame of the Day of the Lord for the Old Testament only speaks of a *unified* period of seven years. The identification of

whether seals 5-6 are during the first or second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is not crucial, essential, or even remotely necessary to determine that the Rapture has already occurred before Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and the Day of the Lord and that God's wrath is being experienced on earth throughout the first six seals.

In other words, if one confirms that Matthew 24:9-12 is referring to events that correspond to the second half of the Tribulation Period, as some pretribulationists do, it does not do away with tribulation during the first 3.5 years. This is because if there will be "great tribulation" (more intense affliction) as Jesus taught (Matt. 24:21), then there must be a time of lesser affliction or tribulation upon the earth which is identified as "the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8). It's understood by Jesus' comparison that the tribulation or affliction begins with the first birth pangs and intensifies at a future time with great birth pangs.

To state it succinctly, whether or not the exact wording of "tribulation" appears during the first half is insignificant or a moot point for Jesus' analogy teaches there would be lesser tribulation (first 3.5 years) before the greater tribulation (second 3.5 years). However, Rosenthal needs to pick apart the clear intent of Jesus' statements regarding two divisions of greater and lesser tribulation occurring within the scope of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week so he can create a third division (Day of the Lord) and circumvent what Jesus was actually conveying and teaching concerning the seven-year tribulation of God's wrath. Rosenthal's argument that the word "tribulation" is only used of the Great Tribulation cannot be supported by the context in which the word appears.

In Matthew 24:21 "thlipsis" is also translated as "tribulation" when referring to the Great Tribulation. This indicates that both divisions of time in Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week were being represented and described as "tribulation" (distress, adversity, a pressing time) for Jesus was certainly looking back to "the beginning of sorrows" (the first 3.5 years) as the lesser time and division of tribulation.

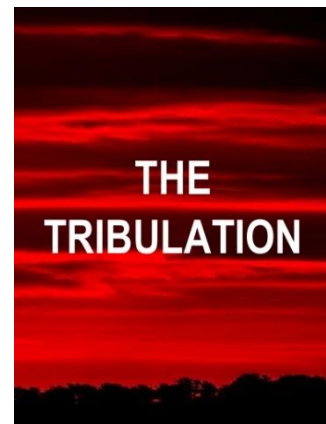


As previously mentioned, when Jesus says, "after the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29), which is a third appearance of "thlipsis," He was not only looking back to the Great Tribulation (the greater birth pangs) but also the lesser birth pangs (the

Beginning of Sorrows) He had spoken about which were also part of the lesser tribulation (Matt. 24:8). Jesus therefore identified the entire period of Daniel's week (the seven years) as "the tribulation" or "thlipsis." So actually, the wording of "the tribulation" can be correctly termed as the Tribulation Period without superimposing some kind of unbiblical findings on the Bible as asserted by Rosenthal. This means the whole 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel can be legitimately and scripturally described as a period of tribulation as well as a time of God's wrath. It is the same period of time known as "one week" (Dan. 9:27) and the time "to finish the transgression, and to make and end of sins" (Dan. 9:24).

Interestingly, Rosenthal restricts "thlipsis" or tribulation to simply trials in general which are to be experienced by the Church today (Rosenthal, Pre-Wrath, p. 237). However, Pretribulationism does not, as prewrathers do, dismiss the obvious meaning and understanding of what Jesus was teaching in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:9, 21, 29) when relating the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (seven years of God's wrath) as being a time of tribulation or adversity that would come upon the entire earth (Rev. 3:10).

The prewrather must jettison the idea of a Tribulation Period of God's wrath for seven years to insert his own division of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) outside the parameters of what Jesus taught concerning the tribulation associated with Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. This is not referring to everyday trial and tribulation that we face today but to "the tribulation" (Matt. 24:29) of the entire week (seven years) of Daniel's prophecy. In other words, the prewrather must conclude that the tribulation Jesus was referring to is not the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) but is only everyday tribulations or hardships that the saints pass through (John 16:33; Rom. 5:3; 8:35; 2 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 2:4; 7:4; Phil. 4:18; Jam. 1:27). However, the prophetic contexts or the prophetic passages clearly reveal that the seal judgments and Great Tribulation are not the same tribulations that saints endure today. They are indeed the expressions of God's wrath.



Jesus taught these End Time judgments are related to the specific afflictions that will occur during the future period of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the seven years – Matt. 24:15) that Jesus outlined as being "afflicted" (Matt. 24:9), experiencing "great

tribulation” (Matt. 24:21) and “the tribulation of those days” (Matt.24:29); hence, the specific eschatological Tribulation Period which consists of greater and lesser tribulation (Matt. 24:9, 21, 24; Mk. 13:19, 24). To conclude that tribulation is only dealing with life’s hardships that all saints pass through is attempting to hijack the meaning and intent of the word “tribulation” (Matt. 24:9, 21) or “thlipsis” as Jesus taught within the framework of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (Matt. 24:1-15). There is a specific Tribulation Period based on Jesus’ own words (Matt. 24:8, 21).

To state it succinctly, prewrathers often attempt to make a distinction between God’s wrath (orge) and tribulation (thlipsis) claiming that the time of tribulation which refers to everyday tribulations we face in life, as presented in the seal 1-6 and Matthew 24, are different than the time and expression of God’s wrath. Of course, these are manmade distinctions and involves playing word games to try and support an unbiblical position. The Bible does not pit, juxtapose, or contrast these terms against one another in prophetic contexts. The tribulation and specific seven years of Daniel’s “one week” prophecy is the full expression of God’s wrath.

To further emphasize this point, the pre-wrath view rejects the idea that the word “tribulation” should be considered as having any bearing on the timing of the Rapture of the Church. Isolating the term tribulation to approximately 21 months in the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (the shortening of the Great Tribulation) is important to the prewrath view for it does not allow the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week (seven years) to be viewed as a *unified* period of God’s wrath and judgment. But the Old Testament prophets and Jesus both viewed Daniel’s “one week” or seven years as a *unified* period of wrath that would be unleashed on planet earth which would debunk the invention of a 21-month period of wrath during the week (seven years).

Randall Price correctly asserts:

“While the Seventieth Week of Daniel is clearly divided into two equal periods of three-and-one-half years, and escalation or intensification is evident (as the Olivet Discourse details), the Old Testament does not distinguish the time of tribulation into periods of “lesser” and “greater” (i.e., “Great”) tribulation. Rather, it considers this experience of tribulation in its entirety as unparalleled in Israel’s history.”

It is interesting to observe that even the term “great tribulation” used by Christ (Matt. 24:21) suggests that there must be a lesser time of tribulation which would be associated with the beginning of birth pangs that takes place in the first half of

the 70<sup>th</sup> week. This means Daniel's use of these terms (greater or lesser birth pangs or tribulation) points to the entire seven-year – not merely to a shortened version of the Great Tribulation as prewrathers would have it.

It is true that the focus of the Scriptures are often on the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, and the term “great tribulation” certainly applies to this terrible time. This is reasonable and to be expected, since the focus of the 70<sup>th</sup> week discussion is on Israel, and Israel lives in reasonable peace and safety during the first half while under the protection of the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27). It is only at the midpoint that Israel faces intense persecution, and the judgments of God (trumpet and bowl judgments) increase greatly as the world rushes toward the Second Coming. But, contrary to the pre-wrath statement, it is not wrong to use the term tribulation in reference to the entire period of seven years for this is what Jesus did.

In Matthew 24:9 Jesus used the word “affliction” (thlipsis) which means tribulation or adversity (first 3.5 years). In Matthew 24:21 He used the expression “great tribulation” or thlipsis (second 3.5 years). In Matthew 24:29 (looking back on the two time periods of sorrow, affliction and great tribulation) He coined the phrase “the tribulation” (The Thlipsis). Hence, there is a future seven-year Tribulation Period (a seven-year thlipsis) which is a unified expression of God's wrath termed by Jesus as “the tribulation.” It will be a specific future tribulation that occurs during the entirety of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and this judgment or wrath of God is specifically aimed at unsaved earth dwellers.

Isaiah 13:6 prophetically declares:

“Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.”

Isaiah 13:11 then adds in the same context:

And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

To summarize, Rosenthal shortens the time of the Great Tribulation to less than 3.5 years and applies this word to only the third quarter of Danile's 70<sup>th</sup> week so he can start the Day of the Lord following the Great Tribulation. He claims that Jesus' words in Matthew 24:9 (“After the tribulation”) refers to after the shortened



version of the Great Tribulation which occurs during seals 5-6. He then concludes that the Rapture occurs in conjunction with seal seven. Again, this is reading one's own position into Matthew 24 and defies the wording of Jesus who taught a two-fold division of seven years of tribulation - not one quarter of a shortened version of tribulation (Matt. 24:15).

Rosenthal has a built-in-bias for pretribulationism which teaches the Church will be raptured before seven years of God's tribulation and wrath (not merely 21 months of wrath). This is why he must do away with seven years of God's tribulation and wrath but in doing so he jettisons what Jesus was clearly teaching in Matthew 24 on "the tribulation" (Matt. 24:9) and forces his own position into the chapter.

**4. Jesus concluded there were only two divisions to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week – not three (Matt. 24:1-25) and both divisions represent the Day of the Lord.**



Let's reiterate this for it does implode the prewrath view on the Rapture. Jesus taught that Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the final seven years) is divided into two segments of time – not three. Who will you believe on this – Jesus or Rosenthal? It's an honest question. The attempt to add to what Jesus taught regarding Danile's 70<sup>th</sup> week should throw up some red flags.

The prewrath confusion concludes that the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is called the beginning of sorrows (Mt. 24:5-8; Rev. 6:1-8) and is considered to be the first division of the seven years. The second quarter of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week covers the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:21; Rev. 6:9-11). The final or last quarter covers the Day of the Lord which occurs in conjunction with the Rapture/Second Coming (Rev. 8:1). The Rapture which follows the shortened version of the Great Tribulation is thought to usher in "the Day of the Lord" or time of God's wrath. Again, this view then would be best described as the "three-quarter tribulational" view.

What did Jesus really teach about Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week in Matthew 24? Jesus said in Matthew 24:8: "All these *are* the beginning of sorrows" (birth pangs). As a pregnant woman's birth pains indicate that her child will soon be born, so there will be universal conflicts and catastrophes that occur during the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (Matt. 24:5-7). Then during the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week Jesus taught in Matthew 24:21 there would be greater or more intense birth pangs ("great tribulation").

It's very clear that Jesus in Matthew 24 was reflecting on the entire seven years of Daniel's "one week" (seven-year) prophecy because of what He taught in Matthew 24:15 concerning the midway point of the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27). There was a first half and second half that together comprises the entire week (seven years). Jesus divided Daniel's one week of seven years into two divisions of time – not three. A woman only has beginning birth pangs and then as the time of birth arrives, she develops greater birth pangs. There is no such thing as greater birth pangs that are greater in intensity than the previous greater birth pangs!



**Beginning of sorrows  
(Matt. 24:8)**  
\*first 3.5 years\*

**Great Tribulation  
(Matt. 24:21)**  
\*second 3.5 years\*

Looking back to what Jesus had just mentioned (Matt. 24:3-7), the "beginning of sorrows" (birth pangs) referred to the deception, false Christs (messiahs), wars and rumors of wars, nations rising up against one another on a global scale, internal conflicts within nations (kingdoms against kingdoms), famines, pestilences, and earthquakes occurring in various parts of the earth. These similar descriptions clearly align with the six seal judgments which will occur during the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period.

Some pretribulationists only view seals 1-4 as being part of the first 3.5 years. One reason for this is because they identify the martyrs of seal 5 with the martyrs of the Great Tribulation which are found in Revelation 7 (the last 3.5 years). But Revelation 6:11 says, "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were* should be fulfilled" (*during the second 3.5 years*).

The martyrs of the fifth seal are to wait for other fellow-martyrs to experience their death which will apparently occur during the second half of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 7:9-17). This indicates there are different phases of martyrdom, the martyrs of the fifth seal occurring during the first 3.5 years as a result of the persecution of the apostate church (Rev. 17:6), which wields a certain amount of power over the

Antichrist during the first 3.5 years (Rev. 17:3), and the second phase of martyrdom resulting from the reign of Antichrist during the second 3.5 years (Rev. 20:4). Apparently by the middle of the Tribulation Period the martyrs, as depicted in the fifth seal, are seen in Heaven and waiting for their fellow martyrs to join them.

Although pretribulationists have different conclusions regarding the exact timing of seals 5-6 (first or second half of Daniel's week), it does not override the undeniable fact that all these seals are representative of God's wrath being poured out upon the earth. But as we have already confirmed Rosenthal does not like the term "tribulation" to be used for the first 3.5 years for it ruins his prophetic scheme of dividing Daniel's seven years into three divisions. Rosenthal uses the word "logic" many times throughout his book. So let me confirm that logic would lead us to the conclusion that greater tribulation (Matt. 24:21) flows out of lesser tribulation which Jesus identifies with "the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8). Actually, it's not only logic; it's what Jesus was teaching His disciples. The lesser would result in the greater and together they would be considered "the tribulation" (Matt. 24:29) – the tribulation of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week of seven years (Matt. 24:15). Jesus uses the word "tribulation" as a unified term encompassing the entire seven years of God's wrath.

Paul referred to the starting birth pangs of the Tribulation Period (Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week), as Jesus did (Matt. 24:8), and identifies these initial birth pangs as being part of the Day of the Lord. This is a clear indication that the entire seven years has a unified theme of the expression of God's wrath. In other words, the first half of the Tribulation is part of the Day of Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 reveals this to be true:

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night (*suddenly and without warning*). For when they (*the unsaved living on earth*) shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them (*those who enter the Tribulation Period*), as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

When the birth pangs start, they start suddenly, and so it will be with the commencement of the Tribulation Period (Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week). Just as a thief gives the intended victim no forewarning, so the unsaved will be given no forewarning concerning when the Day of the Lord will begin. But the world's confidence

concerning no more war will be shattered with the breaking of the first seal. According to Rosenthal and prewrathers, the Day of the Lord begins after worldwide meteorite showers plummet the earth and an earthquake shakes both land and sea causing mountains to collapse and creating catastrophic damage throughout the global earth (Rev. 6:12-17).

This does not sound like the Day of the Lord beginning as revealed in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. Paul reveals there will be a time of false peace and safety before the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) commences on earth with the signing of a peace covenant and the promise that the world has entered the Age of Aquarius (Dan. 9:27). Rosenthal says the Day of the Lord begins after worldwide destruction in the sixth seal. Paul says it begins as a time of peace. John also confirms it begins with a time of peace (Rev. 6:2) until the second rider will "take peace from the earth" (Rev. 6:4). Who will you believe, Rosenthal or Paul? Rosenthal or John?

If "peace and safety" appear on earth just before the beginning of the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:1-2), then certainly meteor showers plummeting the earth, a worldwide earthquake occurring, smoke rising into the stratosphere, and people crying out that the wrath of the Lamb is upon the earth (Rev. 6:13-17) certainly would not qualify as the time of "peace and safety" and would shatter the prewrath arguments for the commencement of the Day of the Lord.

The only Biblical and accurate understanding of the "peace and safety" passage (1 Thess. 5:1-2) is the pretribulation view. The Church is raptured, an interval occurs before the signing of a peace covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27) which is the actual start of the Tribulation Period. Therefore, there is a sense of peace and safety throughout the earth with the promise of peace as Revelation 6:1 reveals as the Day of the Lord begins.

How does the prewrath view explain the cry of "Peace and safety"? Rosenthal suggests that this relates exclusively to the Jews. He basically concludes that the moment the Jewish people see the cosmic disturbances occurring in Revelation 6 that this will signal divine intervention on their behalf from the persecution of the Antichrist. The Jews will "proclaim 'peace and safety,' but their cry will be somewhat premature and an expression of short-lived duration" (p. 174). In other words, when God begins to intervene with cosmic disturbances, then the Jews will suddenly get encouraged to hope that conditions will change, only to have their

hopes dashed to pieces by the fury of God's wrath being unleashed upon them in the Day of the Lord!

Of course, such an interpretation is nonsensical and far-fetched for Paul is not speaking exclusively of the Jews living during the Great Tribulation but is revealing the mindset of mankind living throughout the entire earth prior to the beginning of Daniel's week of seven years. After the Rapture occurs, there will be an undetermined duration of time (a gap) that occurs before the Tribulation Period begins. The people of the earth will sense that the Christian troublemakers are gone. Eventually a peace covenant is made with the Jewish nation by Antichrist (Dan. 9:27) and it appears that mankind has entered a time of "peace and safety" throughout the Middle East and world. But then the Day of the Lord (the seven years) will abruptly begin with God's thunderbolts of wrath. In other words, as Randall Price confirms: "the Day of the Lord will come suddenly on a deceived world unaware of the predicted judgments (1 Thess. 5:1-2; cf. Lk, 17:26-30; 2 Pet. 3:3-9) but will not overtake believers, for they are not destined for that time of wrath (1 Th. 5:4, 9)."

In looking at Paul's statement on "peace and safety," and countering the prewrath view, Arnold Fruchtenbaum correctly asserts: "How is the Day of the Lord to come unexpectedly on the unbelievers if the seal judgments of chapter six precede the Day of the Lord. By then there will have been massive disturbances and cataclysms, with death, famine, disease, wild animals everywhere – not to mention earthquakes and celestial cataclysms. So, in terms of Rosenthal's timing, the Day of the Lord would hardly come upon the world unsuspectedly; and by then they would have had many forewarnings. Only if the Day of the Lord is the entire seven years, coming some time after the Rapture, can it overtake the world by surprise. This is exactly the order found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11."

The Day of the Lord (God's wrath) begins with a very short-lived time of peace (1 Thess. 5:1-2) as Paul taught which is immediately accompanied by the initial labor pains or tribulation as Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:8). Who will you believe – Rosenthal or Jesus? Rosenthal or Paul? Paul taught what Jesus taught. The initial birth pangs of the first 3.5 years are part of the Day of the Lord, and since this is true, the greater or more intense birth pangs that follow during the Great Tribulation (the second 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period) must also be part

of the Day of the Lord. There can be no other “logical” conclusion to use the wording of Rosenthal.

Next Jesus describes the second half of Danile’s 70<sup>th</sup> week or the second half of the seven-year Tribulation Period and equates the greater or more intense birth pangs with the Day of the Lord.

Matthew 24:21

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

Jesus describes greater birth pains that occur right before a mother delivers a child and likens these birth pangs to the intensity of the judgments associated with the second half of the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:15-22) which would begin with Jewish persecution. Since there are only two separate time designation given, the Great Tribulation also aligns with the period when God’s wrath is unleashed on the earth in the trumpet and bowl judgments. To create a third division (The Day of the Lord) out of two is faulty exegesis. It’s clear that both Jesus and Paul placed the entire seven years of Daniel’s prophecy within the Day of the Lord. The Great Tribulation follows the initial birth pangs of the Day of the Lord that Paul mentions (1 Thess. 5:2-3) and therefore also becomes part of the Day of the Lord and a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s’ prophecy about the Day of the Lord.

The phrase “Day of the LORD” occurs in the Old Testament 18 times. The prophets only saw one Day of the Lord and depicted this time of coming judgment on earth in the same imagery or descriptive terms of *birth pangs and unprecedented trouble (tribulation)* that Jesus spoke about in the Olivet Discourse. Jeremiah’s prophecy is the same prophecy concerning the Great Tribulation and trouble that Jesus mentions in Matthew 24. There can be no doubt that Jesus was referring to this ancient prophecy regarding Israel. Furthermore, the Old Testament imagery places the birth pangs and unprecedented time of trouble or tribulation within the context and timing of the Day of the Lord, not outside the Day of the Lord as prewrathers suggest.

Jeremiah 30:6-7

“Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned

into paleness? Alas! for that day *is* great (the Day of the LORD), so that none *is* like it: it *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

Daniel 12:1 also prophetically anticipates this time of great distress or tribulation: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Joel 2:1-2 predicts the Day of Lord as being compared to unprecedented trouble as Jesus taught in Matthew 24:21 and places this trouble in the context of the Day of the Lord. He writes: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, *even* to the years of many generations."

A comparison of Scriptures on the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord shows that these are not separate time zones but refer to the same thing. This is an important point because the concepts found in the eschatological passages of the New Testament did not materialize out of nothing; rather, they are rooted securely in the writings of the Old Testament. Parallel prophetic language is highly significant. The concept of "birth pangs" is directly associated with the Day of the Lord. Here is more indisputable evidence.

Isaiah 13:6-9

"Howl ye; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it."

Isaiah 26:17-18 also alludes to this birth pangs imagery which we have already seen describes the Day of the Lord: "Like as a woman with child, *that* draweth near the

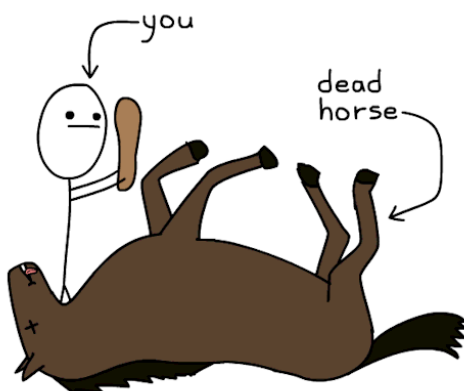
time of her delivery, is in pain, *and crieth out in her pangs*; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.”

Notice the language ascribed to the Day of the Lord. Without possessing any preconceived ideas from some prophecy book or chart, one can honestly see that the Day of the Lord with its illustrative “pangs and sorrows” of childbirth is directly associated with same “sorrows” (Matt. 24:8) and “great tribulation” (great birth pangs) of distress or sorrows (Matt. 24:21) that Jesus talked about in Matthew 24.

Zephaniah 1:14 -15 also envisions the Day of the Lord as a time of distress as Jesus taught in Matthew 24:8-9 and 21. No doubt Jesus was also thinking of this reference when speaking of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week and the Day of the Lord.

“The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day (the Day of the LORD) is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress (tribulation), a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

The Day of the Lord is a time of trouble and distress (Zeph. 1:14–15), as is the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1) which correlates what Daniel and Jesus taught about the Day of the Lord (God’s wrath). In other words, Zephaniah 1:14-15 gives us another similar analogy to the Great Tribulation and distress that Jesus talked about and places it within the parameters of the Day of the Lord. The same wording is associated with the Great Tribulation which Isaiah, Joel, and now Zephaniah identify as the Day of the Lord.



Here is the point. What Jesus said about the tribulation or birth pangs is what Joel, Isaiah, and Zephaniah recorded about the Day of the Lord. This means the Great Tribulation and Day of Lord are used interchangeably and pertain to the same time frame. Prewrathers must stop beating a dead horse. The Old Testament Day of the Lord is described in the same birth pang analogy that Jesus and Paul



used, and they got this concept from the Old Testament Scriptures. Therefore, the Day of the Lord included the birth pangs that both Jesus and Paul spoke about. To deny this is to miss the clear intent of Scripture.

Since Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 concluded that the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week or the initial birth pangs were part of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath), then by extension the last 3:5 years of this prophecy are also part of the Day of the Lord or placed within the context of God's wrath. Furthermore, as we have seen, the Old Testament prophets placed the birth pangs and unprecedented worldwide trouble or tribulation in the exact context of the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:6-9; Joel 2:1-2).

One cannot dismiss the clarity of what the prophets wrote and what Jesus taught unless they seek to impose their position on the clear statements of Scripture and approach the prophetic word with preconceived ideas about a rogue prewrath Rapture. To conclude that none of the birth pangs are part of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) and none of the first six seals are part of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) is to reject the clear revelation of Scripture, how Jesus viewed Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> unified week, puts one's preconceived ideas and position before the Scripture, and results in sloppy and shallow exegesis.

Now think about this. To claim that the Beginning of Sorrows and Great Tribulation (the most severe distress the world has ever seen) are not part of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) is an erroneous conclusion. How can the Day of the Lord be separated from the greatest time of judgment and distress that the world has ever witnessed?



Rosenthal's analogy breaks down. Nothing could be greater in intensity than the greatest tribulation the world has ever seen, so the Great Tribulation could only come from the hand of God's wrath. This means the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) is related to both the beginning and ending of the birth pangs that Paul, Jesus, and Jeremiah mentioned (Jer. 30:6-7). Both Scriptural association with the Day of the Lord and common-sense reveal that both the Beginning of Sorrows and Great Tribulation are in fact an expression of the Day of the Lord – a time of the most intense wrath of God meted out upon planet earth.

George Zeller comments on the birth pangs in this way:

“Rosenthal’s view confuses the childbirth analogy. In childbirth, the beginning labor and the severe labor are followed by the birth! The difficult time is followed by a wonderful and joyous time! Daniel’s 70th week (with its beginning and hard labor) is followed by a glorious time (the Lord’s return to earth and millennial bliss).

“Rosenthal’s view does not make sense. The Great Tribulation is the greatest time of trouble the world will ever know (Matt. 24:21), but Rosenthal says that the Day of the Lord follows it! The Great Tribulation is a time of hard and severe birth pangs, but Rosenthal teaches that the Day of the Lord follows it! When we should be expecting birth and a time of rejoicing, Rosenthal plunges us into the horrors of the Day of the Lord. Confusing!”

The obvious point is that the Great Tribulation does not give way to the Day of the Lord but Scripturally results in the birthing of the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ (Rev. 19-20). After the hard labor comes the joy and blessing of the Millennium.

It's very clear that Jesus spoke of only two distinct time divisions in the Olivet Discourse. Rosenthal tries to create a third stand-alone division (the Day of the Lord) that allegedly encompasses only the wrath of God. Prewrathers claim that the first two divisions (Beginning of Sorrows and Great Tribulation) are only expressing man’s or Satan’s wrath, but the third division is an expression of the wrath of God. The problem with this conclusion is that there is no third division of time separately dubbed as the Day of the Lord. Jesus never mentions it!

Paul Benware in quoting Leon Wood makes an important contribution on the comparison of both Old and New Testament expressions regarding birth pangs, the unprecedented trouble that is to come upon the earth, and how this same time frame relates to the Day of the Lord (God’s wrath). In other words, God’s wrath does not occur outside this time period of birth pangs but is an actual description of the Day of the Lord.

Benware states:

“Notice that both of these times are said to be unprecedented times of trouble. As Leon Wood aptly observes, it is only possible to have one time that is ‘unprecedented.’ ‘There are four classic Scripture passages which speak of the time as being more severe in suffering than any other in history. Because there can be

only one such time, all four must refer to the same period.’ The four passages that speak of this unique degree of trouble are Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1, Joel 2:1–2, and Jeremiah 30:7. In Matthew 24:21 the Lord Jesus, apparently quoting Daniel 12:1, says that it is in the great tribulation (the second half of the Seventieth Week) that this unparalleled time of trouble takes place.

“Joel 2:1–2, however, says that this unparalleled time of trouble takes place in the Day of the Lord. There can be only one unparalleled time of trouble, which suggests that we are looking at the same time frame. As the Day of the Lord and the great tribulation are viewed in Scripture, we see that great trouble is true of both of them. The Day of the Lord is a time of trouble (Zeph. 1:14–15), as is the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1).”

There is total silence regarding any third division. Crickets! This leads to the inevitable conclusion that the entire prewrath theory can be debunked on the basis of what Jesus, Paul, and Jeremiah taught. There are only two separate time divisions within Daniel’s week. There is no such thing as a stand-alone third division consisting of about 1.75 years that represents the Day of the Lord. The prewrathers build their Day of the Lord theory on a faulty foundation which does not even exist.



In a chapter “Kept From the Hour” Rosenthal stated why people of all Rapture-views have been wrong until he came long! “... However, because commentators have not generally understood that there are three sections to the seventieth week – the beginning birth pangs, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord – they have, in the view of this author, made a fundamental error (p. 233).”

Arnold Fruchtenbaum responds to Rosenthal’s 20<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment: “It’s assumed *all* leading biblical, theological and Greek scholars from *all* other Rapture-views have missed something so simple! Yet there is a good reason why all three schools of thought have missed it: it is simply not there! Whenever the timing of the Rapture is spoken of, it is always in two parts, not three. Either the whole seven years is spoken of or only a half of the period is spoken of, but never a quarter.”

$$1 + 1 = 2$$

1+1=2. Rosenthal must have been following the new math when writing his book for his mathematical equation of Matthew 24 is 1+1=3. Jesus taught there were two periods of time related to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week – not three.

The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are not separate time-zones but all refer to the same period of time. For Rosenthal and prewrathers, the fundamental error is the failure to recognize the fact that the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel has three, and not two divisions. The Bible mentions the whole period of the seven years ("one week" - Dan. 9:27) or only a half of this period is spoken about (Rev. 11:3; 12:6, 14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7), but it never mentions a quarter that supposedly contains God's wrath.

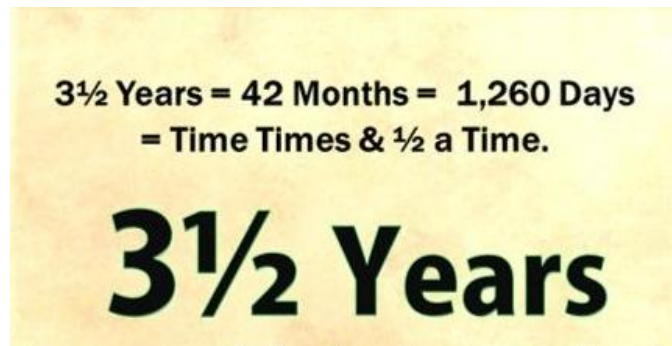
This is a totally fabricated conclusion and a type of quack exegesis that has no Scriptural weight. Again, Rosenthal's entire argument for a third division of the Day of the Lord breaks down for it does not square with Daniel, Jesus, or John's declarations concerning the two divisions of time. Again, will you believe Daniel, Jesus, John or Rosenthal and the prewrathers? I'll side with the authors of Scripture.

By arbitrarily compartmentalizing the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel in this way (three sections), Rosenthal prepares the way for his view by saying that the first two periods (first three-quarters of the seven-year period) is the wrath of man and Satan but not God's wrath. By speculating that God's wrath only occurs during the last quarter of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, he concludes that the Rapture occurs at that point and keeps the Church out of the wrath of God. But this is another case of circular reasoning and assumptions. Rosenthal cannot prove there are three separate time segments related to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week since Jesus taught there were only two in Matthew 24:15 and 29.

To summarize, in the writings of prewrathers, they consistently teach there are three divisions during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week: Beginning of Sorrows, Great Tribulation, and Day of the Lord. However, Jesus taught there were only two divisions. There would be a lesser and greater time of tribulation that is divided into only two segments of time. The Great Tribulation coincides with Christ's statements in Matthew 24:15-22. It involves the persecution by the Antichrist but also includes

the trumpet and bowl judgments which are revealed to be 1,260 days in length or 3.5 half years.

Various calculations are given in the prophetic Scriptures such as 1,260 days, “a time, times, and half a time,” and “forty two months” which reveal the length of the Great Tribulation is 3.5 years (Rev. 11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; Dan. 7:25; 12:7). This confirms there are only two equal time segments of



3.5 years which are associated with what Jesus referred to as “tribulation” (Matt. 24:21) and “the tribulation” (Matt. 24:29). This can only mean that there is a one Tribulation Period that consists of seven years (the “one week” of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week – Dan. 9:27) which is understood by Daniel, Joel, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jesus, and Paul as the direct fulfillment of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-2; Isa. 13:6-9; Zeph. 1:14-15; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-5).

To state it succinctly, prewrath rapturism creates three separate time designations within the seven years instead of two, as Jesus taught (Matt. 24:8-22), arbitrarily creating and compartmentalizing the Day of the Lord in its own time zone. It’s asserted that the Day of the Lord (the third division of time) occurs during about 1.75 years or the final fourth quarter of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week and consists of only the trumpet judgments. However, since Jesus divided Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week into only two designations of time (Matt. 24:15), and since the initial (lesser) birth pangs result in greater birth pangs, then the same birth pangs are in view and there is no warrant for creating a third division of time called the Day of the Lord. This is because Jesus was obviously teaching that the Day of the Lord (Gods’ wrath) encompassed both types of birth pangs occurring throughout the seven years.

While looking at Daniel’s prophecy of the 70<sup>th</sup> week as a whole unit (Matt. 24:15), Jesus confirms in Matthew 24:1-15 that there are only two time periods or designations within Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (the beginning of birth pangs and greater birth pangs). Since the Old Testament prophets place these birth pangs and unprecedented time of trouble or tribulation within the context of the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:6-9; Joel 2:1-2), it’s not only Biblical but logical to conclude that the entire seven years is the Day of the Lord and an expression of the wrath of the God.



It's obvious that the prewrathers are trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. To sustain their prewrath Rapture theory they must create three divisions within the seven years by declaring that the Great Tribulation consists of Antichrist's and Satan's wrath but not God's wrath. However, Jesus taught that the "one week" (seven years) of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:27) was divided into only two divisions of segments of time without any mention of God's wrath occurring outside these time divisions. Therefore, both the beginning of birth pangs and greater birth pangs (tribulation) must be an expression the wrath of God for there are no other time designations mentioned within the parameters of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The Day of the Lord must therefore consist of seven years of lesser and greater birth pangs.

Daniel 12:1 further details the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24:15-21. He states: "And at that time (*the middle of the Tribulation Period – Dan. 12:7*) shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble (*distress or tribulation*), such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time (*the Second Coming*) thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (*scroll or registry of the living – those who are alive at the Second Coming*).

This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 24:21 of this same time period (the second half of the Tribulation Period): "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Furthermore, Isaiah, Joel, and Zephaniah reveal this time as fulfillment of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-2; Isaiah 13:6-9; Zeph. 1:14-15). Therefore, to claim there is an absolute distinction between the terms and events of the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord, which is foundational to a pre-wrath Rapture, is simply not supported by Scripture. These two terms (Great Tribulation and Day of Lord) are used interchangeably of the same time frame, referring to the 70<sup>th</sup> week Daniel (Dan. 9:27) with the emphasis on the Great Tribulation occurring in the latter half of Daniel's prophecy. Jesus envisions the same trouble and tribulation that Daniel

spoke about, and all the trouble is placed within the time zone of the Day of the Lord.

Let's reiterate Isaiah 13:6-9 once again to review the facts:

"Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces *shall be as flames*. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it."

What Jesus said about the tribulation or birth pangs is what Isaiah said about the Day of the Lord. Prewrathers must face the facts and stop attempting to create a separate "Day of the Lord" division when Jesus only created two divisions and linked both of them to the Old Testament Day of the Lord. It's also interesting that the Hebrew word for trouble was translated by the Septuagint (LXX) with the Greek word used by the New Testament for "tribulation." It's very clear that the two designations of time are a Tribulation Period that is placed within the framework of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath). Therefore, we can Scripturally conclude that the combined terms of sorrow, distress, and tribulation encompass God's wrath in the period known as the Day of the Lord (seven years). God's wrath is not limited to 1.75 years or 21 months during the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

In review, the prewrathers do not view the Day of the Lord as a *unified* time of God's wrath and judgment as the Old Testament does. But as we have seen, the judgments of the entire End Time 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (the Day of the Lord) is often expressed by the figurative language of the travail connected with childbirth (Isa. 13:6-9; 66:7-8; Joel 2:1-2; Jer. 22:23; Mic. 4:9-10; Zeph. 1:14-15). This means that the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) is the actual fulfillment of these tribulation statements of Jesus. The Day of the Lord is not merely associated with a short period of time at the end of the Tribulation Period. It would include the first part of the Tribulation Period which Jesus specifically described as the initial birth pangs (Matt. 24:8) and the second half of the Tribulation which is designated as "great tribulation" or greater birth pangs (Matt. 24:21).

Since the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament prophetic texts is described in the same imagery of birth pangs that a woman experiences, as Jesus taught, this indicates that the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel (including the Great Tribulation) is part of the Day of the Lord – not separated from it as the prewrathers teach.

Zechariah 14:1 -2 also prophetically confirms this to be true:

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”

This once again envisions the struggles the Jews will have during the second half of the Tribulation Period prior to the Second Coming of Christ to earth. The time of struggle is identified by Zechariah as when “the day of the LORD cometh.”

John A. Mclean concludes:

“Isaiah 2, 13 and Zechariah 14 are three important chapters that suggest the Day of the Lord also covers the same period as the Great Tribulation. An example is seen in Isaiah 2 where the language of Isaiah echoes the events of the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12–17.... A further example is seen in a comparison of catastrophic cosmic phenomenon in Isaiah 13:6–13 and the sixth seal of Revelation.... The events of these chapters clearly parallel each other. In addition, Zechariah 14 parallels events from the persecution of the Jews, which arises out of the Abomination of Desolation at the midpoint, to the second coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation. Therefore, the parallel language and content of these passages renders the conclusion that the Day of the Lord is not separate from the Great tribulation.”

This also means that when Jesus spoke of both time designations and divisions of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, He was identifying the entire Tribulation Period as a fulfillment of the Day of the Lord. In other words, the entire scope of tribulation (the seven years) is part of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week and is not limited to only a small segment of time (21 months) during the second half of the Tribulation Period.

Once again, the Bible argues for a *unifying theme* of God’s wrath within the confines of two designations of time: 1) the first half which is lesser tribulation (Matt. 24:9) and 2) the second half (Rev. 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5) which is greater tribulation (Matt. 24:21). To move away from these dual time designations of Jesus



and create a third one (the Day of the Lord) is to compartmentalize the Day of the Lord and God's wrath within a very short and narrow period that Jesus never mentions.

Of course, the Old Testament does not distinguish between greater or lesser tribulation periods of judgment within the context of the Day of the Lord. Jesus made this distinction (Matt. 24:8, 21). However, it does view the time period of tribulation as a *whole unit* of seven years ("one week") which consists of God's judgment and wrath upon earthly evildoers (Dan. 9:27). Here is the point. Creating three units of time out of only two designations of time (3.5 years in length) which Jesus confirmed as fulfillment of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (Matt. 24:15) is an exegetical fallacy. Also, ignoring the clear implications of God's wrath in these two separate time designations given by Christ (Beginning of Sorrows and Great Tribulation), which are depicted in Old Testament apocalyptic literature as a unifying theme of birth pangs, is nothing short of huckstering the Word of God (2 Cor. 4:2).

There is a hole in the prophetic bucket of the prewrathers. The idea that the first six seal judgments are a combined expression of man's and Satan's wrath but not God's wrath, and that God's wrath is relegated to only a 21-month segment of time during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, which Jesus never mentions and appears nowhere in Scripture, is a case of severe eisegesis. Remember that if it sounds and looks like eisegesis – it is eisegesis!



It's very clear that the sovereign Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ) is opening these seals – not man or Satan. The scroll which contains these judgments is given to the Lamb (Rev. 5:5) and the contents of judgments are unleashed by the Lamb. This is the wrath of Almighty God being displayed. To deny this is to deny the clear and unmistakable teaching of God's prophetic word. One thing is certain, brilliant men confuse things brilliantly! Rosenthal and other Rosenthalites and prewrathers are not letting the facts of the Bible speak for themselves.

## 5. The length of the 3.5 years of Great Tribulation is not changed to give way to a shortened version of the Day of the Lord.

Prewrathers must shrink and change the length of the 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation. They create a shortened version of the Great Tribulation which Jesus taught was 3.5 years when dividing Daniel's week in two parts (Matt. 24:15). The prewrathers make the Great Tribulation to be approximately 1.75 years instead of 3.5 years so it will fit into their prophetic scheme of introducing a shortened version of the Day of the Lord (only 21 months). In doing this, they create a shorter division of time which allegedly occurs within the framework of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. But again, will you believe the prewrathers or Jesus regarding the time duration of the Great Tribulation?

In quoting Daniel and agreeing with the previous statement of the inspired Scripture (Matt. 24:15), Jesus was dividing the seven years or "one week" of this prophecy into two distinct time designations – not three. Therefore, the shortening of the Great Tribulation as taught by Jesus does not mean the actual length or time of the second 3.5 years is shortened to a lesser number but within the conclusion of the sovereign purpose of God it has been shortened to only 3.5 years.

How do we know that Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the final seven years) is not divided or dissected into three separate time segments (Beginning of Sorrows, Great Tribulation, Day of the Lord) as the prewrather assumes? It's because Jesus taught that only two time divisions occur within the framework of the seven years which He terms as "the tribulation" (Matt. 24:8, 21, 29). Furthermore, how do we know the second half of the Tribulation Period (the Great Tribulation) is not shortened or less than 3.5 years? It's because the Scriptures repeatedly teach by different numerical calculations that the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the Great Tribulation) consists of 3.5 years.

Revelation 11:3

"And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred [and] threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."

Revelation 12:6

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days."

Revelation 12:14

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”

Revelation 13:5

“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.”

Daniel 7:25

“And he shall speak *great* words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”

Daniel 12:7

“And I heard the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these *things* shall be finished.”

These numerical calculations give us the proper time designation of the Great Tribulation (3.5 years) and encompasses the time when Israel is persecuted by the Antichrist and when the trumpet and bowl Judgments are unleashed on planet earth during the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. The Great Tribulation is to last the full second half of the seven years, and this will terminate with the Second Coming. Therefore, the conclusion that the Great Tribulation is shorter than 3.5 years is unfounded.

Benware correctly asserts:

“Jesus was not teaching the shrinking of the great tribulation from three and a half years to about two years, because the great tribulation covers the entire three-and-a-half year period. The great tribulation begins at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week, because Jesus connects its beginning with the setting up of “the Abomination of Desolation” in the Jerusalem temple (Matt. 24:15–21; cf. Dan. 9:27).”

It's very clear that Jesus taught the timing of the Great Tribulation would be 3 1/2 years and not 21 months as prewrathers assert. The timing of the persecution of the Jews which Jesus related to the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21) is exactly 3 1/2 years which is the second half of the seven years. The linguistic parallels between Daniel 21:1 and Matthew 24:21 reveal that both Daniel and Jesus were speaking of the same time period and Daniel states twice that it would encompass the entire second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 9:27; 12:5-7).

The Book of Revelation also relates the timing of Jewish persecution as being 3 1/2 years in length, specifying that it was exactly 1260 days (Rev. 12:6; 13-14). Obviously, the period of Jewish persecution and the length of the Great Tribulation as Jesus and Daniel taught is not being numerically shortened. So in what way will it be shortened? This brings up the next major flaw of the prewrath position. The misunderstanding and misconstruing of the words of Jesus.

Jesus taught in Matthew 24:22:

“And except those days should be shortened (*cut off*), there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”

The statement of God shortening the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:22) does not mean that it will be numerically less than three and one-half years, ushering in an alleged third division and time segment of the Day of the Lord. It simply means that in God's decreed counsel it was ordained to be only 3.5 years or else all of mankind would be physically eliminated from planet earth (Mark 13:20).

The verb “shortened” (“cut off”) is used by Jesus to teach that God had already decreed in the past that the Great Tribulation would last three and a half years. The point of Jesus is that if God had chosen to let this terrible time of intense judgment last any longer than the three and a half years, no human being would survive. So Jesus is teaching that the decree of God, made in eternity past, had already determined that the Great Tribulation would be just three and a half years and not some longer period of time. This interpretation is verified by noting what the Scriptures say about the length of the Great Tribulation which we have seen is repeatedly said to be 3.5 years (Rev. 11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; Dan. 7:25; 12:7).

Several things can be concluded:

- ✓ The “shortening” does not refer to the shrinking of the three and a half years of the Great Tribulation but refers to God's decision in the past not to allow

this terrible time of persecution to be any longer than three and a half years. This is not a *numerical* but *providential* shortening of time which lasts only 3.5 years.

- ✓ The chronological and numerical calculations in the books of Daniel and Revelation all speak of this time as three and a half years.
- ✓ The seven years or final “one week” of Daniel 9:27 is seen by Christ as a unified whole (Matt. 24:15, 29) expressing God’s wrath in waves of tribulation or distress that occur on the earth.

To state it succinctly, Jesus did not view the Great Tribulation as a short period of time that only occurs somewhere in the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (the prewrath position). It would encompass the entire second half of the Tribulation Period and the time when the Jews will be persecuted (Rev. 12:6, 14; 13:5-7; Dan. 7:25; 12:1). This begs the question. How can unparalleled judgment of the Great Tribulation occur only in seals five and six as prewrathers insist and then be followed by lesser degrees of judgment in the Day of the Lord? How can the trumpet and bowl judgments progressively intensify throughout the Tribulation Period and not be part of the Great Tribulation Period that Jesus prophesied about?

The Scriptures speak for themselves on these time designations and divisions of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. And yet, the prewrath theory causes prophetic confusion by insisting that the Day of the Lord is the greatest time of God’s wrath, but it is not part of the Great Tribulation which is the time Jesus declared is the worst of the worst tribulation that will be experienced on earth.

George Zeller brings out the same observation:

“The prewrath view teaches that the Day of the Lord begins after the Great Tribulation and that the Day of the Lord is the time of God’s wrath. Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1 and Jeremiah 30:7 all teach that the Great Tribulation is the greatest time of trouble that the world has ever known. Therefore, if the Day of the Lord is distinct from the Great Tribulation, then the Day of the Lord must be LESS SEVERE than the Great Tribulation.”

Here is the point. If the Great Tribulation will be the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known or experienced, then the Great Tribulation MUST include the

time of God's wrath. It should not be in a separate or different time slot than the Day of the Lord. Without being biased in one's interpretation, Zephaniah 1:15 says "That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress (tribulation), a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." This aligns with what Jesus taught in Matthew 24:21: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

To conclude that these two statements are referring to different designations and time zones is missing the clear and obvious points of Zephaniah and Jesus. The Great Tribulation includes the Day of the Lord – the day of His wrath. Only a prewrather which has a bone to pick with pretribulationism would come to another conclusion.



Rosenthal and most prewrathers also conclude that the bowl judgments (Rev. 16) which are the most intense aspect of God's wrath upon the earth are not part of the Day of the Lord. Instead, they conclude that these seven judgments occur during the 30 days following the Day of the Lord and refers to the time when Christ begins to reclaim the earth (Dan. 12:11). In other words, the prewrather would have us believe that the worst judgments of the Tribulation Period are not part of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath upon the earth) in order to maintain an imaginary shortened version of the Day of the Lord. And yet, from God's perspective these judgments are termed as "the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (Rev. 15:1). But according to the prewrather, instead of seven years of God's wrath (the Day of the Lord) there are only 21 months of God's wrath poured out upon the earth in the seventh seal and trumpet judgments.

There is much misunderstanding about the 75-day extension which follows the Great Tribulation (second 3.5 years) which is found in Daniel 12:11-12. One thing is certain, the chronological flow of all the tribulation judgments, including the bowl judgments, occur during the seven years. They do not occur in the 75-day gap between the official ending of the Tribulation Period and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom.

Daniel 12:11-13 records this:

**“And from the time (second half of the Tribulation Period) that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days (1,290 days = last 3.5 years of Tribulation Period or 1,260 days + 30 more days). Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days (1,335 days = 3.5 years or 1,260 days + 30 days + 45 more days – totaling 75 more days). But go thou thy way till the end be (the end of the stated time period totaling 1,335 days): for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot (Daniel’s resurrection into the Millennium – Dan. 12:1-3) at the end of the days (the end of the 1,335 days which includes the extra 75 days that follows the second half of the Tribulation period).”**

**75**

It’s clear that the total 75-day extension which follows the 1,260 days (Great Tribulation) is the time frame when Jesus will return in His Second Coming. These 75 days (30 + 45) do not imply several comings of Christ as Rosenthal suggests in his charts but is the undetermined time of the single event of Christ’s Second Coming which no man could discern or know (Matt. 24:36). It also involves the time it will take for Christ to judge the armies in Palestine, topple the abomination of desolation in the temple, gather and judge the surviving nations (Matt. 24-25), resurrect, regather, and reward Israel and the Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:1-3; Isa. 26:19), and establish the Millennium.

The 30-day extension has nothing to do with the bowl judgments. This is because the bowl judgments chronologically occur within the 1,260 days or Great Tribulation (Rev. 16) and not outside this designated time. Revelation 15 and 16 (the introduction and coming pass of these judgments) occurs before the Second Coming in Revelation 19. The natural way to understand these judgments is that they will occur during Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (like the seal and trumpet judgments) and are then followed by the Second Coming after the Tribulation Period expires.

Zane Hodges correctly reacts to Rosenthal’s attempt to make the bowl judgments part of the 30-day extension period when he states: “But Revelation is totally silent about the thirty-day period mentioned in Daniel. Moreover, the glorious return of Christ in Revelation (chapter 19) is actually presented *after* the bowl judgments!

And where is Armageddon in this scheme, since it too follows the bowl judgments in the text of Revelation? Neither the charts in Rosenthal's book, nor the text, inform us!"

In addition, it must be understood that the extension of the 30 and 45 days which follows the 1,260 days (3.5 years) in no way indicates that this time is outside the parameters of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) as Rosenthal suggests. Rather, these 75 days continue to be an extension and expression of God's wrath in the events associated with the Second Coming as revealed by the prophets. For instance, Joel focuses on the *narrow aspect* of the Day of the Lord which is a reference to the actual Second Coming and the events that surround His return to earth.

The Bible teaches a broad and narrow aspect of the Day of the Lord. Concerning this broad and narrow sense of the Day of the Lord, A. B. Davidson wrote: "Though the 'Day of the Lord,' as the expression implies, was at first conceived as a definite and brief period of time, being an era of judgment and salvation, it many times broadened out to be an extended period. From being a day it became an epoch." . . . in the narrow sense it refers to one specific day—the day on which Christ will return to the earth from heaven with His angels" (Showers, Maranatha, Our Lord Come, 35,39).

The Day of the Lord begins, in its *broad* sense, when peace and safety is taken from the earth during the opening of the first seal (1 Thess. 5:1-2). By the time of the sixth seal, the world is *already* in chaos, but the cosmic disturbances make plain even to the earth dwellers that God's wrath is already in progress (Rev. 6:16-17). The cosmic signs of the sixth seal and the silence before opening the seventh seal precedes the Day of the Lord in its *narrow* sense in the event of the Second Coming (Joel 2:32). In other words, the cosmic signs that occur of Revelation 6 occur approximately three years before the last intervention of Jesus in the final destruction of His enemies prior to establishing the Millennial Kingdom.

Joel 2:30-32 relates the Day of the Lord to the actual event of the Second Coming: "And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come (*the event of the Second Coming*). And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall



be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”

Now let's recap what we have learned. Jesus taught that He would return in His Second Coming “after the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29). Of course, Jesus was looking back to what He previously said about the two equally divided time periods of the seven-year Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:15) which would encompass the entire time of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the Day of the Lord). Jesus never hinted that there would be only a small segment of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (21 months) designated as the Day of the Lord which would exclusively or solely include God's wrath. The wrath of God begins the moment the Tribulation Period begins (1 Thess. 5:2-3).



The concept of birth pangs has its Biblical roots in the period known as the Day of the Lord. This means the Beginning of Sorrows (first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) and the Great Tribulation or greater birth pangs (second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) are not separate divisions of time that are unrelated to the Day of the Lord. Paul links the commencement of the Day of the Lord with birth pangs as Jesus taught in Matthew 24:8.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 again states:

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night (*suddenly and unexpectedly*). For when they (*the unsaved living on earth*) shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them (*those who enter the Tribulation Period*), as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

One key problem with Rosenthal's concept of the Day of the Lord is that he has it beginning at the point where the seal judgments are followed immediately by the trumpet judgments. How can this be? The Bible says the Day of the Lord will begin with people celebrating peace and safety (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). What feeling of peace and safety will exist when the world is experiencing the trumpet judgments? This must be a reference to the treaty of peace the Antichrist will negotiate at the beginning of Daniel's 70th Week and which will mark the beginning of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27).

The birth pangs were the beginning of the Tribulation Period and Paul uses this same descriptive terminology of birth pangs as being part of the Day of the Lord. Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and the Day of the Lord will begin sometime after the Rapture of the Church when a false sense of security and peace is established throughout the earth and with the signing of a peace covenant that will assure the Jewish nation has peace ("And he shall conform the covenant with many for one week" - Dan. 9:27).

In short, the Day of the Lord is not a separate time designation within the seven years. It embraces the entire seven years. This means the first 3.5 years and Great Tribulation cannot be separated from the Day of the Lord. The Old Testament repeatedly viewed the Day of the Lord as a *unified* period of God's wrath and judgment. There is no linguistic basis to assert that the Day of the Lord refers to only one and half years near the end of the Tribulation Period as prewrathers suggest.

Zephaniah 1:14-18 once again brings together a cluster of terms that characterize the future Day of the Lord. Verse 14 labels this time as "the great day of the Lord" and "the day of the Lord." In verses 15-18 he describes this time with the following descriptions: "that day is a day of wrath," "a day of trouble and distress" (tribulation) "a day of wasteness and desolation," "a day of darkness and gloominess," "a day of clouds and thick darkness," "a day of the trumpet and alarm," "I will bring distress (*tribulation*) upon men," and "the day of the Lord's wrath."

The context supports the truth that all these descriptions apply to the Day of the Lord and are like the statements of Jesus in Matthew 24 who spoke of people being "afflicted" (experiencing distress and tribulation) during the "beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8-9) and those who pass through the "great tribulation" or time of distress (Matt. 24:21). The Biblical usage of the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament with the statements of Jesus in Matthew 24 does not allow an interpreter to chop the Day of the Lord into compartmental segments as Van Kampen, Rosenthal, and the prewrathers insist. The text plainly says that Daniel's entire week (the seven years) is the same as the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) as revealed by the Old Testament prophets. The entire time of tribulation takes place within the framework of God's wrath.

## SHORTER

In regard to the duration of the Day of the Lord, Rosenthal has committed errors of fact and context. Rosenthal and prewrathers not only shorten the length of the Great Tribulation but they also shorten the length of the Day of the Lord to create a third division of time within Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. However, we have confirmed that the

Scriptures indicate the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) is greater in length than just 1.75 years or 21 months within the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (Rev. 11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; Dan. 7:25; 12:7) and the same birth pang imagery Jesus gave in Matthew 24 is fulfilled in the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:6-9; Joel 2:1-2; Zeph. 1:14-15). The Old Testament does not limit the Day of the Lord to a small sector of time within the framework of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (Isa. 30:23-25; 34:1-8; 35:1-10; Joel 2:28-32; 3:1-21; Zech. 14:1-21; Zeph. 3:8, 16-20). As we have seen, the entire period of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is identified with the Day of the Lord.

Manfred Kober correctly states:

"Rosenthal limits the Day of the Lord to 21 months, one reason being that the prophets spoke of the Day of the Lord, using a definite article. In fact, not once in the 18 OT usages of the Day of the Lord is the definite article used in the Hebrew. A close study of the biblical usage of the Day of the Lord indicates that it includes a time of judgment (the Tribulation period) and a time of blessing, the Millennium (Zeph. 3:8-13; Hag. 2:6-23; Zech. 14:1-10). If it can be demonstrated that the Day of the Lord covers more than 42 months—and it can—the pre-wrath position falls."

The Day of the Lord includes judgment upon the entire world (Rev. 3:10; Isa. 13:9-13) including judgment upon the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations. This will occur throughout the seven-year Tribulation Period. It also includes the *narrow* aspect of the coming of Messiah to judge the earth and deliver and restore Israel (Joel 2:31-32-3; Zech. 14).

Joel 2:30-32 speaks of the cosmic signs that occur before the *narrow* aspect of the Day of the Lord occurs in relation to the Second Coming of Christ to earth: "And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion

and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Joel 3:15-16 confirms that there will be cosmic signs associated with the Second Coming: “The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”

We should note that Joel 3:15–16 indicates that the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened when the *narrow* Day of the Lord is near (the Second Coming). Those heavenly bodies will be darkened “before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come” (the Second Coming). It is obvious from this that Joel 2 and 3 are referring to the same Day of the Lord. We can conclude, then, that the narrow Day of the Lord associated with Joel 2-3 and Zechariah 14 is to be identified with the great and terrible Day of the Lord—the day on which Christ will return to earth.

Zechariah 14:1-4 also prophetically declares:

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

Joel 2-3 and Zechariah 14 speak of the Day of the Lord as being that specific day when the Lord returns to fight against the armies that have conspired to fight against Israel. Christ will do this at the Second Coming (Rev. 19:11–21). Again, this is the time that is referred to as “the great and terrible Day of the LORD” (Joel 2:31) So there is a *narrow* aspect related to the Day of the Lord.

Rosenthal creates prophetic soup and confusion on this point by claiming the cosmic signs of the sixth seal are the same as presented in Matthew 24:29 which allegedly introduce the Day of the Lord (the 21-month period during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week). In other words, Rosenthal claims they are not cosmic signs that occur after the expiration of the 70<sup>th</sup> week and in conjunction with the Second Coming. But what did Jesus say?



Jesus taught in Matthew 24:29-31:

“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.”

Jesus taught (not the prewrathers) that the cosmic signs in relation to Matthew 24:29 occur after the official ending of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week which is the seven-year Tribulation Period of lesser and greater birth pangs that Jesus spoke about (Matt. 24:8, 21). These cosmic signs and the Second Coming will occur in the 30+45-day extension that follows the 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 12:11-13). The cosmic signs will begin immediately after the seven years have expired and at one point the Second Coming will occur at an undetermined point in time (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32). However, the cosmic and earthly signs of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:16-17) occur in the middle of the Tribulation Period as they give way to the seventh seal and the trumpet judgments. Note also that there are no earthly signs in Matthew 24:29 as revealed in Revelation 6:12-17 which is another indication that they are different judgments.

At this point, Rosenthal commits some sloppy exegesis and performs prophetic gymnastics to make the cosmic signs of Revelation 6 coincide with the cosmic signs of Matthew 24 to support his Day of the Lord theory. Actually, the signs of Revelation 6 are separated by 3.5 years from the signs of Matthew 24:29 and have nothing to do with the astronomical signs associated with the Second Coming. Rosenthal must conclude that the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal are the same as those of Matthew 24:29 and that these heavenly disturbances will be cut short to end the Great Tribulation, which results in the Rapture and the beginning

of the Day of the Lord. We will look at his view or understanding of the Rapture in our next point along with the events of Matthew 24.

# LONGER

It's interesting that although Rosenthal and prewrathers want to shorten the Day of the Lord to fit their proposed chronology of events, the Bible actually broadens the Day of the Lord to include blessing and God's favor.

Judgment is the major aspect of the Day of the Lord, but it also relates to the coming rule of the Messiah and His goal to establish the Millennium on earth (Rev. 20:1-7). In general, the Day of the Lord relates to God's sovereign intervention in the affairs of mankind to ultimately take back the earth for Himself during the Millennium which looks forward to the eternal state (1 Cor. 15:24-28). So, it's no surprise that the Bible speaks of both a judgment and blessing aspect that is related to the Day of the Lord. Blessing follows judgment and both the Old and New Testament reflect this truth.

Judgment will give way to blessing as the Day of the Lord culminates with the Millennial kingdom.



It is true that in Scripture the Day of the Lord is usually associated with God's wrath either in past judgments of the nations (including Israel and Judah), or during the future 70th week of Daniel. Yet Peter even speaks of a coming Day of the Lord in

which history will close with the dissolving of the present earth and heavens (2 Pet. 3:7, 10-12) after the Millennium. Most who hold the pretribulational view also believe that the Day of the Lord is at times associated with the blessings of the Millennium which eventually merges into the eternal state.

Dozens of times, the Day of the Lord itself is said to include the time of blessing and salvation in connection with the coming and rule of Messiah (the 1,000-year Millennium). The Bible does not teach that the length of the Day of the Lord is only a year or two as proposed by the prewrath Rapture view. Rosenthal and prewrathers must reject the Biblical truth that the Day of the Lord includes both judgment and blessing to keep the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) to only 21 months during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. To extend its length would mean that their concocted theory that the Day of the Lord is confined to a small segment of time during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week would be flagrantly false. "What saith the Scripture?" (Rom. 4:3) or "What saith Rosenthal and the prewrather?"

The Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord reveals that there are blessings woven with judgments as the Day of the Lord comes to an end. The end is the time of the Millennium (the 1,000 years) and eternal state which is the culmination of the Day of the Lord. After judgment comes blessing. This is what the Bible teaches regarding the Day of the Lord.

Joel 2:32 and 3:1 are right in the middle of a passage that deals with the Day of the Lord (even Rosenthal admits this – P. 119). And yet he fails to admit that blessing is associated within the context of the Day of the Lord.

Joel 2:1 sets the context of the prophetic time period of the Day of the Lord:

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is nigh at hand.*"

Joel 2:11 repeats the context of the Day of the Lord:

"And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"



During this same timeframe and context (Day of the Lord) Israel's fortunes will also be restored and the Day of the Lord will morph into a day of great blessing for the redeemed Jewish nation.

Joel 2:32

"And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."

Joel 3:1

"For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem."

So we can Biblically and accurately conclude from God's prophetic word that the Day of the Lord moves from a time of wrath and judgment to a time of salvation and blessing during the Millennium. Both components are part of this prophetic day.

In Acts 2:20-21 Peter quotes the same passage (Joel 2:32) and associates it with the Day of the Lord.

In Acts 2:20 the judgment aspect of the Day of the Lord is seen:

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (*the narrow aspect of the Day of the Lord in the Second Coming*).

In Acts 2:21 the blessing follows:

"And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

There is absolutely no warrant for concluding that only judgment is associated with the time period known as the Day of the Lord. This is because the Day of the Lord encompasses the time Jesus Christ judges the earth but then saves Israel and blesses planet earth during the Millennial Kingdom.

Joel 3:14-16 again reveals the judgment aspect of the Day of the Lord:

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall



withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”

The blessings during the Day of the Lord then follow in Joel 3:17-21:

“So shall ye know that I *am* the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day (*the Day of the LORD*), *that* the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence *against* the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood *that* I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.”

Isaiah 34-35 also intersperse both judgment and blessing in the confines of the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah 34:8 records the judgment aspect of the Day of the Lord:

“For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, *and* the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.”

Isaiah 35:1-6, without giving any hint that the Day of the Lord is no longer in view, explains the blessing aspect of the Day of the Lord during the Millenium. It states: “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, *and* the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”

These texts, like so many others, move from judgment to blessing as it relates to the Day of the Lord. Therefore, to confine the Day of the Lord to 21 months of wrath

during a small segment or sliver of time during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the seven years) is an erroneous conclusion not backed by Scripture facts.

Isaiah 2:1-11 speaks of the blessings of the earthly kingdom (the Millennium) but then immediately, without making any distinction, speaks of the Day of the Lord. Isaiah 2:12 declares, "For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.*" The two (blessing and judgment) are interwoven together when speaking of the Day of the Lord. You cannot have one without the other for the Day of the Lord is not only associated with the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) but the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom.

Zechariah chapters 12-14 are the most revealing Bible texts that reference the Day of the Lord as being both a time of judgment and blessing without giving any hint that the blessings are not part of the Day of the Lord. In fact, the blessings are intermingled with the judgments which are said to be part of "that day" (the Day of the Lord).

The prophetic narrative moves from judgment (Zech. 12:1-9) to Israel's blessing in salvation (Zech. 12:10-14). In Zechariah it again states that "in that day" (the Day of the Lord) there would be blessing intermingled with judgment (Zech. 13:1-8) and promised blessing (Zech. 13:9).

Zechariah 14:1-2

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

Zechariah 14:6 – 9 moves from judgment to the blessing of the earthly kingdom:

"And it shall come to pass in that day (*the Day of the LORD – looking back to verse 1*), *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day (*the Day of the LORD*), *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD

shall be king over all the earth: in that day (*the Day of the LORD*) shall there be one LORD, and his name one.”

It's clear that the prophetic word teaches both judgment and blessing as being represented in the prophetic Day of the Lord. The number of times the phrase “in that day” occurs clearly reveals that the Day of the Lord includes judgment and blessing.

Paul Karleen correctly asserts:

“There is no biblical justification whatsoever for separating judgment and blessing statements in this passage as belonging to different eras. They are all part of the Day of the Lord.”

These Old Testament passages which refer to the Day of the Lord contradict the prewrath conclusions that the Day of the Lord is not associated with blessings. As a result, the prewrather cannot justify limiting the Day of the Lord to only 21 months during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. It is a blatant prophetic error to do so in order to justify an alleged prewrath Rapture of the Church that occurs 3 fourths of the way into the Tribulation Period.

In reference to 2 Peter 3:10, Rosenthal comments:

“The supposed exegetical basis for extending the Day of the Lord through the Millennium rests solely on one verse of Scripture” (P. 128).

Of course, the Old Testament references to the Day of the Lord and the intermingling of blessing with judgment speak volumes against this erratic and erroneous conclusion.

2 Peter 3:10 declares:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

Unadulterated exegesis will lead one to the conclusion that the “day of the Lord” that Peter speaks of includes the destruction of the heavens and earth which according to the prophetic timetable occurs *after* the Millennium has expired. Let's establish the prophetic order of events.

Revelation 20:7

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.”

Revelation 21:1

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

This is irrefutable evidence that the Day of the Lord includes a much broader time slot than only 21 months during Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. Rosenthal and the prewrathers are simply being dishonest with Bible facts and the prophetic flow of events. In order to get away from the inevitable truth regarding the length of the Day of the Lord Rosenthal must perform more prophetic gymnastics to make his alleged shortened prewrath version of the Day of the Lord to work.

The prewrathers commit eisegesis and rearrange God’s prophetic order by forcing this event to occur before the Millennium and conclude Peter is just talking about the remaking of the heavens and earth but not recreating of the universe. 2 Peter 3:10 actually serves a severe blow to the prewrath position when understood in it’s literal sense and timing.

Goerge Zeller reveals the fallacy of Rosenthal who reworks the timing of the 2 Peter 3:10 passage. “The Pre-Wrath view CONFUSES the purging of the heavens and the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12) with judgments which take place near the end of Daniel’s 70th week. This view says that the dissolving of the universe will be pre-millennial rather than post-millennial and this view also teaches that the new heavens and the new earth will be realized during the Millennium (see pages 127-134).

“The passing away of the heavens and the melting of the elements are included as part of the Day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Since Rosenthal limits the Day of the Lord to a very short period of time (less than 3½ years) and since he teaches that the end of the Day of the Lord coincides with the end of Daniel’s 70th week, then a post-millennial event cannot be included in the Day of the Lord. Indeed, Rosenthal cannot include any of the Millennium as being part of the Day of the Lord either because the Day

of the Lord 'is exclusively a time of devastating judgment' and 'no blessing is associated with it' (p. 127).

"If we interpret these verses LITERALLY, then how could this possibly be a description of what shall take place during Daniel's 70th week? If such were to take place during Daniel's 70th week, how could there be any survivors? When the world was judged by water there were only eight survivors! If God were to judge the earth by fire during Daniel's 70th week in such a way that the very elements dissolve, how could anyone survive? Rosenthal fails to interpret 2 Peter chapter 3 literally.

"The key to prophetic chronology is the Book of Revelation. Rosenthal places the new heavens and the new earth during the time of the Millennium. The Book of Revelation places the new heavens and the new earth after the Millennium. The Millennium is described in chapter 20 and the new heavens and the new earth is introduced after the Millennium in chapter 21 (see verse 1).

"In 2 Peter 3:13 we learn that righteousness will find its home in this new heaven and new earth: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is because "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27)."

Rosenthal must edit God's Word to fit his own rogue interpretation of the Day of the Lord. He argues that Peter's reference to the Day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3:10 cannot refer to an extended period of time related to this prophetic time period. Therefore, Rosenthal attempts to convince his readers that the event of 2 Peter 3:10 is only a reshaping of the earth that occurs prior to the Millennium and therefore does not include a longer period of time within the framework of the Day of the Lord. This is an egregious error in view of the sequence of the prophetic events outlined in Revelation 20-21 and what Peter is actually teaching in these eschatological verses. Rosenthal seems to have a prophetic blind spot at this point regarding the destruction or annihilation of the present world and universe.



Rosenthal asserts:

“He is not talking of total annihilation of the earth any more than the earth perishing in the days of Noah was total annihilation. He is talking of nonannihilative judgment during the Day of the Lord as the prophets foretold, but in connection with Christ’s return before the Millennium begins” (P. 130).

Rosenthal has committed another grievous error through sloppy exegesis. This prophetic text, along with others, in no way can be interpreted as a renovation or refacing of the earth as the Rosenthal implies (p. 131).

Psalm 102:25-26 gives us this information:

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.”

It’s obvious that the Scriptures speaks of the destruction of the heavens and earth and not merely a renovation of the heavens and earth. Peter uses the same terminology that John does when speaking about the total destruction of the universe for he declares the heavens and earth “shall pass away” (2 Pet. 3:10).

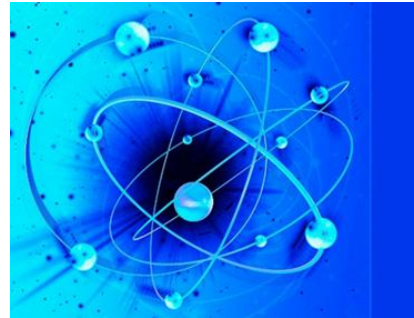
Revelation 21:1 reveals the same thing:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

Passing away does not indicate the universe will only be refaced or get a patch job. This means that both the earth and the heavens will pass out of existence. Peter is

speaking about the termination of the present order of the old universe. A “great noise” is undoubtedly referring to an atomic explosion or blast of some monstrous proportion. The Greek word was used for the swish of an arrow, the rush of wings, the splash of water, and the hiss of the serpent. These are appropriate ways to describe an atomic blast.

The same God who created the laws of nature can break these same laws. And this is what the Bible teaches. God will destroy the universe by interacting with the atomic structure. When Peter says “the elements shall melt with fervent heat” he is talking about the atomic structure (building blocks) of the earth being destroyed. The word “elements” (stoicheion) refers to something that is orderly arranged and speaks of the atoms which are the building blocks of the universe. The fundamental components of matter or the atomic building blocks of the world will be split by God who presently holds the universe together (Heb. 1:3). The very atomic structure of the universe will explode into oblivion and the new heavens and earth will be formed.



Peter concludes that the building blocks or fundamental components of the universe will disappear with a roar, which in some way will involve fire (2 Peter 3:7, 12). Once again, this text reveals that the “elements” (atomic structure or building blocks of the universe) will “melt” (*lyo*) or “be loosened, broken up, broken in pieces, untied” with “heat” (a fiery force of burning heat and energy) resulting in a cataclysmic explosion of epic proportion where the “earth also” will pass out of existence along with all of “the works that are therein” (rocks, trees, hills, etc.). This old earth will explode into oblivion and everything else that is on the earth “shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

2 Peter 3:11-12 continues:

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved (*lyo - loosened and broken apart*), and the elements (*atomic structure of the universe*) shall melt with fervent heat?” (*in a cataclysmic explosion*).

The “day of God” is referencing the eternal state which the Book of Revelation informs us comes into existence after the destruction of the old earth and heavens (Rev. 21-22). So Peter identifies the “day of the Lord” (2 Pet. 3:10) as a time when the total obliteration of the heavens and earth occurs which merges into the eternal state. John reveals “there was found no more place for them” (the heaven and earth - Rev. 20:11) and then the heavens and earth (the totality of the universe) will be replaced – not renovated (Revelation 21:1). This is the prophetic event that follows the Millennium (Rev. 20:7) and not “before the Millennium begins” as Rosenthal errantly suggests (P. 130) to try and limit the Day of the Lord to only 21 months during the seven-year Tribulation Period.

2 Peter 3:10 poses a serious problem for the prewrath position because it indicates the Day of the Lord is extended into the Millennium, a time of blessing when Jesus reclaims the earth and turns it into a theocracy, and when the universe is destroyed and recreated following the 1,000 years.

Karleen correctly observes:

“A viable alternative in this case, of course, is that Peter describes a unitary period of time from the start of the Day (Day of the Lord) at the beginning of the seventieth week to the creation of the new heavens and new earth.”

The lengths that the prewrather must go in order to disprove the clear explanations and conclusions of Scripture to support an imaginary prewrath Day of the Lord theory consisting of only 21 months on the earth are astounding and can be easily debunked as false. Again, Rosenthal and the prewrathers reject the idea that the Day of the Lord includes the blessing of the Millennium and even the eternal state for they cannot expand the Day of the Lord beyond a 21-month period (1.75 years) according to their interpretive scheme. But again, who will you believe – Rosenthal or the Old and New Testament prophets? Rosenthal or Peter?

In summary, the full and complete Day of the Lord has elements of darkness (judgment) and light (blessing). This would mean that the Day of the Lord would include the time of judgment (the Seventieth Week) and time of Messiah’s kingdom rule (the Millennium) which ultimately merges into the eternal state. To be the Day of the Lord, it must “involve His rule of the world system during the Millennium,” argues Renald Showers. “How could the Day of the Lord fully demonstrate who He is—the sovereign God of the universe—without the sovereign exercise of His rule in visible form over the entire world?” Dr. Showers is correct in his assessment.



Clear Biblical research and exegesis reveals that the Day of the Lord includes the rule of the sovereign Lord over the earth.

The familiar Old Testament expression “in that day” is often placed into the prophetic context and background of the Day of the Lord which includes both judgment and blessing. Allow me to share some more blessing verses related to the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah 4:2 anticipates the great blessing of the finale of the Day of the Lord:  
“In that day (*the Day of the Lord*) shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.”

Isaiah 10:20

“And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.”

Isaiah 11:10

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.”

Isaiah 29:18

“And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.”

Joel 3:18

“And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.”

Amos 9:11

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.”

Zechariah 14:9

“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.”

Although the Day of the Lord is certainly represented as a time of judgment and chastening of Israel it will end with the blessing of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom as these prophetic texts reveal.

“Great day! Great day, the righteous marching;  
Great day! God's going to build up Zion's walls!  
Great day! Great day, the righteous marching;  
Great day! God's going to build up Zion's walls!”

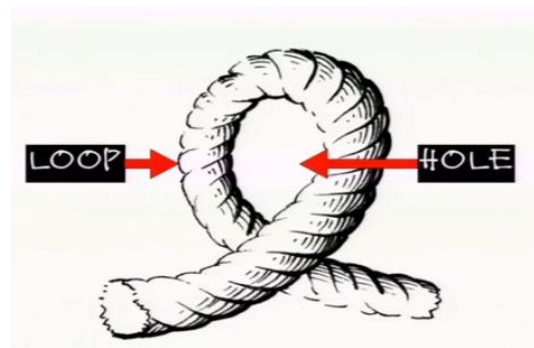
**6. The seventieth week of Daniel relates to Daniel’s people (the Jews) and has nothing to do with the Church.**

Prewrath rapturism denies the dispensational distinctions between believers of the Church Age, Jewish brethren, and tribulation saints (1 Cor. 10:32; Rev. 7:14-15; 20:4). For instance, to keep the Church in the Tribulation Period, this view must conclude that the martyred tribulation saints are the Church and that God’s elect is the Church instead of Israel (Isa. 45:4). One weakness (among many) of the prewrath Rapture position is its assumption that the “elect” mentioned in Matthew 24:22 and 31 are Church-age saints. This is a crucial argument of the prewrath position. The “elect” are allegedly Church saints who have entered the Tribulation Period and who must endure suffering at the hands of the Antichrist.

Van Kampen, one of the original conspirators of the prewrath theory, wrote:

“It is the elect of God (the saints) who will endure Antichrist’s persecution. That is precisely why terms such as ‘the elect’ and ‘the saints’ are used instead of the word church to describe the faithful who will choose death over compromise!” (*Van Kampen, Rapture Question, p. 81*).

In a desperate attempt to prove that the Church is in view in the Olivet Discourse, Rosenthal contended, “Not once in the New Testament is Israel ever called the elect” (*Marvin J. Rosenthal, “the Great Tribulation,” Zion’s Fire, May-June, 1998, p. 9*). Of course,



this statement is full of inaccuracies. Rosenthal is looking for a loophole to try and keep the Church in three fourths of the Tribulation Period. According to Van Kampen the “remnant of her [the woman’s] seed” (Rev. 12:17) is interpreted as “Christians, both Jewish and Gentile” rather than simply Jewish (Van Kampen, *The Sign*, 244). The prewrathers must in some measure mix the Jews with the Church to keep the Church in Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.

Allow me to give some Biblical reasons why Rosenthal is in error when he assumes that the Church is God’s elect in Matthew 24.

First, the seven-year Tribulation Period relates to God’s program for Israel and not the Church. It encompasses the period of time when Israel will be purged and saved which will eventually result in the Millennium and reign of the Messiah during the Kingdom Age, a time when righteousness will be established over the earth.

Daniel 9:24 prophetically anticipates this:

“Seventy weeks (490 years) are determined upon thy people (*the Jewish people*) and upon thy holy city (*Jerusalem*), to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

The breakdown of the 490 period relates to God’s dealings with Israel that would include the final seven years or “one week” which references the seven-year Tribulation Period. “And he (*the Antichrist*) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week” (Dan. 9;27). This prophetic period of time is designed for the Jewish people – not the Church.



Daniel’s people (“thy people”) are not the Church; therefore, proponents of the prewrath position once again shoot themselves in the foot by attempting to mix the Church with Daniel’s people (the Jews) during a time period that specifically brings about God’s purpose for the Jewish people – not the Church (1 Cor. 10:32).

Second, this is the “time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7) – not a time of trouble for the Church! The Tribulation Period is a unique time when God will punish Israel and this is why the period of time is called “the time of Jacob’s (Israel’s) trouble” or distress (Jer. 30:7) and when God says, “I will correct thee in measure” (Jer. 30:11). Daniel 9:24 concludes the Tribulation Period will “finish the transgression” of Daniel’s people with Israel’s salvation occurring in conjunction with the Second Coming. Daniel 12:5-7 conveys how the seven years will break Israel of her power and make her hopeless so that she will return to the Messiah (Isa. 59:20-21).

Third, it’s very clear that Jesus was addressing His Jewish disciples in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24. You can follow the pronoun “you” (Matt. 24:1-2, 4, 9, 15-16, 23) which is referring to the Jewish disciples up to the time Christ mentions about His “elect” people who would naturally be Jewish (Matt. 24:22, 24, 31). So the people and meaning of “elect” remain the same as found in the Old Testament – “Israel mine elect” (Isa. 45:4).

Renald Shower gives us this summary:

“The Greek word *eklektos*, which is translated as ‘elect,’ is not used for the nation of Israel in the New Testament. However, the Greek word *ekloge* is translated ‘election’ and means ‘selection, election, choosing” (Arndt and Gingrich, “ekloge,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 242). This word is also used in the New Testament for not only Jewish believers in Jesus Christ (Rom. 11:5, 7) but also the nation of Israel (“but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes’ - Rom. 11:28).”

Fourth, the context is clearly referencing the Jewish people and not the Church. Jesus tells those who flee the antichrist’s persecution to pray that their flight does not occur “on the sabbath day” (Matt. 24:20). Since the Church is not under the Mosaic law and is not instructed to keep the Sabbath (Col. 2:16), Jesus’ words cannot be directed to the Church. Instead, “the elect” in Matthew 24 who are fleeing the Antichrist on the Jewish Sabbath are a Jewish remnant during the Tribulation Period who will come to believe in Jesus as Messiah and Savior. The Jews are found in Matthew 24 – not the Church. More on this later.

Fifth, the Gospels are written during the Mosaic Dispensation, so it would be natural for the Jews to understand the word of Jesus concerning His coming deliverance for Israel in His Second Coming (not for the Church in the Rapture).

Sixth, terms such as “this gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 24:14), “the holy place” (Matt. 24:15), “the sabbath day” (Matt. 24:20), and “the Christ” or “false Christs” alluding to the Jewish Messiah (Matt. 24:23-24) indicate that Israel is in view – not the Church. These conclusions reveal the Tribulation Period is not a prophetic program related to the Church, but a program designed to chasten and ultimately save Israel (God’s chosen people) and bring them the Millennial Kingdom.

Seventh, the Tribulation will complete the decreed period of national Israel's judicial hardening as punishment for her rejection of the messianic program, which the partial return from exile did not remove, and which culminated in the national rejection of Jesus (Isa. 6:9-13; 24:1-6; Jn. 12:37-41; Rom. 11:7-10, 25-26).

Eighth, the Tribulation Period is a time for calling Israel back to God (Malachi 4:5-6). The Tribulation is a time to discipline and chasten Israel for her stubbornness and rejection of Christ in order to prepare her for her conversion at Christ’s Second Coming (Zech. 12:10-13:2; Rom. 11:26-27; Jer. 31:31-34). The seven years (“the time of Jacob’s trouble”) will convince Israel of her need for Christ (the Messiah) and she will cry out for deliverance to produce a national regeneration (Dan. 12:5-7; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 20:34-38; 36:25-27; 37:1-14; Zech. 12:9-13:2; Isa. 59:20-21). (Zech. 13:8-9; Isa. 64:1, 5b-6a, 8-9; Matt. 23:39; Luke 13:35). God will respond to the prayer of confession of Israel as His national people and return and rescue her from the Tribulation enemies (Zech. 14:1-7).

Ninth, following the Tribulation will result in a massive return of Jews to the Land of Israel (Zech. 8:7-8; Ezek. 36:24; 37:21). Christ’s Second Coming will end the “times of the Gentiles” (Lk. 21:24) and effect the deliverance of the Jewish people from Gentile dominion (Isa. 24:21-23; 59:16-20; Matt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27; Rom. 11:25-26). In Ezekiel 20 God foretold that in the future He will gather the people of Israel out of the countries where they have been scattered and will bring them into a wilderness. It’s here that Christ will plead with them before they enter the land of Israel (Ezek. 20:34-38).

Tenth, to summarize, the seven-year Tribulation Period is designed to bring Israel to her final regathering (Matt. 24:31), regeneration (Ezek. 37:25-27), and restoration in the Millennial Kingdom. Jeremiah 30:7 concludes that a remnant of Jews will be “saved out of it” (the Tribulation Period) to bring them into the

Kingdom blessings (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-17, 20-21; Ezek. 20:33 38; 37:24-25; Dan. 7:13-14; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 8:11; Zech. 14:4, 9).

It's very clear that the prophesied seven years has nothing to do with the Church but everything to do with Israel. To try and shift the purpose of the Tribulation Period from Israel to the Church is another exegetically fallacy of the prewrath position.

### **7. The New Testament Church is raptured prior to Daniel's 70th week and is not found on earth during the Tribulation Period.**

It should be noted that the Church is never mentioned as being on earth during any part of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week when all the Tribulation judgments are being unleashed upon planet earth (Rev. 6-18). Only Tribulation and Jewish saints are mentioned in Daniel's prophetic context of the Tribulation Period (Dan. 7:22, 25, 27). The absence of the Church during this specific time period is significant. Paul repeatedly taught the Church would be raptured before the seven-year Tribulation Period begins (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-8) which as we have seen is described in the Old Testament apocalyptic literature as encompassing the entire seven-year Tribulation Period of birth pangs.

The Rapture is indeed prewrath, but in order to be prewrath it must also be pretribulational (Rev. 3:10). This is because Daniel's entire 70th week (all seven years) is an expression of God's wrath as taught by Jesus, Paul, and the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures, which describe the entire time of God's wrath in the imagery of birth pangs that occur during a seven-year Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:8, 15, 21, 29; 1 Thess. 5:2-3; Isa. 13:6-9; Joel 2:1-2; Jer. 30:6-7).

There is no such thing as a prewrath Rapture that occurs three fourths of the way through Daniel's 70th week for this actually places the Church in the period of God's wrath. It is the invention of man, not scripture. "Let no man deceive you" (2 Thess. 2:3). The terms "tribulation," "Great Tribulation," "seventieth week of Daniel" and "Day of the Lord" are all interchangeable terms for they all relate to God's divine judgment on mankind. Therefore, they should not be chopped up to mean different things. They all include the time when God expresses His wrath upon planet earth.

The inspired outline of the book of Revelation (not the inspired book of Rosenthal) gives us the clear prophetic picture of the Church being raptured prior to the Tribulation Period.

**John's Inspired Outline of Revelation**

**"things which thou hast seen"**

**Past (the Glorified Christ)**

Chapter One

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**"things which are"**

**Present (the Seven Churches)**

Chapters 2-3

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**"things which shall be"**

**Prophetic (Tribulation, Second Coming Millennium, Eternal State)**

Chapters 4-22

Revelation 4:1

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."

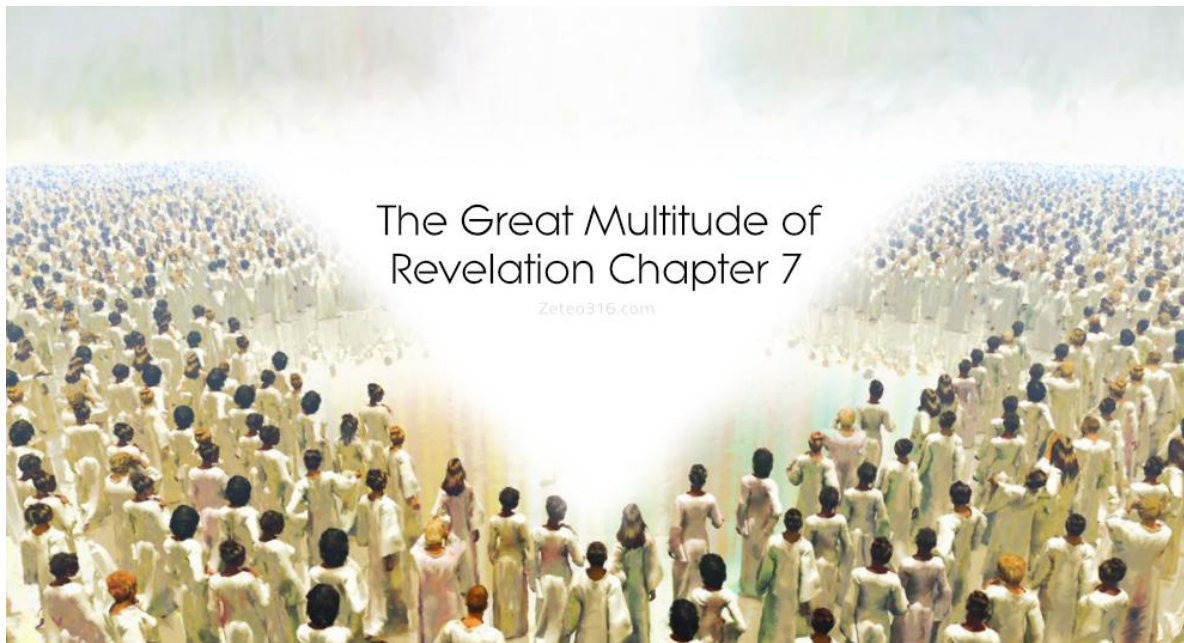
Rosenthal wants us to believe that the "entire context of the seven churches is set in the arena of the seventieth

week and the activity of Satan and the Antichrist." Of course, there is simply no exegetical evidence to support this. The context of Revelation 2-3 nowhere indicates that John is describing a situation inside the 70<sup>th</sup> week. While the activity of Satan is mentioned, this is not surprising since Satan is active in all periods of human history. The Antichrist is not mentioned anywhere in the two chapters. To try and squeeze the churches into the later chapters of Revelation violates John's inspired threefold division of the book.

Chronological and exegetically the events of Revelation chapters 2-3 precede the events of chapters 4-22 and cannot be placed somewhere later in the book of Revelation to fit the preconceived view that the Church will pass into the Tribulation Period. This can be confirmed by Revelation 4:1 which is when the book of Revelation projects us into the future. "After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."

So the "hereafter" (future) only begins in chapter 4 and onward which deals with the Tribulation Period, Second Coming, Millennium, and Eternal State. This refers to a different period of time than the previous three chapters which deals with things in the past and present. To try and force chapters 2-3 into the future rejects the clear explanation and exegesis of John's outline.

Pretribulationism takes the three-fold division of Revelation 1:19 literally and separates chapters 2-3 from chapters 4-22. To place chapters 2-3 inside the 70<sup>th</sup> week in order to make the Church pass through three quarters of the Tribulation Period is totally foreign to what is being outlined and taught by John. Even the mid and post tribbers don't come to this conclusion for the simple reason that it's not there! Rosenthal is once again standing on an island all by himself as he tries to confuse the clear teachings of Scripture to support his debunked prewrath theory which takes the Church into the Tribulation Period.



As previously mentioned, the prewrathers also confuse the martyred Gentile masses of Tribulation saints (Revelation 7:9-17) with Church Age saints. If these millions of martyred saints were the Church, then how could the Rapture be looked upon as a blessed hope (Titus 2:13)? The blessed hope of the Rapture would be turned into a bleak death sentence during the Tribulation Period! There is no warrant for attributing these saints with the Church since Christ's Bride is seen in Heaven during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week of seven years (Rev. 19:1-10).

Revelation 7:9 states:

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."



Revelation 7:13 adds:

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?”

Revelation 7:14 then concludes:

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Rosenthal concludes that the multitude in Heaven refers to the raptured Church which supposedly precedes the Day of the Lord in his scheme of thinking.

Rosenthal states his position in this way:

“This great multitude represents the true church which goes into the seventieth week of Daniel. They are raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation but before the Day of the Lord begins. They are raptured before God's wrath is poured out but are not exempt from the ultimate rebellion of unregenerate men.”

He also claims that the different multitudes coming to greet the Church in Heaven “does not include the Church, which is conspicuous by its absence.” In other words, since the heavenly people greeting the great multitude are not said to be the Church, then the great multitude must be the Church. This sounds like circular reasoning. It is a very shallow argument that is not based upon exegesis. Rosenthal’s argument merely presupposes his position.

It should be understood that the great throng of martyred people during the Tribulation Period are never called the Church. The 24 elders are there to greet the great multitude (Rev. 7:14), but Rosenthal denies the 24 elders are the Church because this would destroy his theory of the Rapture of the Church in Revelation 7. The reason for this is because the 24 elders (a previously raptured Church) would not be greeting another raptured Church in Revelation 7. However, Biblical evidence suggests these elders are the Church.

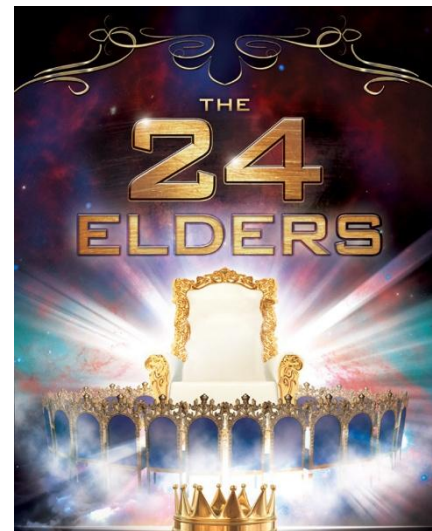
It’s obvious that the 24 elders are actually representing something. They are not 24 specifically created beings in this vision but are representative of something else. When looking at the immediate context and facts, the expositor can conclude that

the elders are a picture of the Church in Heaven which has just been raptured, resurrected, and rewarded.

What is the Biblical support we can give to prove that the 24 elders represent the Church?

- The courses of the priesthood and promise to rule as kings.

John is drawing an allusion from the Old Testament priesthood which was divided into 24 courses. The number 24 in its totality represents the completed priesthood of the New Testament Church. David divided the Levitical priesthood into 24 courses (1 Chron. 24) to represent the completed priesthood. Although the number 24 reflects the completed priesthood of the Old Testament priests we must remember that the New Testament saints in the Church are also said to be a priesthood of believers, who like the Old Testament priests, have access into God's presence (1 Pet. 2:9). Therefore, the reference to the 24 elders point to the *completed priesthood* of believers within the Church (the Body of Christ) that is now in Heaven. The New Testament priests become the actual fulfillment of what the Old Testament priests portrayed – worship in God's presence and throne room. The *typical worship* represented by the Old Testament priesthood is now fulfilled in the *heavenly worship* of the completed Church following the Rapture of the Church.



The Book of Revelation depicts the Church as being kings and priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). These verses in the Book of Revelation look toward the future when we will reign as kings over the earth with Christ and function as priests leading the millennial earth in worship and praise to Christ. Therefore, the heavenly scene of 24 elders (picturing the completed Church), sitting on thrones, reflects the future glory and position the Church will have with Jesus Christ when she rules and reigns with Him over the earth (Rev. 5:10).

In other words, the representative thrones in Heaven (Rev. 4:4) upon which the Church is pictured as sitting is an anticipatory statement about the future or what

lies ahead for the Church when she returns to earth with the Messiah. In other words, this is a proleptic statement and scene (a representation of something in the future) that is going to happen not too far in the distant future. Proleptic statements are part of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 19:7-9; 11:15-18).



Added to this, we must remember that the Church was just promised the privilege of ruling with Christ on earth in the previous chapters (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21). The Church (represented by 24 elders) is now seen in Heaven sitting upon 24 representative thrones anticipating her coming rule over the earth as kings and priests with Christ (Rev. 5:10).

- The context of the previous chapters (Chapters 2-3)

The previous chapters give some evidence that the elders are representative of the Church. It is hermeneutically appropriate to identify these elders as the Church since the book of Revelation has just completed a look at the seven letters directed to the seven churches which are addressed to their elders or leaders! Israel was not part of the Church Age and are not part of these elders. Now, immediately after the Church Age has expired, we see the Church represented in Heaven by these 24 elders (Rev. 4:1-4).

The reference to “elders” apparently points to church leadership (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1) instead of the leadership within the nation of Israel. Elders are the primary leaders of the churches which were just spoken about in Revelation chapters two and three. Their presence in Heaven would be representative of the Church which at this point has just been raptured and now rewarded in Heaven and awaiting their return to rule with Jesus Christ on earth.

- The color presented in their apparel.

The white garments picture the elders as being representative of the Church. While angels do appear in white (John 20:12; Acts 1:10) white garments more commonly the dress of believers. This is particularly true in



the immediate context of Revelation. Christ promised the believers at Sardis that they would “be clothed in white garments” (Rev. 3:5). At the marriage supper of the Lamb, His Bride (New Testament Church) will clothe herself in fine linen which is bright and clean. This white linen will portray and reflect the saint’s eternal rewards.

Revelation 19:8 declares:

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

These white garments within their appropriate contexts speak of the heavenly reward that the Church has received and the reward that will be reflected in the radiating brightness coming forth from her white robes. Thus, the fact that the Church was just promised these robes of reward for her faithfulness (Rev. 3:5), would indicate that she is now seen in Heaven, clothed in these white robes representing her reward.

➤ The crowns provided for their heads.



The crowns on their heads picture the elders as being representative of the Church. There are two kinds of crowns mentioned in the Book of Revelation. One is the crown of a ruler or a sovereign king (Gk. diadem – Rev. 19:12) while the other is the crown of a victor (Gk. stephanos). Crowns of victory and reward were given in the Greek games when a person won a race or some contest. The Greek word used here is “stephanos” which is a victor’s crown (symbolic of honor and reward). This is the same term used throughout the New Testament for the rewards given to New Testament believers (1 Cor 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4). A crown was previously promised to the overcomers (Rev. 2:10). This adds extra evidence to support the truth that these elders represent the Church which has just been rewarded and crowned in Heaven following the Bema or Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).

The Church Age is seen in Revelation chapters 2-3. The Church is now raptured (Rev. 4:1), resurrected, and rewarded in Heaven following the Rapture just before the

Tribulation judgments are about to be unleashed on planet earth with the seven-sealed scroll (Rev. 5:1-2; 6:1). Her reward is symbolized by white garments and crowns and the crowns will be actually cast before the feet of God who sits upon the throne (Rev. 4:10).

Since Israel and the Old Testament saints are not going to be resurrected until after the Tribulation Period (Dan. 12:2-3; Isa. 26:19), and since Israel is pictured on the earth during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 12), it stands to reason that these elders have nothing to do with the elders of Israel but are representative of the New Testament Church which has just been rewarded and is now taken to Heaven following the Rapture of the Church (John 14:1-2).

When we consider the immediate context and all the facts, we can hermetically conclude that the elders represent the raptured, resurrected, and rewarded church that is now in Heaven singing the song of redemption (Rev. 5:8–10). They represent all believers (both Jewish and Gentiles) from the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until the Rapture of the Church, symbolized (pictured) in the event of Revelation 4:1.

Again, Rosenthal attempts to disassociate the natural understanding of the 24 elders from being the Church following a pretribulation Rapture (Rev. 4) who are now greeting the Tribulation martyrs in Revelation 7. In other words, he must refuse to identify the elders as the Church greeting the great multitude in Heaven, which he claims to be the Church, for this would blow his entire theory out of the water that the great multitude in Revelation 7 is the Rapture of the Church. You cannot have the Church (24 elders) greeting the Church (the great multitude).

Craig Blasing correctly states: "The primary difficulty for a prewrath Rapture" is that "the distinct features of the rapture are simply not present in Revelation 7 or 14. There is no mention of a resurrection, no mention of a transformation of living believers from mortality to immortality, no mention of any 'catching up' of resurrection and transformed saints to meet the Lord in the air."

Arnold Fruchtenbaum exposes Rosenthal's assessment of the great multitude being the Church in Revelation 7 when stating: "Rosenthal then insists several times that the great multitude is the Church raptured into heaven. He says the great multitude 'suddenly appears in heaven.' However, nothing in the text indicates a 'sudden' appearance. Their appearance in heaven is no more sudden than the fifth

seal saints; and John uses the same wording for both. 'I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain (6:9); and: 'I saw, and behold, a great multitude' ... (7:9).

"In each case, John was merely shown a group of saints in heaven without saying anything about their arrival, either suddenly or gradually. Furthermore, 7:14 uses the Greek present tense, which carries the concept of 'continually coming' out of the great tribulation, and not suddenly coming; they do not go up as one single group but as they are martyred one by one. Rosenthal wants it to be sudden, because this is the rapture for him. But all of his assertions in the above quotation that the great multitude is the Church are based on presupposing his position to be already true. The identification of the great multitude with the Church is purely the result of dogmatism and assuming certain presuppositions to be true rather than exegesis. Yet this identification is absolutely crucial to his position because it is the only place in Revelation that he can use to try to prove the rapture occurs between the sixth and seventh seals."

Archibald Tomas Robertson, the 20<sup>th</sup> century Greek language scholar in America wrote the present tense participle in Revelation 7:14 is a present middle participle with the idea of continued reparation (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6:352). The Greek present tense of the main verb ("came" or "come") in the elder's statement (Rev. 7:14) indicates that the people who make up the great multitude do not come out of the great tribulation as one group at the same time, but one by one, continuously, throughout the course of the great tribulation, apparently through death.

It should be noted that nothing in Revelation 6-8 describes a Rapture, but Rosenthal presupposes that this is the case to keep the Church in the Tribulation Period and then raptured three quarters into the Tribulation. Revelation 7 is supposedly the best evidence he has to prove that the Church is raptured before the start of the Day of the Lord. But he fails on many levels to prove the Church enters the Tribulation Period.

Rosenthal seems to sense the weakness of his position in a footnote:

"The identity of the great multitude of Revelation 7 is not crucial to the prewrath rapture. The biblical evidence, however, strongly favors identifying them as the raptured church in heaven before the Day of the Lord commences (P. 304)."

Rosenthal denies the saints in Revelation are an extension of the martyred in Revelation 6 but instead are the raptured saints (Church Age saints).

He states:

“This great multitude on chapter 7 is clearly a different group from those described in chapter 6.”

Actually, the Biblical evidence implies that the saints of Revelation 7 belong to the same class of people (martyrs) who were persecuted in chapter 6 and seen under the altar. These saints in Revelation seven, along with those mentioned in Revelation six are saints who will be persecuted and martyred throughout the seven years. The saints of Revelation 7 are seen coming out of the second half of the Tribulation Period (the Great Tribulation).



Rosenthal needs this great multitude of people in Revelation 7 to be Church saints so badly that he resorts to some of his most shallow arguments in the entire book. It's very clear that the saints in chapter seven are an extension of the same class of persecuted saints in chapter six (the fifth seal – Rev. 6:9-11) for several reasons.

First, both groups are dressed the same – in white robes (Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13-14). This alone seems to stress they are similar martyrs related to the Tribulation Period.

Second, the fifth seal saints cry out to God to avenge their martyrdom, but they are told they must wait until others have experienced martyrdom – “until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should



be fulfilled” (Rev. 6:11). Within the context and flow of Revelation, the great multitude of chapter seven fulfills the prophecy of 6:11 with the fellow martyrs (“fellow servants”) yet to occur during the Great Tribulation Period. So exegetically, it is more fitting to make the “great multitude” (Rev. 7:9) a continuation of the persecuted saints that began during the fifth seal since continued martyrdom was promised in Revelation 6:11 and now fulfilled by Revelation 7:9-17.

There is no basis to assume that a sudden rapture occurs of untold millions of people in this great multitude. The symmetry and chronological phrase “After this” (Rev. 7:9) indicates that this prophetic passage (Revelation 7:9-17) involve chronological events that follow the events of Revelation 7:1-8. In other words, it’s clear that this prophetic passage of Scripture is presenting the great multitude as being martyrs who were saved under the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and who “one by one” enter Heaven throughout the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period which both John (Rev. 7:14) and Jesus identified as the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21).

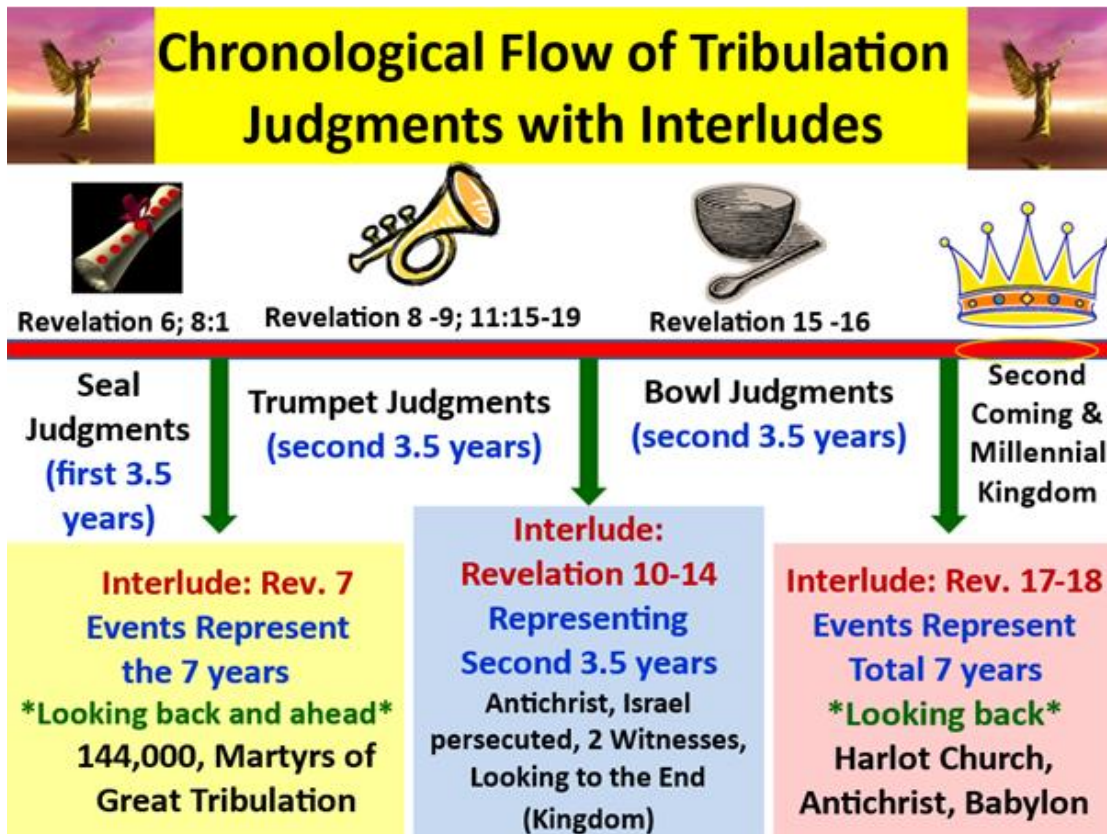
Rosenthal cannot conceive how many saints can be saved during a short time period. There are several answers to this question.

First, the grace of God can save many people in a shorter period of time as revealed in the great awakenings of Church history.

Second, and more importantly, Revelation 7 is an interlude passage that looks ahead to all the saints who are martyred during the entire seven-year period. It is looking back and ahead to the Great Tribulation (second half of the Tribulation) to the vast numbers that will be martyred under the apostate Church (Rev. 6:9-11) and then the regime of the Antichrist (Rev. 7:14).

Possessing a panoramic view of the entire Tribulation Period is important at this point of our study so we can understand the overall picture and chronological flow of the Tribulation judgments and interluding events. A chart on the following page reveals the progression of the book of Revelation with its interludes to describe what events will be occurring at various stages throughout the seven years.





Another shallow argument of Rosenthal to prove these are not martyrs but raptured saints is that according to his thinking the saints of Revelation six are said to be “souls” (Rev. 6:9) while the saints of Revelation seven have “bodies.” But nowhere in chapter seven are they actually said to have “bodies.” Rosenthal is reading this into the text to prove his debunked rapture theory.

Rosenthal makes the point that John does not recognize who the great multitude is. But this argument works against Rosenthal rather than for him. The reason he does not recognize them as the Church is because they are not the Church! If these were Church saints, how can it be that John the apostle, himself being a Church saint, a foundational figure of the Church (Eph. 2:20) would not recognize them as such? But again, Rosenthal reasons because the Church in Heaven is not mentioned as greeting the people, then this must indicate the Church has not been raptured to Heaven previously to this but is only raptured now in Revelation 7. This is a very weak argument that once again presupposes his position.

Here is another point. Rosenthal would have to believe in a partial Rapture if Revelation chapter 7 really does represent the raptured Church saints. This is

because the Scripture states these saints only came out of the Great Tribulation. This would exclude all other Church saints who have died since Acts chapter two (Pentecost), or those who die before the Great Tribulation. The Bible reveals that the saints of all the ages will be resurrected and participate in the event of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17), not just those who allegedly, according to Rosenthal's vain reasoning, come out of the Great Tribulation

On another note, if the 144,000 of Revelation chapter seven are sealed to be a witness to the lost, indicating their own salvation, then they too should also be part of the Church and raptured in Revelation 7. But this means they cannot fulfill their witnessing obligations. To get around this, Rosenthal gives a strange interpretation of divine sealing that does not include or indicate actual salvation. But the Scripture always speaks of sealing in relation to salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).

Again, the symmetry or flow of thought found in Revelation 7 is that these men are saved to be a witness to the lost (Rev. 7:1-8). "After this I beheld" (a chronological phrase – Rev. 7:9) naturally introduces the events of Revelation 7:9-17 and explains the result of the ministry of the 144,000 Jews which is to lead myriads of Gentile people to faith in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation.

In summary, Rosenthal's conclusion that the great multitude of Revelation 7:9 must be Church saints is based upon his position as already being true rather than basing his claims on solid exegesis. As previously stated, nothing in Revelation 6-8 describes the Rapture. Nowhere does the text in Revelation 7 say millions of people were suddenly raptured to Heaven. Therefore, Rosenthal must presuppose his position. His conclusions of associating tribulation saints who will be martyred during the seven-year Tribulation Period with Church Age saints is an exegetical fallacy. It becomes a case of "illegitimate transfer" which is associating one group (tribulation martyrs) with a totally different group of people (the raptured Church).

The prewrath Rapture cannot legitimately place the Church on earth since it has already been built, completed, and raptured in accordance with God's predetermined dispensational plan.

Goerge Zeller gives some Biblical reasons why the Church is not on earth during any part of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week by explaining what occurs *prior* to the beginning of the Tribulation Period (Day of the Lord).

- The fullness of the Gentiles comes in (Rom. 11:25).
- The building is complete (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 16:18).
- God finishes calling out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14).
- Christ finishes building His Church (Matt. 16:18).
- The last believer is placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).
- The Church is received up in glory (Col. 3:4; cf. 1 Tim. 3:15-16).

The fulfillment of all these things is understood to occur prior to Daniel's 70th week – not during the 70<sup>th</sup> week or the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-3). Since the Church is complete with the last person becoming part of the Body of Christ, which results in the Church being received up to glory, there is no reason to speculate that God's Church will enter any part of the Tribulation Period. The Church will be in Heaven, as the Bride of Christ, enjoying the presence of the Bridegroom throughout the seven years (John 14:1-3).



Rosenthal must in some way associate the “last trump” of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 11:15) with the “trump of God” which is linked with the Rapture texts of Scripture (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). He does this to force the occurrence of the Rapture within the context of the Tribulation Period and therefore meet his criteria of the Church passing through three fourths of the Tribulation Period and

being raptured prior to the beginning of the Day of the Lord (between the sixth and seventh seal).

Rosenthal states: *“The last trump will be nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different than the final, climactic, eschatological outpouring of the wrath of God.”*

Later he writes:

“We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (1 Cor. 15:51 -52), the Rapture must occur at the opening of the seventh seal and

immediately prior to the beginning of God's wrath. That interpretation is unstrained and biblically accurate (pp. 189-191, 193-194).

Of course, Rosenthal's interpretation, like the mid tribbers, mixes or equates in some manner the Rapture trumpet with the Tribulation trumpet (the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet in Revelation 11:15) in order to force the Rapture to occur during the Tribulation Period. Rosenthal does not fall into the trap of the mid tribber by identifying the "last trump" of Revelation 11:15 with the "last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52) or "trump of God" (1 Thess. 4:16) since he correctly reasons the Thessalonians would have no knowledge about the specific events of the book of Revelation for it was not yet written. It also would force Rosenthal to conclude the Rapture would occur at the midway point of the Tribulation as the midtribulationist teaches. This is something which Rosenthal denies.

As a result, he must concoct the theory of indirectly generalizing the seventh trumpet as a collective of all the seven trumpets combined in the 7<sup>th</sup> seal. In other words, he views all of the trumpets flowing out of the seventh seal. This means the seventh trumpet is in some sense retroactive to the seventh seal, and therefore the seventh trumpet has a connection with the Rapture, which occurs in conjunction with the opening of the seventh seal.

Does this sound confusing? Does it sound impossible? Yes! Rosenthal's "last trump" of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52) is really a period of 21 months, rather than a trumpet occurring at a specific point in time, which signals the event of the Rapture. He views the "trump of God" associated with the event of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52) as a more general trumpet sound heard and experienced throughout Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week which encompasses all seven trumpets.

There is a serious flaw in Rosenthal's theory. The "last trump" of the Rapture found in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is instantaneous; it occurs "in a moment," to use Paul's own words. This means there is no exegetical basis for connecting the last trump with the long, drawn-out process of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, the seven trumpets. Nor is there any reason to assume that the trumpet at the Rapture is connected with "the final outpouring of God's wrath" as Rosenthal assumes (pp. 131-132). No wrath is mentioned in any Rapture passages dealing with the Church's departure. Furthermore, there is simply no Biblical basis for the prewrath view that concludes

“the last trump/trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16) is the same phenomena as “the end of the age” (Mat. 13:40) that Jesus spoke about.

So essentially, Rosenthal makes the trumpet of Joel 2:1, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, and the seven trumpets (Rev. 8-9; 11:15) all the same “last trump” (1 Cor. 15:52) which in some way is also related to Paul’s teaching concerning the Rapture. In some unbeknown and mysterious way, the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) aligns with the “trump of God” (1 Cor. 15:52) and is lumped together as a generalized trumpet sound. This begs the question. Would anyone arrive at such a conclusion if he did not approach all these texts with a preconceived eschatology?

It’s very clear that the trumpet of First Corinthians and First Thessalonians are obviously the same for both result in the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living saints (1 Cor. 15:52-1 Thess. 4:16-17). These trumpet blasts result in blessings for all the Church Age saints. The trumpet of Joel 2:1 is a trumpet blown by men as a warning to Israel of impending judgment and doom – not blessing.

Joel 2:1

“Blow ye the trumpet (ram’s horn) in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is nigh* at hand.”

The “day of the LORD” has both a near and far (prophetic view) in this passage and context. But Rosenthal would have us believe that this is the one and same trumpet which is collectively combined together to symbolize the Rapture trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Of course, this is a case of severe eisegesis for it forces the mystery about the Rapture of the Church (1 Cor. 15:51) back into the Old Testament apocalyptic literature of the Day of the LORD. But the truth about the “mystery” associated with the Rapture and its trumpet call cannot possibly be found in the Old Testament. This runs contrary to the nature of mystery revelation taught in the epistles which refers to sacred secrets previously unknown and unrevealed to the prophets and not seen in Old Testament revelation.

In addition, just a casual reading reveals that the trumpets in the book of Revelation are blown by angels, resulting only in judgment upon all humanity without any

blessing associated with any of them. But Paul's trumpet sounds are only associated with blessing for the saints (resurrection, rapture, reward). Of course, Paul was very specific about his "last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52) by preceding it with a definite article ("the last trump"). This signifies it is a singular trumpet and cannot refer to all 7 trumpets lumped together as a whole as Rosenthal suggests. Making the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15 retroactive to the "trump of God" in the Rapture is extremely strained and sloppy exegesis. Nobody would ever come to this conclusion without a preconceived bias.

Rosenthal misreads the 1 Corinthians 15:52 text and keeps citing Paul as saying that the "Rapture occurs before the last trump." Actually, Paul states "at the last trump" - not before the last trump, as Rosenthal would have it. Again, he must reconstruct the text to get the Church into the Tribulation Period and be raptured at the seventh seal.

1 Corinthians 15:52 says this about the Rapture trump:

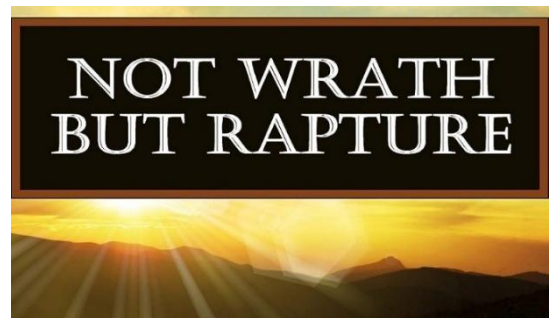
"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The Bible teaches that upon the last trump, after a series of trumpet sounds, the Church will be snatched from planet earth to meet the Lord in the air. The great catching away and disappearance of God's saints will occur "with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4:16). But this "trump of God" occurs before the seven years as Paul clearly reveals and outlines in the next chapter of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath (*the wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period as Jesus taught*), but to obtain salvation (*deliverance via Rapture*) by our Lord Jesus Christ."

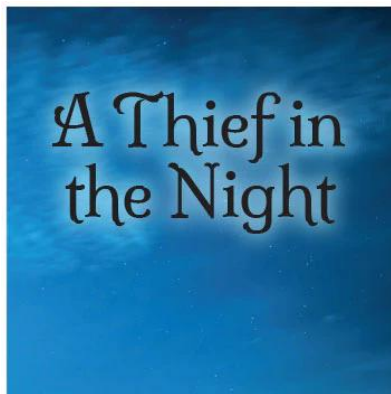
Paul is clearly teaching that the Church will not enter the time of God's wrath (Day of the Lord – the seven years of tribulation over the earth) but will be delivered from God's wrath through the event of the Rapture, rescued or "delivered from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10). The natural understanding and order of Paul's eschatological teaching is that the Rapture of chapter four occurs before the wrath presented in chapter 5 and that the Church is totally exempt from the seven



years of wrath which will arrive on earth following the Rapture. You will also notice there is a trumpet sound in chapter 4 associated with the event of the Rapture but no trumpet sound signaling God's wrath during the Tribulation Period in chapter 5. Again, to somehow link the trumpet sounds of the book of Revelation with the trumpet sound of the Rapture is a failed attempt to blend together two different events which occur at different times. The prewrathers analysis is subjective and not objective in nature.

1 Thessalonians 5:4 states:

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."



Rosenthal's treatment and exegesis of this text is very sloppy. He reads into it words and concepts which are not there and ignores the actual wording of the text. Rosenthal assumes "that day" mentioned in this verse is a reference to the Rapture and therefore claims the Rapture cannot be an imminent event for Paul taught the Rapture *would not* overtake the believers as a thief in the night. In other words, he reasons that if the Rapture is imminent then the Rapture *would* overtake

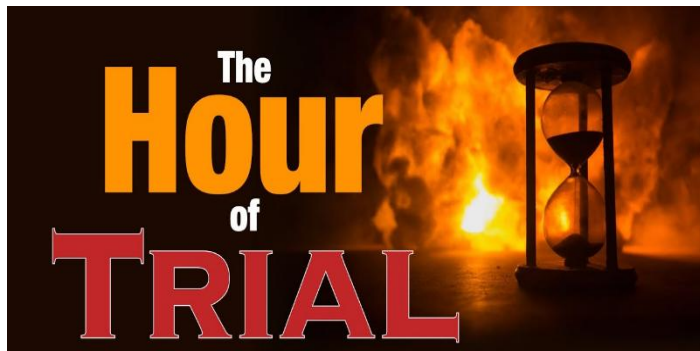
the saints as a thief in the night. According to Rosenthal, this means the saints will know and be prepared for the general time of the Rapture/Second Coming which he claims will occur with the opening of seventh seal just prior to the beginning of God's wrath.

Or course, Rosenthal's great blunder in this section of Scripture is that he identifies "that day" as the Rapture when Paul is referring to the Day of the Lord. Paul dealt with the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and introduced a new subject in 1 Thessalonians 5:1 as the expression "But of" (Greek - "de peri") shows. The new subject is the Day of the Lord, or the Tribulation Period, and "that day" will not overtake the believer. The reason is given why the Day of the Lord (not the Rapture) cannot overtake the saints. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 states: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath" (the believers). In context the wrath of 1 Thessalonians 5:9 is the Day of the Lord as stated in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 ("For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night"). Because the wrath of God is not for the believer the believer is removed before the Day of the Lord occurs. This means the believers removal is by the Rapture of 4:13-18.



Rosenthal also insists that *“Biblically, no extended period of time can separate the two events of rapture and wrath.”* He arrives at this conclusion so he can deny an imminent return of Christ in the Rapture by assuming (he makes a lot of assumptions!) that the Rapture must occur at a specific time, at the seventh seal, without any time gap between the Rapture and the commencement of God’s wrath. His basis is to use the analogy of Noah, claiming that *“on the very day that Noah entered the ark, God's judgment fell.”*

Actually, Matthew 24:36-39 makes no such statement. It is a Bible fact that seven days intervened between Noah entering the ark and the beginning of the 40 days of rain (*“after seven days”* - Gen. 7:10), so there can be a period of time between the Rapture and the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation Period as well. Daniel's 70th week actually begins with the Antichrist signing a firm covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27) which certainly means there will be a period of time (a gap) that exists between the Rapture and the commencement of the Day of the Lord. As the Day of the Lord begins peace will be in the air but then suddenly the wrath of God begins to be poured out on earth. *“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape”* (1 Thess. 5:3).



Rosenthal then deals with Revelation 3:10 and once again interprets this prophetic text on the basis of supposition and not exegesis. He concludes that his view is already assumed to be true. He accuses others of not using a literal hermeneutic, but this is exactly what he does.

Revelation 3:10 declares:

*“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”*

Rosenthal writes:

*“A number of salient points must be made. First, God has promised the Church of Philadelphia that those who keep the word of His patience He will keep from the*



hour of temptation. (To apply the promise given to the Church of Philadelphia to all Christendom is to interpret the Scriptures nonliterally. It is only the Church of Philadelphia which is promised exemption from the hour of temptation.)

“But there is no known or prophesied adversity for the days immediately prior to the seventieth week of Daniel, and if there is, the Rapture cannot be imminent. If the rapture occurs pretribulationally, there is no sense in which the believer can be said to be keeping the word of His patience, to be enduring in the midst of the adversity. There is no reason or logic for that concept.

“If, on the other hand, Revelation 3:10 describes an event in the *middle* of the 70th week, it makes perfect sense. The promise of exemption from the hour of testing is given by the Lord only to those who, in His words, ‘have kept the word of my patience (that is, who have faithfully endured during the adversity of the first three and on-half years). They are exemplified by the Church of Philadelphia ... no such exemption is promised to the other six churches” (p. 237).

“The phrase ‘I also will keep you from the hour of temptation’ in Revelation 3:10 is not a watershed verse to determine the timing of the Rapture. It has nothing whatever to do with the timing of the Rapture. It deals with the Great Tribulation and holds out the promise - the glorious promise - that a remnant who have stayed true to the Lord during the first three and one-half years will be kept from the temptation of the Great Tribulation which will try the souls of men under the barbaric reign of the Antichrist. It is following the Great Tribulation that the Rapture and the Day of the Lord will occur (pp. 239-241).”

In his comments Rosenthal builds one error on top of another, creating a prophetic dilemma. First, if Rosenthal follows a strict literal approach, as he declares, then he would have to limit the promise given to the Church of Philadelphia to believers living in modern day Turkey since the original Philadelphia church has long disappeared. A visitor would be hard pressed to find an evangelical church in Philadelphia today. So much for his wooden literalism! This means the promise originally given to Philadelphia was not limited to just the original church but the saints who would be living at the time of the Rapture. In addition, the promises that are given to all the saints as overcomers apply to all the saints of all time during the Church Age. For instance, does not the other promises given to the Church of

Philadelphia apply to all Church Age saints such as possessing a place in God's temple and a receiving a new name (Rev. 3:12)?

Rosenthal contradicts himself in his summary above by straining to prove his point and ignoring all the obvious implications of Revelation 3:10 which teaches that Church Age saints are exempt from the "the hour of trial" (the seven-year Tribulation Period) that is about to fall upon the entire earth and which is detailed in Revelation 6-18, a section where the Church is not mentioned once despite of it being frequently mentioned in the first three chapters. His statement that "there is no known or prophesied adversity ... immediately prior" to the 70th week is not true for during the time of the churches there was persecution ("I know thy works, and tribulation" - Rev. 2:9) which means the Church was promised persecution and adversity throughout its history. Adversity is seen early in church history as the book of Acts unfolds (2 Tim. 3:12).

So Rosenthal claims the adversity being described is that of believers living during the first half of the seven-year Tribulation and a protective exemption from the shortened period of the Great Tribulation which occurs prior to the Rapture. Obviously, he throws away a literal interpretation at this point (according to his own thinking), for what he is now saying is not limited to only the Church of Philadelphia but all the saints. But it gets even worse. He violates the simple chronology of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:19) and inserts the events described in Revelation 3:10 to cover the first half of the seven years, with the exemption coming in the middle of the seven years (the Great Tribulation), which is then followed by the Rapture occurring in 8:1 at the seventh seal.

Of course, there is simply no exegetical ground to force Revelation 3:10 into the first three and one-half years, the Great Tribulation (second half), and then make the Rapture occur at Revelation 8:1 (three quarters of the way through the Tribulation Period). Only by presupposing his position on this text can Rosenthal arrive at such a grandiose conclusion. Rosenthal's reasoning is anything but a natural interpretation of the text which involved transporting Revelation 3:10 to events that will occur during the first and second half of the Tribulation Period.

Rosenthal's shallow exegesis breaks down. Many saints who keep the faith will die throughout the Tribulation Period (Rev. 11:7; 13:7; 14:13; 16:6; 17:6; 20:4) which would make the promise of Revelation 3:10 meaningless if it applied to exemption

from the Great Tribulation. Believers living during the Tribulation have no such promise of safety.

As Charles Ryrie observes:

"If the church will not be raptured before the hour begins, then the promise will not be fulfilled because many saints simply will not be preserved in the tribulation but will suffer and die along with unsaved people" (Revelation, 1996, p. 34),

Only by a pretribulation Rapture can all the saints become exempt from the hour of trial (adversity) that will fall upon planet earth which is a key promise given to the overcomers in Christ within the seven churches. **Promises made – promises kept! Kept from the hour!** The overcomers who are in Christ (1 Jn. 5:4) will be raptured prior to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (God's wrath) as outlined and revealed in Revelation 6-18. Therefore, Church Age saints can claim this promise given to them. Rosenthal's biased Scripture twisting to support his alleged prewrath theory will not change God's promise.

One of the bones of contention of Rosenthal is that the Holy Spirit cannot be the Restrainer mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. With annoying dogmatism he therefore makes the outlandish claim that the restrainer in 2 Thessalonians is Michael the archangel which supposedly militates against a pretribulation



Rapture. Instead, Michael is supposedly the one restraining evil until Christ comes to rapture the saints before the Day of the Lord begins (2 Thess. 2:1-2) at the commencement of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1).

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

"And now ye know what withholdeth (*restrains – katecho; neuter*) that he might be revealed in his time (*the Antichrist*). For the mystery of iniquity (*lawlessness*) doth already work: only he who now letteth (*restrains – katecho; masculine*) will let, until he be taken out of the way."

Rosenthal and proponents of the prewrath view limit the restraining ministry to Michael's protection over Israel based upon Daniel 12:1 which concludes: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Rosenthal comments:

"...of paramount importance is the identification of the one who restrains or hinders the Antichrist until 'he [the restrainer] be taken out of the way.' The restrainer is neither the Holy Spirit nor human government. Evidence is strained to support either of those contentions. There is, however, substantial evidence to identify the restrainer. He who restrains until 'he be taken out of the way' is the Archangel Michael" (p. 112).

Rosenthal's goal is to place the restraining work of Michael during the Tribulation Period in order to protect Israel from the Antichrist. This conclusion keeps the Restrainer from representing the Holy Spirit (the primary pretribulation interpretation) whose ministry is essentially pretribulational in nature, holding back "the apostasy" (the religious departure of Antichrist) from occurring on earth until the Rapture occurs. To make the withholding or restraining ministry refer to Michael the archangel, which occurs during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, allegedly opens the door for the Church to pass through three fourths of the Tribulation, including a shortened version of the Great Tribulation, since the Holy Spirit is not the Restrainer and therefore will not be "taken out of the way" with the Rapture of the Church prior to the Tribulation.

Marvin Rosenthal asserts that it is clear that the Restrainer is neither human government nor the Holy Spirit (p. 260). Rosenthal claimed the issue is not crucial to his view. However, it appears to matter to prewrathers given their attention to this point. Prewrath adherents claim that Michael the Restrainer is removed at the midpoint of the 70th week after protecting Israel from the Antichrist.

There are several reasons why the Restrainer is a reference to the Holy Spirit and not Michael the archangel.

First, Michael's responsibility during the End Times is to protect Israel (one nation) but the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is designed to protect the entire world from total apostasy or lawlessness from occurring on a universal scale.

Second, the Restrainer is referred to in both a neuter gender (what) and a masculine gender (he). The idea is that something is happening on earth, and someone is working to keep universal apostasy from occurring, a distinct form of apostasy from all previous apostasy, a sudden apostasy that will come upon the earth, apostasy in its absolute and final sense (total abandonment and rebellion).

Here is the point. This mix of genders appears in relation to the specific work and person of the Holy Spirit. However, the Greek word translated "archangel" is only masculine in gender which indicates a different person is in view in the prophetic text of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7.

Renald Showers conveys this:

"Earlier, we noted that the restrainer in 2nd Thessalonians 2 is described by a neuter gender participle in verse six ("what withholdeth") and the masculine gender participle in verse seven ("he who now letteth"). In line with this twofold description, the New Testament Greek word for the Spirit (pneuma) is neuter, and the New Testament also uses Greek masculine words (translated 'he' and 'him') to refer to the Spirit. For example, that combination is found in Christ's statements about the spirit in John 14:26; 15:26. and 16:13-14).

"Because the Bible signifies that the Holy Spirit functions as a restrainer of lawlessness, and because neuter and masculine words are used for the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2 and the Holy Spirit, we can conclude that a biblical basis does exist for identifying the Holy Spirit as the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2."

Third, the Restrainer's restraining work is stopped when the Restrainer is "taken out of the way" (2 Thess. 2:7) and then the Antichrist is revealed (2 Thess. 2:8). In contrast to the prewrath view, Michael's restraining work is stopped by his "standing still" (Dan. 12:1) in the middle of the Tribulation Period. It is not stopped by him being "taken out of the way" which confirms this is referring to a different event at a different time (not the middle of the Tribulation) by a different Restrainer (the Holy Spirit). It refers to the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit prior to the

start of Danile's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the seven years), holding back total or full-blown apostasy from occurring on earth.

Fourth, it is also said that the Restrainer "now restrains" and will continue to do so before the Rapture and prior to the revelation of Antichrist and the future climax of apostasy. In other words, the restraining work ends with the Rapture which is followed by the revelation of Antichrist – not while Antichrist is in power - "And then shall that Wicked be revealed" (2 Thess. 2:8). The Restrainer with His restraining work occurs *before* Antichrist appears on the world scene. Since the man of sin has not yet been revealed, this can only reference the revelation of the Holy Spirit as the Restrainer who has been effectively suppressing the revelation of the Man of Sin for over 2000 years.

Paul is talking about the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit occurring today through the Church (changed lives), *prior to Antichrist's revelation* – not the protection that Michael grants for Israel *during the Tribulation* when Antichrist is in power. Therefore, the Restrainer cannot be referring to Michael protecting Israel during Antichrist's reign of persecution but the Holy Spirit's reign of restraining sinful apostasy through indwelling the Church, keeping total lawlessness from occurring, stopping it from completely overtaking the world prior to the Rapture and revelation of Antichrist.

Of course, identifying the Restrainer as the Holy Spirit damages the prewrath position. This is because it promotes a pretribulation Rapture of the Church with the Holy Spirit holding back the commencement of Antichrist apostasy and worship (the satanically empowered movement), keeping it from starting on earth through His indwelling presence of the Church (1 Cor. 6:19), until Church Age saints are raptured from planet earth. Therefore, Rosenthal must resort to the far-fetched notion that Michael during the Tribulation Period is the restraining influence holding back Antichrist's persecution upon Israel (one nation).

His straining at a gnat, as Jesus taught, is seen in the following statement:

"The identification of Michael as the restrainer is by no means a new and novel idea. Michael is mentioned at the as the restrainer of Satan and the forces of evil as early as the first or second century AD in Greek magical papyri" (p. 260-261).

Arnold Fruchtenbaum makes a valid point and contribution:

“For historical validity, all Rosenthal can do is cite Greek magical papyri, hardly a great source for sound theology! One is tempted to jump off the stage of scholarship and scream, ‘Oh come on, Marvin, is this the best you can do!?!’ Rosenthal also resorts to a non-lexical meaning for a Hebrew word to try to prove his point, and quotes a rabbi who frequently played with the Hebrew text for his own ends. This was the same rabbi who interpreted Isaiah 53 as speaking of the nation of Israel and not the Messiah! He is hardly a trustworthy exegete. Rosenthal resorts to this, because the lexicons do not support him.”

Fifth, the Bible signifies that the Holy Spirit functions as a restrainer of lawlessness,

Genesis 6:3

“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”

The Holy Spirit strove with lawless mankind in the days before the Noachic Flood. The Hebrew word used for “strive” means to govern and embodies the idea of restraining or governing.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 goes on to say:

Let no man deceive you by any means: *for that day shall not come (be present), except there come a falling away first (a departure from ethical norms), and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*”

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 then goes on to say:

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

Rosenthal and Rosenthalites (prewrathers who follow his aberrant teachings) want us to believe that the Day of the Lord (the expression of God’s wrath) begins *after* the Tribulation Period begins, which according to their thinking, occurs immediately after the shortened version of the Great Tribulation occurs. They suggest that this is actually Israel’s apostasy (the Jewish abandonment of the God of Abraham, Issacc and Jacob) which begins with the signing of the covenant with Antichrist (Dan. 9:27) and continues on through the first four seals (the entire first

half of the Tribulation) and part of the second half (the Great Tribulation – the fifth and sixth seals) just prior to the commencement of the Day of the Lord (the seventh seal). In other words, the Day of the Lord cannot begin, says the prewrather, until Antichrist is revealed, and Israel’s apostasy occurs during the Tribulation Period.

Renald Showers correctly reacts to this errant position:

“In neither 2 Thessalonians 2 nor any other biblical writing did Paul state that the apostasy would be Jewish in nature or that it would begin with the establishment of a covenant relationship.”

Prewrathers must have the apostasy occur *before* the Day of the Lord begins (at the seventh seal) and therefore associate the apostasy with Israel who is living during the Tribulation Period instead of the Holy Spirit restraining sin before the Rapture occurs (the pretribulation position). Of course, Paul was not teaching the apostasy (Antichrist apostasy) must occur *before* the Day of the Lord begins but that it would occur *during* the Day of the Lord, and this is proof that the Day of the Lord was not “at hand” (2 Thess. 2:2). In other words, they were not living during the period known as the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period) as some were suggesting.

While we see global preparations for this apostasy today, it has not arrived. This apostasy is already at work in seed form (“the mystery of iniquity doth already work” – 2 Thess. 2:7) but this certainly is not only applicable to the nation of Israel (the Jews) today but is true within the context of the entire earth. This is the way it will be during the End Times when the final Satanically inspired and distinct apostasy of Antichrist worship (the departure) is suddenly pushed upon all mankind on a universal scale (Rev. 13:11-18). It’s clear that Paul was arguing that the Thessalonians could not be living during the time of the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period) since the Restraining work of the Spirit was still occurring (holding back the full explosion of evil) and because Antichrist had not been revealed.

So Paul confirmed to the Thessalonians that they were not living during the period known as the Day of the Lord as some would-be prophecy teachers were suggesting for “*that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*” (1 Thess. 2:3). To comfort and clarify the confusion of the Thessalonians, Paul made it clear that 1) the restrainer of lawlessness had not yet been removed, and 2) the man of sin had not yet been



revealed. Obviously, since the Rapture and onset of the Day of the Lord wrath had not come, the Thessalonians could once again be comforted by “the blessed hope” of an imminent Rapture (Tit. 2:13).

Randall Price remarks:

“The problems of that day, like those of today, were fueled by the sensational claims of various prophecy teachers who caused the Thessalonian believers in Christ to fear that they had already entered the terrible time of God's wrath called the tribulation second (2 Thess. 2:1-2) and, therefore, had missed the deliverance promised through the Rapture of the church (1 Th. 5:4, 9).”

Paul is actually teaching the Thessalonians that the apostasy (a religious departure) would take place on a worldwide scale and that this specific apostasy would occur chronologically in conjunction with the revelation of the Man of Sin *within* the Day of the Lord (*not before it begins as prewrathers suggest*). He was teaching that the Church could not have possibly entered the Day of the Lord as some were teaching because the revelation and worship of Antichrist had not yet begun with the final abandonment of God during the End Times. “Let no man deceive you” (2 Thess. 2:3).

Sadly, prewrathers place the Church in the Day of Lord (even through they conclude they do not) when God’s wrath is being meted out upon earth. The result is that many within the Church today are being deceived by this false teaching. “Let no man deceive you.” A man might write books on the End Times and be well-known, but no man should lead us astray and away from the blessed hope “to wait for his Son from heaven,” to eagerly anticipate Christ’s imminent return to rescue His children “from the wrath to come” which is the seven-year Tribulation Period or the prophetic Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:10).

Contrary to what he assumes, Rosenthal’s conclusions are confusing, strained, unbiblical, far-fetched and he therefore forces an interpretation to support his imaginary thesis that the Rapture will occur at the beginning of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1). Of course, there is absolutely no evidence that the Church will be raptured just prior to the seventh seal. If this is the case, why isn’t the Rapture mentioned here? Furthermore, there is no exegetical basis to conclude that the wrath of God only begins during the seventh seal. All of this is wishful and unbiblical thinking.

Throughout his book Rosenthal links together prophetic texts which do not refer to the same time and event. He ignores the general consensus of Greek scholars, creating word games and scenarios with God's prophetic word which are designed to confuse and complicate the obvious meanings and teachings of Scripture. It appears he wants to get the saints lost in his maze of arguments and prophetic word salads. In a chapter entitled "The prewrath Rapture: Why This View Now?," Rosenthal basically views himself as being part of the fulfillment of the Daniel 12:4 prophecy that knowledge will be increased in the last days. He concludes that his view is a fulfillment of this prophecy (pp. 276-278). Again, this is unmitigated arrogance and just one more example of his boasting which he does throughout his book. Actually, the knowledge will occur during the Tribulation Period and be given to saints who are alive during this future time. One can be sure Danile 12:4 is not a direct fulfillment of the brilliance of Marvin Rosenthal!

Rosenthal also attempts to find the event of the Rapture in Daniel 12:1-3 where there is no Rapture (pp. 267-268). These are Old Testament saints being resurrected – not Church Age saints. Pathetically and non-exegetically, Rosenthal tries to insert the Church in the Old Testament, which violates the nature of its mystery revelation (Eph. 3) while at the same time brags that he has special knowledge which is only promised to those who are alive during the time of Daniel's 70th week. Daniel was not prophesying of the saints living during the Church Age but those who would be alive during the seven-year Tribulation Period and how knowledge would be increased as they study and see events unfolding predicted in the book of Revelation.

**8. The Rapture is not seen in Matthew 24 since the Olivet Discourse relates to the Second Coming of Christ to earth – not the Rapture.**

The prewrather argues that the events of Christ's Second Coming in Matthew 24:30-31 describe the same event of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. Therefore, they conclude that they are one and the same and combine the two prophetic returns of Christ. This is a consistent interpretive tactic employed by the prewrath advocates. Once they have concluded that the Olivet Discourse includes the Rapture of the Church, they compare passages from the epistles of Paul, looking for parallels between his writing and Matthew 24. They then offer various charts and graphs to validate their contention that Jesus and Paul were speaking of the same series of events, in the same order, essentially the same way. Then, satisfied

that the Olivet Discourse proves that the Rapture and the Day of the Lord happen concurrently (simultaneously), they read that assumption into their arguments concerning the Thessalonian letters (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:7).

Jesus recorded in Matthew 24:29-31:

“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.”

This event clearly explains the Second Coming and not the Rapture. Matthew is dealing with Daniel’s people in Matthew 24 (the Jews – not the Church) and their treatment during the Tribulation Period before the Second Coming of Christ to earth occurs. When Christ does return to earth the unsaved, as in the days of Noah, are taken to judgment and the saved will enter the Millennium (Matt. 24:36-41). The fundamental hermeneutical challenge of the prewrather is to demonstrate contextually how Matthew 24:29–31 can refer to the posttribulational Second Coming of Christ to earth (“after the tribulation of those days”), while Matthew 24:36–44 can allegedly depict the prewrath Rapture of the Church several years earlier.

Just a cursory glance at these prophetic texts would lead the exegete of Scripture to see that Matthew 24:29-31 and 24:36-44 are the same event and have nothing to do with the Rapture but the Second Coming of Christ to earth, the Jewish people, the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet, and the Jewish persecution during this specific time period (Matt. 24:15-28). Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week has no relation to the Church but with Daniel’s people (“thy people” – Dan. 9:24) who are the Jews. The events of the Olivet Discourse are Jewish in nature (“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel” - Matt. 24:15) and have no reference to the Church.

In order to have the Church in the Tribulation Period the prewrather must assume that the “elect” is a reference to Church Age saints. There are two main difficulties with this view.

First, the Church is missing in Matthew 24.

Ron Graff correctly argues:

“The fact is, when Jesus gave His explanation of future events, known as the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 and 25), the Church had just been announced (Matthew 16:13-18), but it's composition and destiny, including the Rapture, was still a mystery. This information would later be revealed to the Apostle Paul. If Christ had discussed the course of the Church age and the Rapture, it would have been very confusing to the disciples at that time.”

In other words, Jesus is not inserting a detailed analysis of Pauline Church truth here, something which would be taught in the later epistles.

Robert Lightner adds this:

“The prewrath Rapture view is different from the normal pretribulational view in that it does not consistently distinguish between God’s program with Israel and His program with the Church.”

Of course, the way it differs is that it has the Church in Israel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 9:24-27) and the “time of Jacob’s trouble” or distress (Jer. 30:7). Therefore, it must find the Church during the Tribulation Period under the disguise of the “elect” which is actually referencing Israel and the tribulation saints.

Second, the whole premise that the “elect” is a reference to the Church and not Israel is a misconception. Jesus was specifically speaking about the Jewish people who would be living during the future Tribulation Period and how they would suffer at the hands of the Antichrist. He references his Jewish “disciples” (Matt. 24:1) and follows through with personal pronouns that relate to the Jewish people and gives examples of Jewish persecution (Matt. 24:1, 4, 9, 13, 15-25, 34). But a crucial argument for the pre wrath rapture is the contention that the elect in the Olivet Discourse Matthew 24:22, 24, 31 is the Church. However, it’s clear that Jesus was relating His elect people to His Jewish disciples as the entire context of Matthew 24 reveals.

## PRONOUNS!

Christ's words in the Olive Discourse were extended toward His Jewish disciples. The pronouns "them" (Matt. 24:2, 4), "ye" (Matt. 24:6), "you" (Matt. 24:9), "ye" (Matt. 24:15) "your" (Matt. 24:20) relate back to His initial conversion with His Jewish disciples (Matt. 24:1-2) who are then identified as the elect or the Jewish remnant of the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:22, 24, 31). It's hermeneutically, grammatically, and dispensationally impossible to relate the "elect" to the Church when Jesus was talking to His Jewish disciples who were not part of the Church. To conclude that the Church is in Matthew 24 is wrongly dividing the Word of truth.

Rosenthal again concludes: "Not once in the New Testament is Israel ever called the elect" to support his theory that the Church is found in Matthew 24. But just a cursory glance in Matthew 24 reveals that it's Israel who is God's elect – not the Church (Rom. 11:28). Of course, the context determines whether the elect is referring to Israel or the Church. Again, terms such as the "gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 24:14), "the holy place" (Matt. 24:15), and "the Sabbath" (Matt. 24:20) indicate that Israel as a nation is in view as God's elect. Once the epistles are written the term elect will describe the Church.

Jesus taught in Matthew 24:16-21:

**"Then let them (*the Jewish people*) which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight (*the Jews*) be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day (*the Jewish sabbath*): For then shall be great tribulation (*the second half of the Tribulation Period*), such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."**

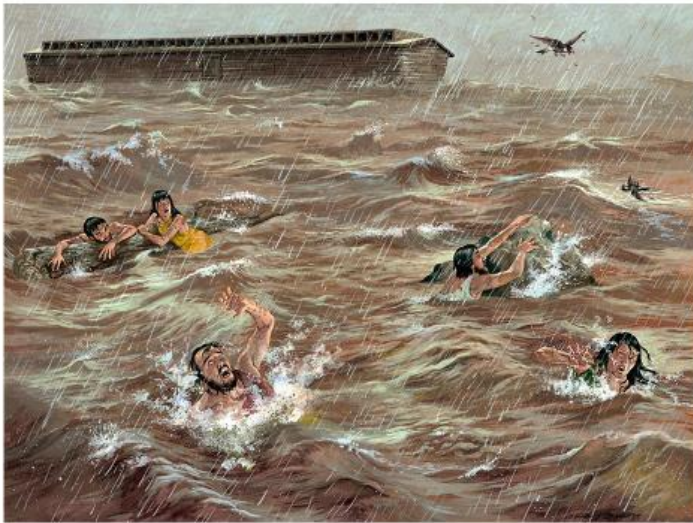
The context of the Second Coming focuses on delivering the persecuted Jewish people – not rescuing the Church from the hands of the Antichrist. Since this is true, then how could Jesus be referring to the Rapture of New Testament saints in this chapter? The Church is not mentioned in Matthew 24, and neither is the Rapture because the Church will not experience the wrath of the Tribulation Period (1 Thess.

5:1-3). The Church is looking for Christ – not the Antichrist (“we look for the Saviour – Phil. 3:20). Matthew 24 is a Jewish and Tribulation context that has nothing whatsoever to do with Church truth or the experience of Church saints.

Dr. Gaebelien correctly states:

“It is impossible to find a place for the Church in this prophecy.”

There is no place or trace of the Church in Matthew 24! The prewrath position has the Church being raptured in Matthew 24:37-42. The prewrather confuses those *taken* and those *left* in Matthew 24 in order to force the Rapture of the Church into the context of the Tribulation Period before the Day of the Lord’s wrath begins (Rev. 8:1). The Church must be placed in Matthew 24 (the Tribulation Period) to support the prewrath position which essentially concludes that the Church will be raptured three-quarters of the way through the Tribulation Period. However, Matthew 24:37-42 is a reference to Christ’s Second Coming to earth – not the Rapture.

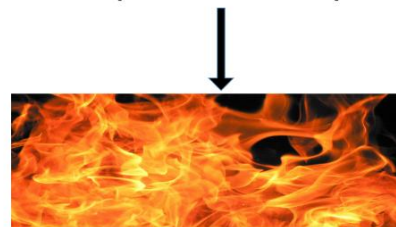


Jesus taught in Matthew 24:37-42: “**But as the days of Noe were** (the days on earth prior to the Genesis Flood), **so shall also the coming of the Son of man be** (the Second Coming of Christ to earth). **For as in the days that were before the flood** (the days on earth before the Second Coming will mirror or be similar to the days of Noah before the Genesis

Flood) **they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage** (going about their daily living and ignoring God), **until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away** (the unsaved people on earth were swept away into the global judgment of the Genesis Flood); **so shall also the coming of the Son of man be** (the same analogy can be applied to Christ’s Second Coming to earth).

**“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken (the unsaved are taken away to judgment as the earth dwellers were judged during Noah’s day), and the other left (the saved are left to enter the Millennial Kingdom as Noah and his family were spared to enter the new world that followed the Genesis Flood). **Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken (the unsaved will be raptured by angelic assistance to the place of judgment – Hades – Matt. 13:41-42, 49-40; 25:31-33, 41), and the other left (the saved shall remain on earth to inhabit the earthly kingdom or Millennium – Matt. 13:43; 24:31; 25:31-34). **Watch therefore (be alert and ready – preparedness is equivalent to salvation): for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come”** (there is a need to be saved and therefore spiritually prepared to meet the Messiah in His Second Coming, for judgment will come at a time when people least expect it).****

Many pretribulationists and also prewrathers who are at opposite ends of the pole in relation to the prophetic timing of the Rapture have applied these specific verses to the Rapture (the saved Church Age saints being raptured to Heaven). However, Matthew 24:37-42 is actually teaching a *reversal of the Rapture*. In the blessed hope of the Rapture the *saved* are taken away and transported back to Heaven (John 14:1-3) but at the Second Coming the *unsaved* are raptured away to a place of judgment which is identified elsewhere as Hades.



Jesus already taught about this judgment in Matthew 13:41-43 and uses the same analogy of the unsaved being raptured or taken away to judgment at His Second Coming: **“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom (prior to its inception or official establishment) all things that offend, and them which do iniquity (the unsaved will be gathered and taken away to judgment as next explained); And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing (the unsaved will be raptured or transported to Hades**



*which is the place of temporary judgment until the Lake of Fire – Luke 16:23). Then shall the righteous (the saved) shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (the earthly Messianic Kingdom). Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Matthew 13:49-50 adds:

**“So shall it be at the end of the world (the pre-Messianic Age): the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just (the rapture or taking away of the unsaved), And shall cast them into the furnace of fire (the temporary place of judgment called Hades): there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (expressions of pain and anger in the judgment of Hades).**

Again, we are dealing with a *reversal of the Rapture* in these texts of Scripture where the unsaved are raptured or taken to judgment.

## Raptured (taken) to Judgment by Angels at Second Coming



This certainly cannot be referring to the rapture of Church Age saints because they go up to Heaven and not down to Hades. But Rosenthal reverses the teaching of these texts of Scripture to integrate an alleged prewrath Rapture in Matthew 24.



Matthew 25:31-34 reveals the same rapture to judgment scenario:

**“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory (*the Second Coming*): And before him shall be gathered all nations (“ethnos” = *Gentile nations who survive the Tribulation Period in contrast to the previous Jewish severance and judgment of Matthew 24-25:1-30*): and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep (*the saved*) on his right hand, but the goats (*the unsaved*) on the left. Then shall the King (*the returning Messiah*) say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom (*the promised earthly kingdom*) prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”**

Like Matthew 24, Matthew 25 is placed in the context of Christ’s return in His Second Coming and the establishment of His “kingdom” over the earth. These events occur seven years after the Rapture (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 3:10). The Bible does not teach that the Church is raptured to enter the earthly kingdom but is raptured and transported back to Heaven to live with Christ for seven years (John 14:1-3).

Matthew 25:41 concludes the judgment analogy at the Second Coming:

**“Then shall he (*the King*) say also unto them on the left hand (*the unsaved*), Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (*the severing of the unsaved wicked from the saved, prior to the Millennium, taking away the unsaved into Hades which begins their eternal torment*).**

It should be very clear to the Bible interpreter that Jesus was not describing the Rapture in any of the related passages in Matthew 13 or 24-25 since the removal of the Church will not be a judgment on the Church. In every instance, Jesus taught that in His Second Coming it will be the *unsaved* that are raptured, removed, and who experience His retribution or judgment, and it is the *saved* who remain on earth to enter the Millennium. We should not mix Rapture with Second Coming Scriptures nor kingdom truth with Church truth. But this is exactly what the prewrather does with his interpretive approach to Matthew 24-25.

According to Matthew 25:31-46, there will be a judgment of "sheep" and "goats" based on how people treat Israel (“the least of these my brethren” – Matt. 25:40). In the pretribulation and Biblical understanding of this prophetic passage, surviving

Gentile believers of the Tribulation period will qualify as the "sheep" who assist the Jews. However, in the prewrath view, all Gentile believers would have been taken at the Rapture and only a remnant from Israel itself would become believers at the very end. It is difficult to imagine that these new Jewish converts could be the "sheep" who acted kindly toward Israel during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (the Tribulation Period). These "end of the age" passages are difficult for the prewrath position because this view does not allow for a large number of believers at the end of the age, which according to most prewrathers, occurs at the Rapture/Second coming in conjunction with the seventh seal.

I've prepared a chart to show clearly marked differences between the two passages related to the event of the Rapture and the Second Coming.

<b>RAPTURE</b> (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18)	<b>VERSUS</b>	<b>SECOND COMING</b> (Matthew 24:29-41)
<b>DIFFERENT EVENTS DESCRIBED IN THESE PASSAGES</b>		
<b>Does not occur after the Tribulation</b>		<b>"Immediately after the Tribulation"</b>
<b>Church saints united with resurrected bodies</b>		<b>Church saints not united with resurrected bodies</b>
<b>Church Age Saints meeting Christ in the air</b>		<b>Elect (Israel) not meeting Christ in the air</b>
<b>Shout</b>		<b>No shout</b>
<b>Church "caught up" in clouds</b>		<b>Elect (Israel) gathered but not caught up in clouds</b>
<b>Return of "Jesus"</b>		<b>Return of the "Son of Man"</b>
<b>Instantaneously - "in a moment"</b>		<b>Not instantaneous</b>
<b>No reference to a sign or cosmic signs</b>		<b>The sign of the Son of Man and cosmic signs</b>
<b>No mourning</b>		<b>Mourning</b>
<b>No tribes witnessing His coming</b>		<b>Tribes witnessing His return</b>
<b>One archangel (no group)</b>		<b>Angels (plural)</b>
<b>No gathering from the four winds</b>		<b>Elect (Israel) gathered from the four winds</b>
<b>Trump of God</b>		<b>Sound of a great trumpet</b>
<b>"Caught up in the clouds"</b>		<b>"Coming in the clouds of heaven"</b>
<b>Raptured to Heaven to meet the Lord</b>		<b>Taken to judgment as in days of Noah</b>
<b>Comfort</b>		<b>No comfort</b>

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

These differences are too great to ignore. The differences should prevent the expositor from blending together the events of the Rapture and Second Coming as the prewrathers and posttribulationists do. They are not the same event but two different returns focusing on different purposes, and which occur at different times. The Rapture occurs before the seven years whereas the Second Coming occurs after the Tribulation Period has expired (Matt. 24:29).



Another assumption of Rosenthal is that the fifth seal represents persecution (martyrdom) of Jewish people during the Great Tribulation of Matthew 24 which starts at the middle of Daniels 70<sup>th</sup> week but is then shortened to provide time for the Day of the Lord to be fulfilled on earth. According to Rosenthal these Jews are martyred because they have not bowed the knee to Antichrist. Rosenthal must have it this way to promote his prophetic scheme that the Church is raptured between the sixth and seven seals and before the Day of the Lord allegedly begins which follows on the heels of an alleged shortened Great Tribulation! Of course, there is no Biblical exegesis and evidence that actually supports the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) beginning with the seventh seal (based upon the testimony of unregenerate people in the sixth seal) and that Israel is being martyred during the fifth seal. This is one assumption built upon another, and in the end Rosenthal's assumptions and exegesis breaks down and fails miserably.

Rosenthal must conclude that the fifth seal martyrs refer to persecuted Jews living during the Great Tribulation (the second half of the Tribulation) in order to force the Rapture to occur and the Day of the Lord to begin in conjunction with the seventh seal. However, there is nothing in the context of the fifth seal that indicates this is the starting point of the Great Tribulation and Jewish persecution. The fifth seal and Matthew 24 Jewish persecution during the Great Tribulation are not one and the same as Rosenthal asserts. The persecution of the fifth seal saints is that of believers in general, and nothing in the text or context of Revelation six implies that it is the same persecution of Jews as found during the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24. The persecution of the saints in Revelation six (the fifth seal) is by at large the direct result of the apostate church who will be "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17:8).

The power and persecution from the apostate church occurs during the first half of the Tribulation Period and is seen in seal five. The power of Antichrist and His persecution is found in Matthew 24 and occurs during the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. This fits the chronological flow of the book of Revelation. Rosenthal must actually "grandfather clause" the events of Revelation 11-13 which occur later in Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, including Israel's persecution, and make these events occur before the sixth seal. But In spite of Rosenthal's claim that what he set forth is "irrefutable," one must build upon unproven presuppositions to get to his point.

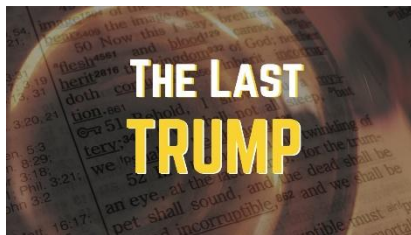
More assumptions and presuppositions rather than exegesis is promoted by Rosenthal when he insists that "The reason for the silence in heaven at the opening of the seventh seal is most solemn. It signals the start of the Day of the Lord's wrath on the earth. It will be so awesome that heaven can only observe in silence. Again, here the prophet Zephaniah speaks to this point ... (Zeph. 1:7, 14-15)." Rosenthal attempts to link together these prophetic passages of Scripture to prove when the Rapture and the Day of the Lord begins. However, it's clear there is no connection between Revelation 8:1 and Zephaniah 1:7. It's even more clear that the "mystery" revelation of the Rapture cannot be found or assumed to exist in the Old Testament (1 Cor. 15:51-52) which allegedly occurs, according to Rosenthal, in conjunction with the seventh seal.

The only point of similarity between these two texts in Revelation 8:1 and Zephaniah 1:7 is "peace" (silence) which is a very shallow basis of connection because everything else is different. John is describing a situation in Heaven. Zephaniah is describing a situation on earth that is specifically linked geographically to Jerusalem and the judgment of Israel which is not noted by Rosenthal. These are two incompatible texts, but Rosenthal does much of this in his book, creating prophetic links between Bible texts which are not associated with one another.

There's absolutely no correlation between Revelation eight (the seventh seal) and Zephaniah one. The expressions "for the day of the LORD is at hand" (Zeph. 1:7) and "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly" (Zeph. 1:14) do not connote that the Day of the Lord was about to begin with the seventh seal. Historically, Israel was going to be judged by the Babylonians in the Day of the Lord but prophetically Israel would once again be judged by God during the eschatological period of the Day of the Lord which occurs during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week or the Tribulation Period (Jer. 30:7; Rev. 6-18). Zephaniah described God's

judgment of the people of Judah without specifying exactly when He would judge them. Most of what Zephaniah prophesied in this section of the book found fulfillment, at least initially, in 586 B.C., but the future End Time judgment was also in view for many prophets foretold of a near and far view fulfillment of similarly described events.

The only reason Rosenthal wants to make this correlation is that he wishes to begin the Day of the Lord with the 7th seal. But trying to find the seventh seal in Zephaniah 1:7 is like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Revelation eight does not specifically mention the Day of the Lord but Zephaniah does. Rosenthal desperately needs Zephaniah to correlate exactly with what is occurring in Revelation eight. But his exegesis is strained and strange. An honest reading of both texts will show a total lack of similarity between the texts. This is essentially Scripture twisting.



Yes, there are more assumptions! As we have previously mentioned, Rosenthal likens the “last trump” of the event of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52) with the last trumpet of Revelation 11:15 and basically commits the same error as the midtribulationist who must associate the Rapture trumpet with the last trump of the Tribulation to force the Church to appear in Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. Rosenthal asserts that “the last trump is the final outpouring of God's wrath” (pp. 131-132).

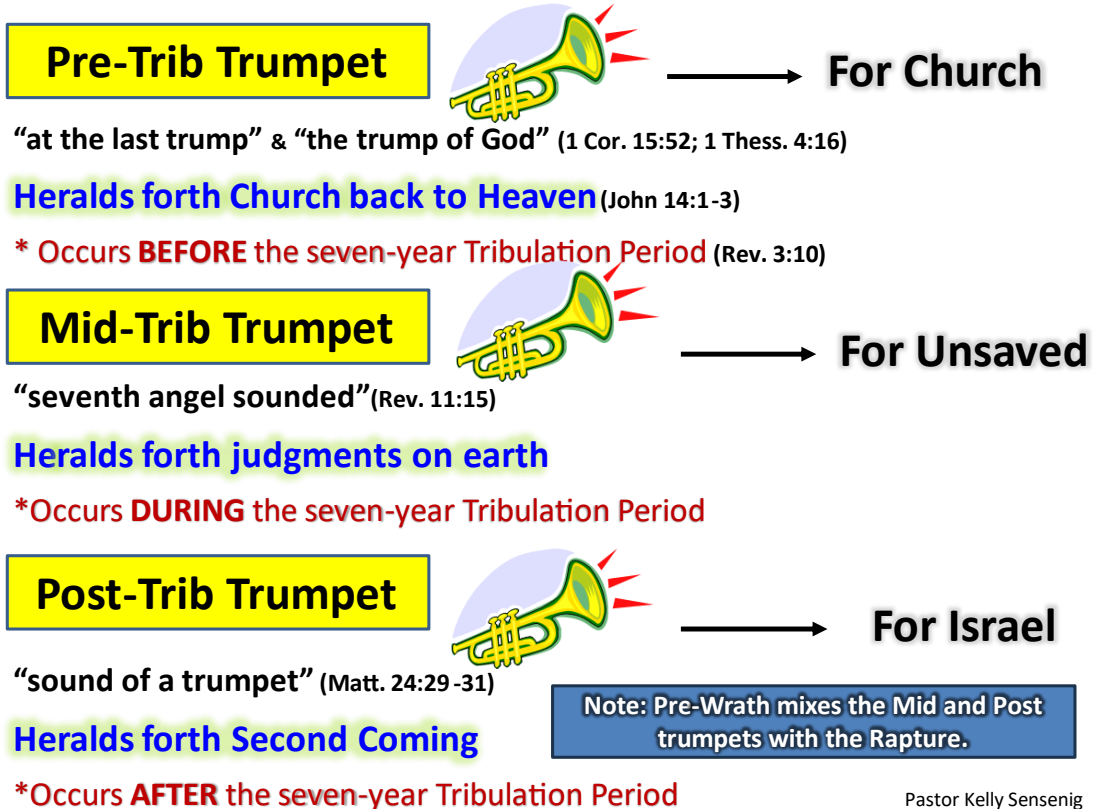
In other words, he assumes that the Church is raptured before God’s wrath begins in what he identifies as the Day of the Lord (the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal). He can only come to this conclusion by assuming the seventh trumpet judgment is seen a “a comprehensive whole” which looks back to the seventh seal out of which God’s wrath is poured in the Day of the Lord (Rev. 8:1). He huffs and puffs about this to support his imaginary thesis that the Church is raptured before God’s wrath begins over the earth just prior to the seventh seal. However, there are many flaws with his thinking.

First, there is no exegetical basis for connecting the seventh or last trump with the long, drawn-out process of the seventh seal. The seventh trump is not retroactive to the seventh seal. In other words, the seventh trumpet is not looking back to the beginning of God’s wrath which the seventh seal unleashes as Rosenthal asserts. How can the seventh trumpet judgment which occurs many months after the seventh seal, a trumpet which represents the culmination of God’s expression of

wrath upon the world, be somehow linked with a prewrath Rapture trumpet which allegedly occurs just before the seventh seal?

Rosenthal is reading his position into the Book of Revelation and goes to great lengths to prove his errant position which is filled with strained exegesis and illegitimate associations. Making the the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet retroactive to the seventh seal to teach a prewrath Rapture trump of God is interpreting Scripture on the basis of pure assumption. It is unconvincing and far-fetched exegesis.

Second, no trumpet passage where the event of the Rapture is mentioned is connected with God's wrath. There is no reason to assume that the trumpet at the Rapture is connected with the final outpouring of God's wrath. These are two different trumpets associated with two different events and blown at different times. The Rapture trumpet is blown before the seven years (compare 1 Thess. 4:16 with the promise of exemption from wrath in 1 Thess. 5:1-11). The last trumpet is blown during the Tribulation Period to signal the start of the final bowl judgments of the Tribulation Period. Below is a visual review of the different trumpets in God's eschatological program which are blown at different times for different reasons and to summons different people.



Pastor Kelly Sensenig

We have three different trumpet players in our home church, but I have never tried to associate the same people with the same trumpet. They are distinct trumpets blown by different people. To make them all one and the same trumpet is illogical and the same is true regarding the prophetic timing and playing of the trumpets during the Tribulation Period.

**9. There are not four comings of Christ and Jesus is not manifesting His presence on earth while the Church is in Heaven (John 14:1-3).**

Goerge Zeller again comments:

“The Pre-Wrath view of the second coming is CONFUSING in that it teaches that ‘there is only one Second Coming’ which ‘includes the Rapture of the Church, the outpouring of God’s wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ’s physical return in glory (pp. 221-222).’ ‘It means a coming and continuing presence’ (p. 222). From this view one gets the impression that Christ meets the Church in the air at the Rapture and then Christ and the Church continue to gradually descend to the earth during the Day of the Lord. However the Bible teaches that when Christ comes to rapture the believers He will receive His believers unto Himself ‘that where I am, there ye may be also’ (John 14:3). The context is referring to the Father’s house in heaven (John 14:1-3). According to our Lord, the Rapture involves Christ receiving His Bride (the Church) and taking her with Him to heaven. Once the Church is raptured and taken to Heaven by Christ, it will remain wit Him forever.

“The Pre-Wrath view does not allow for this because it insists upon the Lord’s ‘continued presence’ with respect to the earth (once He comes He must remain present and not return to heaven). Thus it is very significant that in a 300-page book dealing with the Rapture, Rosenthal does not once even mention John 14:3 which is one of the key passages on the Rapture. The reason is clear: John 14:3 does not fit in with the Pre-Wrath theory and thus it is best to ignore contradictory data. [Gundry spiritualized John 14:3 verse on page 154 of his post-tribulational book. Rosenthal does not even mention it!].”

To state is succinctly, Christ cannot be in Heaven with the Church and still remain in proximity to the earth while judging it beginning at the seventh seal and until the end of the Tribulation Period. Rosenthal cannot have it both ways and this is why He is strangely silent on the teaching of John 14 is in his prewrath book. Paul promises, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17) and “Jesus

promised “that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn. 14:3). This means Jesus cannot remain in Heaven with the Church and at the same time return to earth (manifesting His presence on earth) to judge it during His Second Coming which according to Rosenthal begins with the Day of the Lord (at the seventh seal).

Rosenthal concludes that the Greek word *parousia* for “coming” is used of the event corresponding to the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:15) and to His Second Advent (Matt. 24:3) and therefore concludes that both are one and the same event. He also asserts that the word “means a coming and continuing presence” (p. 222) which means Rosenthal believes that the Second Coming involves the Rapture of the Church, the Day of the Lord judgment, and the His return in glory (p. 218) keeping Christ’s presence and return occurring over the last quarter of the Tribulation Period.

Rosenthal argues:

“*Parousia* (coming) is derived from two Greek word, *para* meaning with and *ousi* meaning *being*. *Parousia*, then denotes to things: an arrival and a consequent presence with” (p. 217).

Despite his conclusion, the author’s contention that the word “parousia” means Christ returns and stays continuously can be easily debunked.

Paul Karleen answers this satisfactorily:

“The word *parousia* can mean ‘arrival’ or ‘coming’ as the prelude to a presence. And it can also refer to the presence itself. The author (Rosenthal) correctly cites 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 2:12 as describing Paul’s presence. However, notice that there is no element of coming in these. The emphasis is on the presence in these passages.”

Karleen then concludes:

“The author (Rosental) has committed the linguistic error of *illegitimate totality transfer*, in which meaning of a word in various occurrences and contexts are all poured into one particular occurrence.”

In other words, the word “presence” is sometimes understood in a context without a specific coming or arrival in mind. In fact, there are a number of occurrences of *parousia* in the New Testament where no element of “presence” is behind the



meaning of the word. Consider this word in Matthew 24. Matthew 24:3 refers only to Christ's coming since the disciples asked for a sign of His coming – not a sign of Him being present. In Mathew 24:27, 37, and 39 the *parousia* of Christ is compared to things that occur suddenly such as a streak of lightning and the Genesis flood. Of course, a continuous presence is not something that occurs suddenly.

This means that a remaining presence of Christ on earth (while the Church is in Heaven) does not occur in conjunction with the Second Coming which allegedly, according to Rosenthal, occurs during the last quarter or several years of the Tribulation Period. This type of “continuing presence” in relation to Christ's Second Coming is not in view in the Matthew 24 occurrences and does not make any prophetic sense. For instance, Christ's two advents are separated by thousands of years and none of them can be viewed as Christ's continuing presence. The angelic messengers taught that He “shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

There was no continuing physical presence of Jesus that remained on earth after His first coming and the same will be true in relation to Christ initially returning to earth. In other words, Christ will not continually be present in proximity to the earth judging it for several years while the Church is in Heaven. His coming will be sudden, climactic, and lead into the Millennium. In short, there is no linguistic evidence for Rosenthal's assertion that Christ comes and stays on earth and judges it throughout the Day of the Lord and bowl judgments. Building an argument on the etymology of a word often leads to confusion. In this case, it leads to Second Coming confusion. Christ will return in power and great glory and His presence will be known and seen by all (Matt. 24:29-30), but His presence does not mean He will be floating around the air for the last several years of the Tribulation Period, judging the earth throughout the Day of the Lord, while He leaves behind His beloved Church in Heaven!

Matthew 24:29-30 against states:

“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.



Rosenthal's interpretation of Matthew 24:29-30 is a peculiar one. The proper hermeneutical and prophetic understanding of the coming of Christ with power and great glory is an event that occurs after the seven-year Tribulation Period (“after the tribulation of those days”) and preceding the establishment of the

Millennial Kingdom. However, Rosenthal and Van Kampen interpret the sign of the coming of the Son of Man in Matthew 24:29 as occurring with the Rapture of the Church and equates it with the same cosmological signs of the sixth seal during the Tribulation Period which precedes what Rosenthal says is the Day of the Lord. But such an interpretation forces the sixth seal and events of the Olivet Discourse into an artificial mold created by the prewrath rapturrists.

This is because the chronological cosmological signs of Revelation six occur at the middle of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 6:16-17) and cannot possibly be related to the cosmological signs that occur at Christ’s Second Coming following the seven years (Matt. 24:28-30). How can the sixth seal which Rosenthal claims occurs just before the Day of the Lord begins in the seventh seal have anything to do with the Second Coming? This assumption is prophetically perplexing and becomes a case of forced exegesis to make the Rapture happen during the Tribulation Period and not prior to the seven years.

Isaiah 13:9 -10 once again prophetically states:

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”

Joel 2:30-31 adds:

“And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.”

Joel 3:14-15 also conveys:

“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.”

As we have previously mentioned, Rosenthal concludes that these cosmic disturbances predicted in the Old Testament prophecies align with the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal which therefore makes the seventh seal the beginning of the Day of the Lord. In other words, he claims these cosmic calamities will occur before the Day of the Lord actually begins which aligns with what is occurring in Revelation chapter 6.

Of course, this is a preconceived prophetic fabrication designed to make the Day of the Lord begin with the seventh seal after the cosmic signs of the sixth seal. What do these prophetic texts teach us? Joel prophesied there would be cosmological signs which occur before the actual Second Coming (“before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come” – Joel 2:31). It’s clear that the Day of the Lord in this context has a specific reference to the Second Coming of Christ to earth which occurs in conjunction with Israel’s salvation.

Joel 2:32

“And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”

This once again should be regarded as the *narrow* aspect or view of the Day of the Lord which places these cosmic signs as preceding the actual Second Coming of Christ to earth.

Matthew 24:29

“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.”

The cosmic signs mentioned in Joel 2:30-32 could not possibly occur at the sixth seal for this is at least 3.5 years before the Second Coming. So Rosenthal actually compromises his interpretation when forcing the prophetic reference of Joel 2:30-31 align with the sixth seal.

The other passages of Isaiah 3:14-15 and Joel 2:13-14 do not indicate the cosmic signs will precede the commencement of the Day of the Lord. They are set in the broader scope of the Tribulation Period (Day of the Lord) and inform us that God's wrath and judgment will be seen throughout this time via cosmic cataclysmic signs. The phrases "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh" (Isa. 3:14) and "the day of the LORD is near" (Joel 3:14) are not an indication that the impending Day of the Lord actually begins with cosmic signs but that when it does begin and God's wrath is meted out on earth it will be accompanied at various times throughout the climactic seven years with cosmic disturbances.

It's certain that Revelation 6:12-17 would be included in these cosmic signs. However, there is no mention in the prophetic texts of Isaiah 13:9-10 and Joel 3:14-15 that the Day of the Lord must actually begin at the seventh seal following the alleged precursor cosmic signs of the sixth seal. These signs would actually occur within the framework and timeframe of the Day of the Lord once it begins to overtake planet earth. In fact, as we have already confirmed, there are cosmic disturbances that occur at different times throughout the End Time period of the Day of the Lord in relation to the third trumpet (Rev. 8:10-11), the fourth trumpet (Rev. 8:12), and the seventh bowl (Rev. 16:17-21).

These texts such as Isaiah 13:9 -10 and Joel 3:14-15 which are cited in the Old Testament reveal the *broad* view and spectrum of the Day of the Lord in which the revelation of God's wrath will be on display throughout the seven years via cosmic intervention. They are not an indication *when* the Day of the Lord beings but *what* will happen during the Day of the Lord.

Rosenthal remarks:

"The following facts cannot be set aside (1) The great tribulation begins in the middle of the 70th week, but it does not run to the end of that week. It is cut short. (2) *Immediately* after the great tribulation, there will be cosmic disturbances these phenomena will signal the coming of the son of man from heaven. (3) This coming commences *before* the end of the seventieth week, and is consummated after the end of the 70th week (Rev. 19:11). For pretribulationism to be sustained there must be *another* coming at the beginning of the 70th week. Evidence for such an event is simply nonexistent. It will later be demonstrated that following the cosmic disturbances (the sixth seal, Rev. 6:12 -14), the Lord's coming from heaven will be

for the purpose of rapture of the church before the day of the Lord's wrath begins with the opening of the seventh seal" (p. 110).

So Rosenthal must interpret the coming of Christ in Matthew 24:29-30 as the Rapture which he believes will occur in conjunction with the sixth seal but before the opening of the seventh seal after a shortened Great Tribulation in which the Church passes through, and which occurs before the ending of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. Yes, it sounds like a prophetic blind leap into the dark! Rosenthal criticizes pretribulationism for requiring another coming of Jesus before the seven years begins and insists that evidence for such an event is simply nonexistent. However, Rosenthal seems to have a blind spot because his system requires the very same concept. His Second Coming is not a singular event as he presupposes.

According to his theory the Rapture takes place at the three-quarter point, and then the return of Christ to the earth takes place at the end of the fourth quarter. No matter what semantics Rosenthal may use, his system requires the Rapture and the Second Coming to be two separate events which are separated by a period of time (the Rapture *before* the Day of the Lord the return *after* the Day of the Lord). In fact, there are actually four comings of Christ in the prewrath theory despite Rosenthal's semantical attempts to keep Christ's return to one multifaceted coming.

Prewrathers insists that the Lord's Second Coming is speaking of the totality of a glorious series of events and is a comprehensive whole. But even though the prewrath view speaks of only one Second Coming, it needs to be noted that it actually "teaches four future comings of Christ within the boundaries of the one Second Coming." (Showers, p. 83). According to the prewrathers, these various comings are timed as follows:

First, He will come for the Rapture of His Bride (Old Testament saints and church saints) between the 6th and 7th seal and take her to Heaven.

Second, after the end of the 70th week and at the beginning of the 30-day reclamation period (Dan. 12:11), He will leave His Bride and come again for at least six days on earth to bring salvation to Israel and to reclaim the rule of the earth to God before He returns to His Bride for approximately another 24 days in Heaven.

Third, after the seventh bowl judgment at the end of the 30-day reclamation period, He will come again, without His Bride but with His holy angels, to defeat Antichrist and his forces at Armageddon. After a 45-day restoration period, He will return to heaven to deliver the kingdom of earth to God and to receive the rule of the whole earth from God.

Fourth, after several days, He will come again with His Bride (the Old Testament saints and the Church saints) to rule His worldwide Millennial Kingdom.

How can one Second Coming involve four comings? And how is it possible for prewrath promoters to insist on Christ's "coming and continuous presence," when in body, Christ is neither continuously present on earth or in Heaven nor continuously present with His Bride on earth or in Heaven until after His fourth, future coming? All of this becomes prophetic manipulation and confusion to try and promote a rogue Rapture and flawed understanding of the Second Coming.

According to Rosenthal and the prewrathers there is only one coming (parousia) of Christ that occurs, which includes the Rapture of Church saints while Christ returns to earth in His Second Coming, which then begins His systematic destruction of the wicked who remain on earth during the Day of the Lord. But this interpretative conclusion denies the Biblical teaching of Christ coming *for* His Church in the Rapture to take them to the Father's house (John 14:1-3), and His coming *with* His Church to earth to deliver Israel and establish His earthly Millennial Kingdom (Rom. 11:26-27). One will search in vain to find a Rapture passage that connects itself with the Day of the Lord, and Rosenthal has not produced any that do.

Without making a distinction between Christ's return in the Rapture specifically for the Church (1 Thess. 4:13-18) and the Second Coming which relates to Israel's salvation (Rom. 11:26) results in viewing both events as occurring together (simultaneously). This is no different than a posttribulational view which sees the coming of Christ as only one event. Rosenthal refuses to make a distinction between the Rapture and Second Coming and fails to view them as different events occurring at different times. Prewrath rapturism seeks to blend together the Rapture with the Second Coming by viewing it as a single event broken down in four different phases.



Here is the bottom line. Rosenthal wants to have his cake and eat it too. But he cannot. You cannot have it both ways. If the Church is in Heaven with Christ as he seems to imply (John 14:1-3), then Christ cannot be on earth judging it during the Day of the Lord, trumpet, and bowl judgments through His “continued presence” as He suggests. This is incoherent thought and that is why in his book he is unclear regarding where the Church is while Christ is allegedly continually returning and

bringing forth His judgments over the earth. How can Christ be with the Church saints in Heaven while floating or hovering over the earth and judging it during His “continuous presence” during the Day of the Lord? This sounds like circular reasoning, assuming something is true without proving it to be true or offering concrete evidence that it is true.

Rosenthal is playing word games. His point is that the Second Coming is only “one composite whole” and that this composite whole includes “the Rapture of the Church, the outpouring of God's wrath during the Day of the Lord, and Christ physical return...” (pp. 221-224). This is illogical for Christ cannot be in Heaven dwelling with His Church following the Rapture (“that where I am, there ye may be also” - Jn. 14:3) and also be continually manifesting His presence in His Second Coming as He judges the earth. The word “coming” does not mean a “continuing presence” as Rosenthal asserts. He invents this theory among many other conclusions which cannot be supported by the meaning of words and the Scriptures.



To reiterate, prewrathers place the Rapture of the Church in the context of the Second Coming of Christ to earth (Matthew 24:29—31). They blend together the events associated with the Second Coming with the Rapture by making the saints go up to Heaven while at the same time portraying Christ coming down to earth to begin judging it as the King. Christ supposedly maintains His parousia or presence on earth as Judge while the saints are in Heaven.

This contradicts the promise of John 14:1-3 where Christ is said to dwell with His Church during the seven years and wrongly (not rightly) divides the prophetic truth of God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Once again, Jesus taught, "that where I am, *there* ye may be also" (Jn. 14:3). Since this is true, Christ cannot physically dwell with His saints in Heaven while at the same time physically maintain His "continuous presence" on earth to judge the unsaved during His extended four-part return.

The conclusion of the prewrath Rapture theory is that there are four alleged comings of Christ lumped or joined together but are seen as one event of Christ's return. Four and yet one. Yes, it sounds confusing.



Four comings of Christ! Really? This is an exegetical and eschatological nightmare. We know that one prophetic error normally results in another prophetic error to support the previous one. I think one can conclude that the basic thesis of the prewrath theory of the Rapture cannot be supported exegetically, linguistically, or hermeneutically from Scripture.

David Cooper's Golden Rule of Interpretation cannot be improved on:  
 "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense."

Marvin Rosenthal's book entitled "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: A New Understanding of the Tribulation, and the Second Coming" should raise some red flags.



As Harry Ironside used to say:

“Be careful of any teaching that is new, it might not be true.”

Such is the case with the debunked prewrath Rapture theory. The Bible, when understood in its plain sense, does not teach a prewrath Rapture theory that occurs near the end of the Tribulation Period, but a pretribulation Rapture, which is a seven-year prewrath escape from the righteous expression of God’s wrath to be meted out on planet earth during the seven-year period known in both Old and New Testaments as the Day of the Lord (Rev. 3:10; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-10).



As the above chart reveals, the prewrath view sees the Second Coming and the Rapture as one event, lasting about a year and a half, with four

returns of Christ within the confines of the one alleged Second Coming. At the first of these four comings Christ returns to take His people to Heaven before the Day of the Lord begins (the seventh seal). At the second, which ends the Seventieth Week, He will descend to earth bringing salvation to Israel and will remain on earth for six days before returning to Heaven. Third, after the bowl judgments Christ will then return to destroy the armies of Armageddon and celebrate His victory over the earth (the 75-day extension of Daniel 12:11-13). Fourth, Christ will then return with the Church to establish the Millennium.

Essentially, four comings are forced into the mold of only one coming. Rosenthal does not want to view Christ’s return as multiple comings to counter pretribulation rapturism which teaches

$$1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 1$$

**Where’s the error?**

that there are two separate comings of Christ – one return for His Church and another return as the King in His Second Coming. Therefore, the assumption is that his alleged four comings equal only one coming. Rosenthal is trying to prove that **1+1+1+1 = 1**. Once again, he should brush up on his arithmetic.

In the prewrath scheme of things, a thirty-day period of reclamation of the earth by the Lord will occur when the bowl judgments are poured out following the end

of the Seventieth Week. Revelation 15:1 anticipates the bowl judgments as the last seven plagues. Although Rosenthal asserts that these judgments are not part of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath) the Scripture explicitly states that they are associated with God's wrath.

Revelation 15:1

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

According to Rosenthal (not the Scriptures) the third of the four comings takes place after the thirty-day period, when Christ returns with His angels to defeat the Antichrist at Armageddon. This victory will be followed by a forty-five-day period, after which Christ will return to Heaven. At the fourth coming Christ will return to the earth with His Bride (the Church) to rule the world during the Millennial Kingdom.

You might wonder where do all these returns of Christ come from? They originate from the mind of a prewrather – not from Scripture! Where do we find in Scripture that the Second Coming of Christ to earth has multiple phases or returns? This kind of reasoning does a great injustice to the clear presentation of the single event of the Rapture and the single event of Christ's Second Coming to earth.

Jesus proclaimed in Acts 1:11, "...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Jesus did not say that in His Second Coming He would come again, again, and again! He said He would "come" (implying one Second Coming appearance) someday to earth as He left it upon the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4).

**10.If the Rapture cannot occur until three-quarters of the way through the Tribulation Period, then the Biblical teaching on the imminent (any moment) return of Christ must be thrown under the bus and forsaken.**

There are many verses that promote the imminent return of Christ for His Church encouraging each believer to live a life of eager expectancy that Christ could return at any moment (1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Cor. 1:7; Tit. 2:13; Jam. 5:8-9; 1 Jn. 3:2-3).



This is a very important point that discredits the prewrath Rapture position. If Christ cannot come until the middle of the Tribulation Period (midtrib position) or three quarters of the way through the Tribulation (prewrath) or after the Tribulation (posttrib position), then His return in the Rapture is not imminent. It could not occur at any moment. So yes, you must throw imminency under the bus! However, the Scripture repeatedly teaches imminency as it relates to the event of the Rapture (Phil. 3:20; 4:5; Rom. 13:11-12;

1 Cor. 16:22; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:1; 3:11; 22:10, 20). The prewrath Rapture is not the Rapture of the Bible. It's a rogue Rapture that has no Biblical support for it rejects the teaching of Biblical imminency in relation to Christ's return for His Church.

Rosenthal argues:

"Perhaps here is the ultimate error of pre-tribulation rapturism. It holds out the false hope of imminent rapture, instead of the true hope of expectant rapture. By expectant rapture it is meant that every generation since the first century could have been the generation that entered the seventieth week to experience the Rapture" (p. 282).

The prewrath view teaches that there are several events that must occur just prior to the Rapture and the beginning of the Day of the Lord. These alleged events would include such things as the coming of Elijah "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Mal. 4:5) and how cosmic disturbances must also occur "before the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31). The claim is then made by Rosenthal that "the doctrine of imminency is destroyed by the question posed by the disciples ... 'What shall be the sign of thy coming [parousia]?' (Mt. 24:3).

According to the prewrath view, the cosmic disturbances (Mt. 24:29) are equated with Joel 2:31 and Rev. 6:12-14. They will be the sign of the end of the age which occurs in conjunction with the Rapture/Second Coming and the seventh seal, and "will serve as a warning to the unsaved that the Day-of-the-Lord judgment is

imminent.” “Since the sign must precede the coming, and the Rapture is related to the coming, the Rapture cannot be signless. And imminency ... is once more discredited.”

As previously mentioned, prewrathers fail to distinguish between the broad and narrow views of the Day of the Lord, the narrow aspect referring to the actual Second Coming of Christ to earth. Logically, Elijah would return as one of the witnesses during the second half of the Tribulation Period and cosmic signs would occur just prior to the Second Coming which occurs at the end of Danile’s 70<sup>th</sup> week of seven years. The doctrine of imminency is not destroyed by these events because they occur *after* and not before the Rapture as Rosenthal would have us believe by his drummed up presuppositional arguments for Revelation chapters 6 and 7.

Rosenthal poisons the well of imminency. Of course, imminency is not a false hope but a blessed hope (Titus 2:13). It is a blessed expectancy and thrilling prospect that Christ could return at any moment. The Bible reveals that the Rapture itself is at hand (Phil. 4:4).

The English word imminent comes from the Latin verb *immineo* which means to overhang or project. In light of this fact, the English word imminent means “hanging over one’s head” or something that is ready to befall or overtake one, something that is close at hand (*Oxford English Dictionary*). People cannot count on a certain amount of time transpiring before an imminent event occurs. Thus, they should constantly be prepared for it to happen at any moment. Furthermore, people cannot legitimately set a date for an imminent event to occur. The setting of a date for an imminent event violates the concept of imminency. It signifies that a certain amount of time must elapse before that event can happen and thereby conflicts with the concept that the event could occur at any moment.

In addition, people cannot legitimately say that an imminent event will happen soon. The term soon implies that an event must take place. In contrast an imminent event may take place within a short time, but it does not have to take place soon to be imminent.

The Scriptures repeatedly teach the event of the Rapture is an impending and imminent event and therefore we should be looking for the any moment return of Christ for His Church. Paul said, “we look for the Saviour” (Phil. 3:20). *Paul did not*

say that he merely “looked forward” to Christ’s return someday in the future but he was actually looking for the Lord to return. The verb “look” is a word of expectancy and would indicate the any moment nature of Christ’s return. Paul was not looking for Jesus to return at a later time but immediately and presently during his lifetime.

Rosenthal would have us believe that the Rapture is an *expectant* event but not an *imminent* event (Rosenthal, *Per-Wrath Rapture*, pp. 282-284). By an *expectant* Rapture Rosenthal means “that every generation since the first century could have been the generation that entered the seventieth week to experience the Rapture” (p. 282). In other words, Rosenthal concludes there is no conclusive proof that the early church believed in an imminent Rapture. He claims that all the verses that pretribulationists point to which speak of *imminency* actually mean *expectation* but not *imminency*. But this cannot be.

The language of these texts do not simply portray expectancy (looking forward to something happening) but speak of how the actual event could occur at any moment. Paul against states, “we look for the Saviour” (Phil. 3:20). He did not say, “We look forward to seeing the Savior” or can expect to be the generation to enter the Tribulation Period to experience the Rapture.

Titus 2:13 also exclaims, “Looking for that blessed hope” and not merely looking forward to the blessed hope happening when we enter Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week and are raptured three fourths of the way into the Tribulation Period. These verses cannot possibly teach the early church was “expectant” or only looking forward to being the generation that enters the Tribulation to experience the Rapture, if they survive Antichrist’s wrath, wars, famine, animal attacks, and worldwide plagues which occur during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel! Of course, the early Church was actually looking for Jesus to return at any moment and escape the coming night of tribulation over planet earth (1 Thess. 5-1-11). By the way, an *expectant* Rapture can also be an *imminent* Rapture.

1 Corinthians 1:7 declares the saints were “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They were not only expecting to be part of the generation who were alive at the Rapture but were actually waiting for this event to occur at any moment! Likewise, the Thessalonians were also instructed by Paul to “wait for his Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:10). They were expecting and literally waiting for Christ to return at any moment. But one can be absolutely certain they were not

merely looking forward to His return to occur at a later time during Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week following their torture from the Antichrist.

Renald Showers correctly states:

"The combination of the meaning and present tense of the Greek word translated 'to wait for' in first Thessalonians 1:10 prompts the conclusion that Paul was indicating that the Thessalonian Christians were continuously and patiently expecting or waiting up for Christ to return from heaven because they were confident that he could come at any moment."

Maranatha (1 Cor. 16:22) was the buzzword of the early church ("Our Lord comes"). It was not "we look forward to and expect his coming at the seventh seal" but the Lord is coming at any moment of any day, morning, night, or noon! "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5). Paul did not say, "The Lord is at hand and therefore should look forward to His return by the seventh seal." James 5:8 declares that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" and it then states, "behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:8). None of these expressions can mean only *expectant*; they actually mean *expecting* the Lord to return at any moment.

1 John 2:28 also declares, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." The concept of "when he shall appear" introduces the element of uncertainty relative to Christ's coming and speaks of imminency. The repeated emphasis on Christ returning "quickly" (swiftly, without delay, ready to befall, overtake) is also used in relation to the Rapture (Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). All of these Rapture texts speak of imminency in relation to Christ's return in the Rapture. They do not simply mean looking forward to His arrival someday.

Gerald B. Stanton wrote:

"There is not a little wrong with any system of interpretation which destroys the force of exhortations such as these, painting over the bright hues of the hope of an imminent return of Christ with the somber shades of impending Tribulation."

The prewrath view teaches that the Rapture cannot possibly be imminent since there are several events that must occur just prior to the Day of the Lord (seals 1-6 and cosmic signs), which occur in conjunction with the timing of the Rapture/ Second Coming. Not wanting to be redundant, I must reconfirm the prewrather

argues that the cosmic disturbances will occur “before the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31). The claim is made that the doctrine of imminency is destroyed by the question posed by the disciples, “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” (Mt. 24:3). According to the prewrath view, the cosmic disturbances (Mt. 24:29) are equated with Joel 2:31 and Rev. 6:12-14. They will be the sign of the end of the age and will serve as a warning to the unsaved that the Day-of-the-Lord judgment is imminent. Since the sign must precede the coming, and the Rapture is related to the coming, the Rapture cannot be signless. Therefore, imminency is once more discredited by these prewrath arguments.

It's evident that Rosenthal, Van Kampen, and the prewrathers need to mix the Rapture with the Second Coming. In order to do this, they must force the cosmic disturbances of Revelation 6:12-14 to align with the cosmic disturbances that occur with the Second Coming (Joel 2:31; Matt. 24:29-30) in order to make the prewrath scheme work and, in the process, destroy the teaching of imminency. But we have already shown in this study and by a chart that there are no cosmic signs associated with the Rapture of the Church and that the cosmic signs associated with the Second Coming occur “after the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29) which according to Jesus is a clear reference to the seven years during Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.



In addition, the reference to Joel 2:32 reveals the *narrow aspect* of the Day of the Lord (the actual event of Second Coming) and how there would be cosmic signs occurring in conjunction with Christ’s return to earth. The point is that these are not the same cosmic signs because they occur at two different times and the Rapture certainly is not part of the event of the Second Coming.

The prewrathers wants us to swallow the theory that the sending of Elijah will occur “before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). And “if the Day of the Lord begins at the beginning of the seventieth week, [as Pretribulationism teaches], then imminence is destroyed” (p. 159). Of course, this is yet another attempt to mock imminency. Rosenthal wants us to believe that

Elijah as one of the two witnesses must actually return *before* the seven years which destroy an imminent Rapture. This is not the case. Rosenthal continually confuses the Day of the Lord (the wrath of God related to the seven years) with the specific or culminating event of the Day of the Lord, which is the actual event of the Second Coming of Christ (“the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord”), the time when Jesus returns to save Israel (Joel 2:32).

Elijah will return as one of the witnesses during the second half of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 11:1-13) just prior to the culminating event of the Tribulation Period (Day of the Lord) which is the Second Coming. Only a prewrather with an axe to grind will conclude that this is a reference to the timing of the seventh seal which occurs during the Tribulation Period and therefore destroys imminency.

The prewrathers also force their prewrath theory into the passage of 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 to destroy the doctrine of imminency. They claim that the apostasy and revealing of “the man of sin” will occur first, before the Day of the Lord begins. Therefore, it is claimed, “Paul did not teach the Thessalonians that the Rapture was imminent. Quite the contrary, he taught that the apostasy must occur first, and that the man of sin must be revealed (2 Thess. 2:3)” (p. 249). Of course, this is a ruse or form of deception. As previously mentioned, Paul was not teaching the apostasy (Antichrist apostasy) must occur *before* the Day of the Lord begins but that it would occur *during* the Day of the Lord, and this is proof that the Day of the Lord was not “at hand” (2 Thess. 2:2). In other words, they were not living during the period known as the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period) as some were suggesting.



Rosenthal and the prewrathers make a lot of smoke to try and cover up the imminent return of Christ by trying to force the innocent bystander to believe their unscriptural and exegetically biased conclusions based upon presuppositions.

Goerge Zeller summarizes Rosenthal’s attack against imminency and the blessed hope when stating: “The



Rapture of the Church is not an imminent event (p. 292). It cannot take place today. It is impossible for the Lord Jesus to come for His Church today. The Rapture cannot take place next week, next month or next year. Indeed, the Rapture cannot take place for at least four or five years [at the very earliest]. The Rapture will occur immediately prior to the Day of the Lord and the Day of the Lord will begin with the opening of the seventh seal (pp. 18,60,176). The Rapture will occur on the very day the Day of the Lord begins (p. 117). It will occur at the very outset of the Day of the Lord (p. 210).”

The Bible warns us to not allow any man, including Rosenthal, to steal the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ from our hearts in the Rapture.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

When Paul states: “Let no man deceive you by any means” he is reminding us that some will teach that we are going into the Day of the Lord (seven-year Tribulation Period) but we should not allow any man, which include the prewrathers, to bring this deception into the realm of our thinking. Yes, the prewrath position concludes that the Church will be raptured before the Day of the Lord begins but their eschatology reworks the timing and length of the Day of the Lord and by so doing actually keeps the Church in three fourths of the Tribulation Period. But since it has been proven that the entirety of Danile’s 70<sup>th</sup> week encompasses the birth pangs of the Day of the Lord ((Isa. 13:6–9; Joel 2:1-2; Jer. 30:6–7; 1 Thess. 5:2–3; Matt. 24:29), this warning of 2 Thessalonians 2:3 applies to the prewrathers who remake the Day of the Lord by twisting the prophetic Scriptures, but in the end still place the Church in the Day of the Lord’s wrath and judgment.

Titus 2:13 again reminds us of the blessed hope:

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The early Church expected Christ to return in their day for they were longing for His return and with great expectancy looking for Christ’s to appear and take them back the Father’s House (John 14:1-2). By the way, how could the Rapture be a “blessed hope” if we were to pass through the Tribulation Period and suffer starvation,

pestilence, hunger, death (Rev. 6:7-11) and likely martyrdom at the hands of the Antichrist (Rev. 20:4). This would be the blessed horror! The whole alleged prewrath theory argues against the blessed hope and gladness of the Rapture.

The early Christians had a saying, “Maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:22) which is taken from the Aramaic language and means, “Our Lord cometh.” The early Christians were expecting Christ to return at any moment. The Rapture was NOT viewed as something that would happen in the distant future, at some point down the road during the seven years of the Tribulation Period or after the Tribulation Period. It was viewed by the early church as an imminent and impending event.

Christ is pictured as standing “before the door” (James 5:9) of Heaven ready to return for His saints. The early saints were “waiting for his Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:10) which relates to great expectancy. They were not waiting for the Antichrist to be revealed but the true Christ to appear and remove them from planet earth to Heaven so they could be “delivered (rescued) from the wrath to come” (the wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period) as clearly outlined in 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

When Scripture is taken at face value, without reading into the texts, the Rapture is presented as an imminent, impending, any-moment event (Phil. 3:20; 4:5; 1 Cor. 16:22; James 5:8-9) that Paul taught will take place before the seven-year Tribulation Period (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9-10). The Rapture is not an event that occurs five years or three fourths of the way into the Tribulation Period. The early Church was looking for Christ and not Antichrist! They were not looking for the occurrence of seal judgments, but deliverance from the entire period of tribulation which was designed to punish unsaved earth dwellers that are left behind (Rev. 3:10).

Nevertheless, in Rosenthal’s prewrath interpretive scheme, the Church must endure Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, and after approximately 64 months into the 70<sup>th</sup> Week, it will be raptured. Of course, this totally destroys the doctrine of imminency, which Rosenthal calls “untenable.” He claims “there simply is no exegetical evidence for pretribulational rapturism” (p.208). As we have seen, passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Titus 2:13 and 1 John 3:2–3 speak of the blessed hope as an imminent event, encouraging the believer to live a life of eager expectancy and anticipation in the glorious truth that Christ could return at any moment. We do not have to face the wrath of the seven-years. Period.

Think about this. If you hold to a midtrib, prewrath, or posttrib view of the Rapture then Jesus cannot return today (right now). You must wait halfway, three-quarters, or after the Tribulation Period has expired for Jesus to return. If this is true, then you have robbed yourself of the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ. You have lost the blessed hope that Jesus could return at any moment, glorify us, giving us a new body (Phil. 3:20), deliver us from all of trials and hardships associated with life, but most of all deliver us from the seven years of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 3:10).

In summary, the prewrath Rapture view denies the imminence of the event of the Rapture whereas the Bible clearly reveals the blessed hope of the early church (Titus 2:13) was to look, wait, and expect Christ to return at any moment (Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Cor. 16:22). The Bible teaches there is nothing that must happen before Jesus returns to take home His beloved Bride (John 14:1-2). This truth immediately invalidates the mid, prewrath, and post tribulation views. Only a pretribulation view allows for the imminent return of Christ and therefore is the Biblical truth.

Let's consider the "quickly" passages in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 3:11

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Revelation 22:7 adds:

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:12 also declares:

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Revelation 22:20 concludes:

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

All of these verses use the adverb "quickly" (tachy) which means "without delay" or "speedily" which connotes to come in a sudden manner. This means the Rapture

could occur at any moment. It could be fulfilled at any time. This is the promise of Christ to the Church today. Jesus will return quickly or suddenly without any delay which means His coming is imminent. Nothing must occur or happen before Jesus returns. Leon Morris comments on the use of the word “quickly” and Christ’s return in Revelation 22 when stating, “The imminence of the coming is repeated.”

J. Barton Payne suggests that the word “quickly” means:

“Not soon but swiftly, all at once, that is before one can be aware and make preparations.”

John Walvoord comments on the word “quickly” when stating:

“The thought seems to be that when the action comes, it will be sudden. Also, it is to be regarded as impending as if it is meant to be fulfilled at any time.”

This word “quickly” denotes imminency and cannot be restated to mean otherwise. The possibility of the Lord’s sudden return and appearance was always a present reality to the early church and Early Church Fathers.

Clement wrote:

“[O]f a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, ‘Speedily will He come, and will not tarry’; and ‘The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look.’”

Ignatius wrote to Polycarp: “Be watchful, possessing a sleepless spirit,” and “Be ever more becoming more zealous than what thou art. Weigh carefully the times. Look for Him who is above all time, eternal and invisible, yet who became visible for our sakes.”

Barnabas wrote:

“For the day is at hand on which all things shall perish with the evil *one*. The Lord is near and his reward.”

Since there is no exact timing related to the Rapture, it cannot be placed into a specific time period as the midtribbers, prewrathers, and posttribbers do. It would be erroneous to do so since the Bible reaffirms repeatedly that Jesus could return at any moment. We are not waiting for the Rapture to occur to fulfill some

manmade prophetic scheme that takes imminency off the table. We are not to be looking for signs but looking for the Savior (Phil. 3:20).

Just like the early church, we have the same hope and expectancy of Christ's imminent return. Jesus could come suddenly and without delay. He could break into human history at any moment and interrupt the plans of mankind and take His children home to be with Himself as promised (John 14:1-2).



There is a real sense of urgency throughout the book of Revelation concerning the any moment return of the Lord. We should expect Him at any moment and get our life in order in view of His return and our subsequent reward (Rev. 22:12). The early Church believed that Jesus could come back for them in their lifetime. Not knowing when He might return, they wisely lived prepared and hoping for Jesus to return at any moment.

The word "surely" (Rev. 22:20) is also used to denote the blessed assurance that Jesus may come at any moment. It can "surely" (truly or most assuredly) happen right now. The imminent hope of Christ's return filled the hearts of the early Christians. There was a ray of sunshine in their hearts as they realized that Jesus might return quickly or swiftly, in a sudden manner, without any warning or delay. This kept their eyes to the sky, and their hope was not pie in the sky, but a real expectancy and blessed hope that Jesus could come today!

"Oh, joy! Oh delight! Should we go without dying,  
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying,  
Caught up thro' the clouds with our Lord into glory,  
When Jesus receives "His own."

O Lord Jesus, how long, how long,  
Ere we shout the glad song,  
Christ returneth! Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah! Amen,  
Hallelujah! Amen."

One must conclude that the promise of the Rapture in John 14 and the blessed hope do not fit the prewrath position. Christ's Rapture promise (the imminent return) and the heavenly scene of Revelation 19 (the Church is in Heaven throughout the seven years) provide us with the hope and assurance of not being present on earth during the entire seven-year Tribulation Period (Revelation 6-18). But according to Rosenthal and his scheme of prophetic events, the Church is on earth and will not be in Heaven during much of the Tribulation Period. His position like that of the posttribulational view is obviously untenable considering John 14:1-4 which is one of the key Rapture passages.

Christ promised that He would leave His own saints on earth to prepare their eternal dwelling place in Heaven. But upon His return in the event of the Rapture He would take the saints back to the Father's House. The eschatological fact ("I will come again") means that Jesus could return for His Church at any moment. Jesus did not expect His followers to be waiting around for the events of the seven-year Tribulation to begin. Instead, Christ would take His beloved Bride back to Heaven ("that where I am, *there* ye may be also") while all the judgments of the Lamb are falling on the earth.

Again, the prophetic scene of Revelation 19:7-8 anticipates the Church as residing in Heaven while the judgments of Revelation 6-18 are being experienced on earth. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come (*the marriage to His beloved Bride – the Church*), and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

We have touched upon this already, but it's worth reconfirming. It's very interesting that in Marv Rosenthal's book on the prewrath Rapture of the church, he never once explains John 14:1-2, other than referring to it as a Scripture mentioned by Sproul (p. 55).

Dr. Manfred E. Kober writes:

"Rosenthal has no clear explanation where the Church will be for 21 months after the rapture. It definitely will not be in heaven in his scheme of events. His position, like that of the posttribulational view is obviously untenable in light of John 14:1-4, one of the key rapture passages. Christ promised that He would leave His own on

earth to prepare their eternal habitation in heaven, in the Father's House. Then He would return for them and take them to the prepared place.

“The view of Rosenthal and that of the posttribulationists preclude that the believers will ever be in heaven. In other words, they do not believe Christ's clear statement. No wonder Rosenthal has absolutely nothing to say about John 14:1–4. He simply quotes John A. Sproul, who lists John 14 among ‘debatable Scriptures’ (p. 55). Rosenthal compares his position to the house built on the rock, since it is established on ‘irrefutable logic’ (p. 107) and ‘will never see its basic tenants successfully assaulted’ (p. 293). In short, his main arguments are ‘impregnable’ (p. 155). Or are they?”

Why is Rosenthal fuzzy or unclear about where the Church is following the prewrath Rapture? It's because the imminent promise of the Rapture that Christ gave to His disciples (Jn. 14:1-3) does not fit into the prewrath Rapture theory of the Church. The Church cannot be Heaven during the first five years of the Tribulation Period if it's only going to be raptured at the seventh seal, but Jesus taught that the saints would dwell with Him in Heaven while the seven-year Tribulation Period, the time of sorrow (birth pangs) and Great Tribulation is occurring on earth (Matt. 24:15-29). Also, in the prewrath view Christ is seen on earth judging it during the Day of the Lord which means He cannot be in Heaven at the same time with His Church. Christ promised, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). This means Christ cannot return in His Second Coming and remain in proximity to the earth judging it while the Church is in Heaven.

Christ's promise of His imminent return (“I will come again” – John 14:3) and the Church's entrance into Heaven (“that where I am, there ye may be also”) speaks volumes against the prewrath view. This is because the prewrath theory also has Christ returning at a specific time within the Tribulation Period (at the seventh seal) which destroys the doctrine of imminency (“I will come again”). Jesus did not teach “I will come again exactly after five years of the Tribulation Period has expired” or “I will come again at the seventh seal” or “I will come again just before the trumpet judgments begin in Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.”

As previously stated, this is creating a rogue Rapture view which cannot possibly be true for several reasons. First, Christ never told Van Kampen, Rosenthal, or any prewrather when He would return in the Rapture. Second, Christ's return is

imminent. The Rapture revolves around imminence – not a specified time designation in Marv Rosenthal’s book which was published in 1990.

George Zeller again remarks about John 14:

“The context is referring to the Father’s house in Heaven (John 14:1-3). According to our Lord, the Rapture involves Christ receiving His Bride (the Church) and taking her with Him to heaven. The Pre-Wrath view does not allow for this because it insists upon the Lord’s "continued presence" with respect to the earth (once He comes He must remain present and not return to heaven). Thus it is very significant that in a 300-page book dealing with the Rapture, Rosenthal does not once even mention John 14:3 which is one of the key passages on the Rapture. The reason is clear: John 14:3 does not fit in with the Pre-Wrath theory and thus it is best to ignore contradictory data. [Gundry spiritualized John 14:3 verse on page 154 of his post-tribulational book. Rosenthal does not even mention it!].”

The prewrath errant position also has the Church suffering on earth during much of the seven-year time period, the time when God’s saints will be persecuted by the apostate church (Rev. 17:6; 18:24) and at the hands of the Antichrist, causing great multitudes of God’s tribulation saints to be martyred for their faith (Rev. 7:1-14; 16:6; 20:4). Is impending death before the Rapture really the blessed hope of the Church (Titus 2:13)? Is it a blessed hope to pass through three quarters of the judgments associated with the Tribulation Period and suffer starvation, plagues, war, and death at the hands of the Antichrist? I don’t call this the blessed hope but the lost hope!

Since all the judgments of the Tribulation Period are proceeding forth from the Lamb and are the expression of God’s wrath (Rev. 15:4; 16:7; 19:2), can we really view Rosenthal’s Rapture as a blessed hope? How can “sudden destruction” (1 Thess. 5:3) and “the hour of temptation” (trial and adversity) coming upon planet earth (Rev. 3:10) be a blessed hope to God’s saints? Such thinking is an absurdity.

In spite of what Jesus promised in John 14:1-3 and the repeated Biblical promises of deliverance from the entire seven-year period of wrath (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9-10), Rosenthal asserts that his compartmentalized and narrow prewrath position of deliverance from the Day of the Lord is “unstrained and biblically accurate” (p.194), that his “evidence is strong and compelling, the reason clear and logical” (p.67). He characterizes his view on the Rapture as one of “simplicity, clarity, logic..., the fruit



of an unstrained, clear, unified and normative interpretation of the Word of God.” (p.31). It sounds like he is tooting his own horn instead of listening for the sound of the trumpet (1 Thess. 4:16).

Rosenthal argues that pretribulationism has two different comings, but the Bible only speaks of one coming. However, as we have already studied, he shoots himself in his own foot for he promotes 4 Second Comings of Christ somehow morphed together into one event.

### **The Pretribulation Rapture**

How can the prewrath Rapture be a comforting hope (1 Thess. 4:18) when we have the gloomy prospect of being on earth to face the wrath of Satan (Rev. 12:12), the fury of the Antichrist (Rev. 13) and the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known (Matt. 24:21)? How can we be comforted knowing that we will likely face martyrdom from the Antichrist via decapitation (Rev. 20:4)?



After dealing with the major arguments of the prewrath theory, I now want to do a summary on pretribulationism. Rosenthal has labeled pretribulationism as “wrong or inconsistent” (p. 33); “facing impossible-to-resolve problems” (p. 197); “having insurmountable exegetical difficulties” (p. 147); not to mention being “calamitous,” and that it could cause “a spiritual catastrophe” and “a satanically planned sneak attack” (pp. 281-282). Again, Rosenthal has described his own view as being one of “simplicity, clarity, logic” and “the fruit of an unstrained, clear, unified, and normative interpretation of the word of God” (p. 31). Of course, merely saying these things does not make them true.

Rosenthal’s conclusions are not hermeneutically sound, dispensational, and cause clear prophetic truths to become garbled, distorted, unclear, and confusing. To state it succinctly, Rosenthal’s work is not as intimidating as he seems to think. Many will assume Rosenthal’s book is true because of the multitude of words rather than its factual accuracy. Others will be snared or become trapped into following this view because of the volume of information given in his book without weeding through and investigating the information. However, when weighed in the

balance of Scripture, Rosenthal's position is found wanting (Dan. 5:27). His conclusions are unsound and ineffective from a Biblical standpoint.

Rosenthal claims that a proper understanding of the Book of Revelation has escaped Bible students "to this very hour." The implication is that only his view will unlock the mystery of the book. Toward the end of his book Rosenthal begins self-aggrandizing: "But I am convinced that the basic tenets found within these pages will not be successfully assaulted. Its gates will not be breached. The prewrath Rapture is not built upon sand. It has the word of God to sustain it. Winds may blow, rains may descend, and storms may arise slash - it will not fall" (pp. 292-293).

Rosenthal apparently assumes that the pretribulation Rapture is "built upon sand" but it has been proven that it's actually the prewrath position that is built upon sinking sand (Matt. 7:26). Pretribulationism has survived all the previous attacks against it (pre, mid, and posttrib) and therefore will have no trouble surviving the prewrath attack. A pretribulation Rapture not only aligns with clearly defined Biblical statements regarding escaping the Day of the Lord, which is the entire seven years (2 Thess. 2:1-5; Rev. 3:10), but also with the Biblical teaching of the imminent return of Christ (Phil. 3:20; Tit. 2:13).

We need to stop talking about different positions or views on the Rapture! Instead, we must teach what the Bible actually states concerning the timing of the Rapture. The Church must stop downgrading prophecy to a "lesser" doctrine and therefore teach all the alleged views of the Rapture as though all of them have some merit and truth. How can the Rapture be pre, mid, prewrath, and post at the same time? It's impossible.

The doctrine of the Rapture is not to be like a smorgasbord where you can pick and choose what you want. Instead, through careful and exegetical study, the only Biblical view of the timing of the Rapture is pretribulationism. A prewrather must cut out imminency in relation to the return of Christ, pigeonhole the wrath of God to a small segment of time during the Tribulation Period, reconstructing the Biblical length of the Day of the Lord to suit his theory, and arrive as the conclusion that Jesus cannot come today.

The mid-trib, post-trib and pre-wrath church hymnal has different words to the favorite and beloved hymn "**Glad Day**." In fact, they should entitle their hymn "**Sad Day**" since they have the Church passing through much of the Tribulation Period.

According to the prewrath view, Jesus CANNOT come today because He can only return at the seventh seal. So the words of the hymn are different in the prewrath church hymnal.

“Jesus can’t come today,  
Sad day! Sad day!  
Dangers and troubles won’t end,  
If Jesus can’t come today.  
Sad day!  
Sad day!  
Jesus can’t come today.  
The Beast and False Prophet I soon shall see,  
Jesus, my Lord, I cannot see;  
Sad day!  
Sad day!  
Jesus can’t come today.”

It really is true if you stop and think about it! This is what prewrathers really believe.

George Zeller observes:

“To the one holding the Pre-Wrath Rapture view this question can be asked, ‘DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST COULD COME FOR YOU TODAY?’ He would have to deny this with an emphatic “NO!” To such a person the Lord’s coming is not near at hand. It is at least four or five years away!”

Again, how could the Rapture be a blessed hope of escape and comfort if the Church on a universal scale was destined to pass through famine, starvation, pestilence, war, death, and be decapitated by the Antichrist (Rev. 20:4)? The Bible warns that we should not be deceived in regard to the teaching that the Church will enter into the Day of the Lord which Scripture reveals as the entirety of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 points to a pretribulation Rapture:

**“And to wait for his Son from heaven (*the Rapture*), whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered (“delivers”) us from the wrath to come” (*the specific wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period*).**

Paul was talking about a specific time of wrath (“the wrath” - the seven-year Tribulation Period) which would occur following the Rapture. The definite article which is used with the Rapture event indicates this is not the wrath of God related to hell. These people were already saved. Paul was talking about the “the wrath” of the Tribulation Period. God’s saints would escape the coming wrath of the seven years. This was Paul’s argument in the 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Paul uses the present participle (an ongoing action) for this verb (“delivers” – to rescue, save, preserve) which emphasizes the ongoing office and work of Christ as our Deliverer from God’s wrath and condemnation. *We have the perpetual promise of deliverance from all of God’s wrath.* This means the deliverance we have from the Tribulation Period of God’s wrath is based on the deliverance Christ provided for us on the cross.

This text promises that Christ will return and deliver Church Age saints “from” (Gk. preposition – “ek” meaning “out from” or “away from”) the coming time of wrath. He will not keep them through (a different preposition) the time of wrath but deliver them from it. The promised deliverance is from all seven years of God’s wrath, not a small-time segment of only one and half or several years as prewrathers suggest.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 goes on to promise:

**“For God hath not appointed us to wrath** (*contextually the specific wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period - the entire scope of the Day of the Lord*), **but to obtain salvation** (*deliverance*) **by our Lord Jesus Christ**” (*in the event of Christ’s return in the Rapture*), **Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep** (*spiritually alert or spiritually lethargic in our approach to living as in 1 Thess. 5:6-8*), **we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”**

Paul speaks of our deliverance from wrath in the context of the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:1). This cannot apply to a prewrath Rapture because no promise could ever be given of escaping God’s wrath if you are going to pass through it! The entire seven years is an expression of God’s wrath according to Old Testament teaching, the understanding of Jesus, Pauline theology, and the teaching of the prophetic book of Revelation. Paul is teaching a pretribulation Rapture from the entire period known as Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (the seven-year Tribulation Period).

Paul again warns in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7:

**“Let no man deceive you by any means (that you are living in the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period): for that day shall not come (cannot be present on the earth), except there come (except these events are now present, have set in, or have arrived on earth, as some falsely claimed, signaling the Day of the Lord has begun, is present, and underway as indicated in verse 2 – “at hand”), a (the) falling away first (THE RELIGIOUS APOSTASY OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD), and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition (THE REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST WHO IS THE INSTIGATOR OF THE APOSTASY – the revelation occurring in conjunction with the apostasy as explained next);**

**“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God (THE REPULSIVE CHARACTER OF THE APOSTASY). Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth (holds back or restrains) that he might be revealed in his time (the Antichrist). For the mystery of iniquity (a New Testament revelation of the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church though which lawlessness is suppressed, keeping evil and spiritual anarchy in check, not allowing wickedness to completely overtake the earth with the emergence and apostasy of Antichrist worship) doth already work (in germ or seed form today): only he who now letteth (restrains) will let, until he (the Holy Spirit) be taken out of the way” (THE ROMOVAL OF THE RESTRAINER WHICH RESULTS IN THE APOSTASY – the Holy Spirit is not spatially removed but His functionality of suppressing sin is removed).**

Let no man deceive you! Not even your friends or other godly men who might disagree with you about the timing of the Rapture. In short, the Church was not living during the Tribulation Period, as some were teaching, since the Restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit has not been taken away, since Antichrist apostasy (Antichrist worship as God) and the actual revelation of Antichrist had not occurred. Paul is reconfirming his previous teaching of a pretribulation Rapture. The saints can rest assured that they will not be part of Danile’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (the seven years).

When we study the prophetic word without prefabricated conclusions regarding the Tribulation Period, Great Tribulation, Day of the Lord, and just study the factually clear statements of Scripture, we will arrive at a pretribulation Rapture.

It is noteworthy that the Church is not named once in the entire account of the Tribulation period (Chapters 4-18) in the Book of Revelation. This is all the more noticeable since the word is used repeatedly in the first three chapters, where Christ is seen walking among the churches, and then sending messages to seven specific churches. The best explanation for this is that the true Church, the beloved Bride of Christ, is taken from the earth at the Rapture. At chapter 4, the apostle John is told to "Come up hither" (Rev. 4:1). For the remainder of the vision, John is in the presence of the Lord, looking down on the dreadful events of the Tribulation. Therefore, the "come up hither" (here) certainly was mentioned to picture or portray the Rapture of the Church which occurs before the Tribulation Period.

John taught the pretribulation Rapture of the Church before illustrating it in Chapter 4:1 with the words "come up hither."

In Revelation 3:10 he declares:

**"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (a specific type of trial and adversity of the seven-year Tribulation Period), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (the unsaved who are left behind after the Rapture).**



Rosenthal misrepresents the Pretribulationist view of Revelation 3:10 by saying that this view teaches "removal from the temptation (testing)." But this is inaccurate and not true. The verse does not say "kept from the temptation (testing)" but it says, "kept FROM THE HOUR of temptation (testing)." Pretribulationists have always taught that our exemption will not just be from the testing but from the TIME of the testing (the seven years). We will be KEPT OUT OF (Greek: "ek") this HOUR. We will not be on earth during this time period.

Rosenthal wants this verse to support the prewrath position. How does he understand it?

George Zeller gives us an understanding of Rosenthal on this verse:

"Rosenthal wants this verse to support the Pre-Wrath position. How does he understand it? The time of testing spoken of in this verse refers to the Great Tribulation, according to Rosenthal. The Rapture and the Day of the Lord will follow

this time of testing (p. 241, see chart). His understanding is as follows: 'Because you (the church of Philadelphia) have kept the word of My patience (during the 'beginning of sorrows' or the first 3½ years), I will keep you from the hour of testing (the Great Tribulation)' (p. 241). ROSENTHAL CLAIMS THAT REVELATION 3:10 PROMISES THAT GOD WILL KEEP THE CHURCH FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION, AND YET THE PRE-WRATH VIEW INSISTS THAT THE CHURCH WILL BE ON EARTH DURING THE ENTIRE TIME OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

"Moreover, the Pre-Wrath view teaches that believers will be severely persecuted during the Great Tribulation: 'Some will be sent into captivity. Others will be slain' (p. 236). Thus, the PRE-WRATH view presents two confusing, contradictory statements: (1) BELIEVERS WILL BE ON EARTH TO BE PERSECUTED, TO SUFFER AND TO DIE DURING THE ANTICHRIST'S REIGN OF TERROR KNOWN AS THE GREAT TRIBULATION and (2) BELIEVERS WILL BE KEPT FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION (according to the promise of Rev. 3:10). Do these two statements harmonize and make sense or are they very confusing and contradictory?

"Rosenthal makes the confusing statement that Revelation 3:10 'has nothing whatever to do with the rapture.' He teaches that the Rapture will take place after the Great Tribulation. God's promise to keep His people (Rev. 3:10) will be fulfilled during the Great Tribulation and has nothing to do with the Rapture. He teaches that the Rapture will keep the Church from the Day of the Lord, but it will not keep the Church from the time of Great Tribulation. The Church will be on earth during this tribulation time, tested severely by the Antichrist."

In other words, Rosenthal claims the time of testing spoken of in this verse refers to the middle of the Tribulation Period, the time when the Great Tribulation begins and carries over into the second half of the Tribulation. However, Rosenthal seems confused as to how this exemption or deliverance occurs. He claims that some are delivered by a physical removal as they flee Jerusalem (the faithful Jews). Others (the faithful within the Church) are physically delivered by direct, divine protection within (during) this specific period of time (the Great Tribulation). In these two ways, the promise of Revelation 3:10 is kept. However, what happens to the rest of the saints who die at the hands of Antichrist (Rev. 11:7; 13:7; 14:13; 16:6; 17:6; 20:4) following Revelation 8:1, after Rosenthal's alleged Rapture occurs? Were they not faithful?

Of course, this is very shallow and unnatural exegesis of Revelation 3:10 which is not sustainable by Scripture. Rosenthal is again mixing Church saints with the Jewish people and tribulation saints. Only by separating church saints (chapters 2-3) from tribulation saints (chapters 6-18) does the promise of Revelation 3:10 make sense. Only believers living before the Rapture are given the promise of exemption from the hour or time of testing (the seven years of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week). Believers living after the Rapture have no such promise.

Pretribulationists have correctly taught that our exemption will not just be from the TESTING but from the TIME of the testing (the entirety of Danile's 70<sup>th</sup> week). We will be KEPT OUT OF (Greek: "ek") this HOUR. We will not be on earth during that time. However, on page 239, Rosenthal re-translates the verse to fit his theory. He translates Revelation 3:10 in this way: "kept through the hour." But the verse does not say this. It says, "kept from the hour" or "kept out of the hour." The preposition "ek" literally means "out of" and does not mean "through." On page 234, Rosenthal says that the verse means "protection from the Great Tribulation." But in what way are believers protected from the Great Tribulation if millions are martyred as the Scriptures clearly teach (Rev. 7:7-14; 20:4)? This kind of thinking makes no sense and only creates great prophetic confusion. In short, it results in a prophetic word salad.

To reiterate, the Bible says we will be **“kept”** (guarded) **“from”** (not through) the Tribulation Period. Christ could not be teaching immunity through the Tribulation Period since large numbers of Tribulation saints (those who are saved during the Tribulation Period) will suffer martyrdom (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:14; 20:4). The wholesale martyrdom of the saints during the Tribulation Period demands that the interpretation of Revelation 3:10 means **“keeping out of”** (not keeping within) the hour of testing.

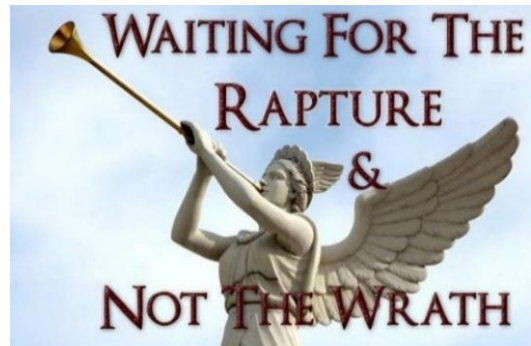
Dr. Myron J. Houghton in reviewing Van Kampen's prewrath book comments: "Dr. Van Kampen says the Greek word translated 'keep' (tereo) means, 'guard, watch over or keep' (169). When coupled with 'from' (ek) in this passage, he says 'it carries the idea of protecting someone while he is within a sphere of danger, not that of keeping him away from the danger altogether' (175,176).

"My reply: (a) In the only other place in the Greek NT where tereo and ek are used together (John 17:15), Christ prays that believers would be kept (tereo) out of or



guarded from the evil (or evil one). This means protection from evil. (b) In Revelation 3:10 the promise is not to be kept merely from the testing itself but from the very hour of testing, i.e., the time when the testing occurs.”

The careful selection of this preposition indicates that these Church Age saints will not enter this period of testing and trouble (God’s wrath and judgment). The Greek preposition “from” (ek) relates to the hour of trial (the seven years) and must be understood as being kept FROM entering the entire trial period. The preposition does not mean deliverance through the time of trouble. The Greek preposition literally means to “be out of, kept from, or away from.” The preposition is understood this way in hundreds of occurrences (Matt. 2:15; 7:5; 15:19; 27:53; Rev. 3:16; etc.). If John wanted to convey that we are passing *through* the Tribulation Period another preposition (dia) would be required. The general meaning and understanding of the preposition “from” (ek) conveys exemption from something (John 17:15; James 1:27).



Bible believing Christians should continue to draw strength and hope from the fact that our Lord could rapture His church at any moment. We will not be left to pass through any part of the seven-year tribulation. Maranatha!

### **Addendum**

Let’s recapitulate and restate the basic errors of the prewrath Rapture theory and the confusion it propagates.

**PREWRATH PREMISE #1:** The Rapture takes place just before the Day of the Lord which is the expression of God’s wrath toward man.

**PREWRATH PREMISE #2:** The Day of the Lord begins only at the last quarter of the seven years (not at the beginning of the seven years).

**PREWRATH CONCLUSION:** The Rapture cannot take place at the beginning of the seven years, but only at the beginning of the fourth quarter of the Tribulation Period.

The basic thesis of this prewrath view is that the Church will be removed from the earth by the Rapture just before the fourth quarter of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. This view proposes first that the Tribulation involves three distinct periods: the Beginning of Sorrows, lasting 3 1/2 years; the Great Tribulation, lasting 21 months; and the Day of the Lord, spanning the final 21 months. The Church, therefore, would need to go through three-fourths of the Tribulation. This view teaches that believers will endure the time of man's wrath and Satan's wrath but will be delivered before the Day of the Lord, the time of God's wrath, which begins with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev 8:1). This view holds that the Church must experience the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation, but after approximately 64 months into the 70<sup>th</sup> week the Church will be raptured.

I was talking to someone who held the prewrath view and he asked me, "Are you saying that I am wrong in what I believe?" Logically, only one of these views can be right for only one can be based on proper exegesis of the prophetic Scriptures. A pretrib, prewrath, and posttrib Rapture cannot be equally true.

#### PRETRIBULATION REBUTTAL:

- ✓ The Rapture is an imminent event (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 1:7; 16:22; Phil. 4:5; Titus 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:10; James 5:9; Rev. 22:7, 12; 20). This means Jesus is not going to return at the exact moment the prewrathers have decided He will return as outlined on their prophetic charts, about 5 years into the Tribulation Period, at the beginning of the seventh seal. The Biblical truth of imminency can only support a pretribulation Rapture.
- ✓ Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is a Jewish Tribulation - not a Church Tribulation. It was for "thy people" (Daniel's people) who are the Jews (Dan. 9:24) and it's "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) – not the Church's trouble. The 70 weeks involve 490 years of Jewish history – not Church history. Rosenthal teaches that the time of Jacob's trouble is identical to the Great Tribulation, but different from the Day of the Lord (which he says follows the time of Jacob's trouble). This is an obvious errant conclusion. The Day of the Lord's wrath could not be separated from the greatest tribulation the world has ever seen.
- ✓ There are four classic Scripture passages which speak of the Day of the Lord as being more severe in suffering than any other in history. Because there

can be only one such time, all four passages must refer to the same period (the Day of the Lord). The four passages that speak of this unique degree of trouble are Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1, Joel 2:1–2, and Jeremiah 30:7. In Matthew 24:21 the Lord Jesus, apparently quoting Daniel 12:1, says that it is in the Great Tribulation (the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week) that this unparalleled time of trouble takes place. Joel 2:1–2, says that this unparalleled time of trouble takes place in the Day of the Lord. There can be only one unparalleled time of trouble, which suggests that we are looking at the same time frame. As the Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation are viewed in Scripture, we see that great trouble is true of both of them. The Day of the Lord is a time of trouble (Zeph. 1:14–15), as is the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1). Isaiah 13:6-9 relates the time of trouble that Jesus talked about (the Great Tribulation) to the Day of the Lord.

- ✓ The judgments in the first half of the Tribulation are clearly divine judgments. It is Christ who opens the seals and uses various means to judge a Christ-rejecting world (Rev. 5:1-5; 6:1, 3,5, 7, 9, 12). Satan’s wrath does not end, and God’s wrath begins with the Rapture. There is no artificial shift from Satan’s wrath to God’s wrath. It’s a mere assumption that God’s wrath does not begin until Christ returns.
- ✓ The Day of the Lord (God’s wrath) encompasses the entire 7 years of the Tribulation Period (the Beginning of Sorrows or birth pangs and the Great Tribulation) according to Old Testament apocalyptic statements (Zeph. 1:14-18; Isa. 13:6-9). This is what Jesus taught concerning “the tribulation” (Matt. 24:29) as He looks back on the entire seven years. The Day of the Lord is not limited to a small segment of time during the 70<sup>th</sup> week.
- ✓ The unsaved of the earth cannot say, “Peace and safety” (1 Thess. 5:1-2) or possess a sense of security and peace immediately following the greatest time of trouble and persecution (the Great Tribulation) the world has ever known as the prewrath Rapture suggests.
- ✓ The Day of the Lord is clearly longer than 21 months, covering the entirety of judgments of the Tribulation Period and blessings of the Millennium (Zeph 3:8-13; Hag 2:6-23; Zech 14:1–10) which would include a total of 1007 years.

- ✓ The event of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 should not be confused with the Second Coming of Christ to earth in Matthew 24-25 and Matthew 13. The two events are prophetically incompatible with one another. The Rapture is not a time of judgment over the earth as depicted in Matthew 24-25 and the time when Jesus comes to establish His earthly kingdom (“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory” - Matt. 25:31-34).
- ✓ Christ cannot take His children to Heaven as promised in John 14 while returning to earth at the same time as prewrathers suggest in Matthew 24. This is why they are silent about Christ’s John 14 teaching where Christ promised that He will dwell with His Church in the place that He has prepared for her (“that where I am, there ye may be also”). Paul also concluded: “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). This means Christ will not leave His Church in Heaven for several years when returning to judge the earth during the Day of the Lord and in the closing events of the Tribulation Period. Rosenthal has no clear explanation of where the Church will be for 21 months after the Rapture. He dodges the promise of Christ in John 14:1–4.
- ✓ The Church should not be confused with Tribulation saints in Revelation 7 for they are tribulation saints who were martyred during the Great Tribulation Period. The wording does not suggest this vast group appeared immediately in Heaven. The 144,000 are not sealed by God prior to their salvation to prevent them from being raptured for Scripture nowhere speaks of sealing unsaved people (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). The 144,000 lead the great multitude to Christ. Furthermore, there is no mention of the word Church or the event of the Rapture in Revelation chapters 6, 7, 8 or Matthew 24.
- ✓ The Restrainer is not Michael the archangel working with Israel *during* the Tribulation Period but the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church *before* the Tribulation. It’s the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church (2 Thess. 2:6-8) which prevents the Antichrist from being revealed and the commencement of the Tribulation Period. Once the Church is raptured the revelation of the Antichrist will occur and reach its apex with worldwide worship of the Man of Sin.

- ✓ Christ said He would be with His disciples “unto the end of the world” or literally the “consummation of the age” (Matt. 28:20) referring in general to the Pre-messianic Age (the time before Messiah rules the earth). This does not mean He expected that Church Age saints (representative of the disciples) would actually be living up to the *very moment* when Christ begins to rule over the earth. As far as the timing is concerned, Jesus was speaking in hyperbole. In other words, this was a sweeping or very broad statement that means Christ’s presence would be with His disciples *prior to the Messianic rule*, which was hailed and widely known as the coming Golden Age over planet earth (Dan. 7:13-14). There was no hint that the disciples would actually be thrust into the Tribulation Period (Day of the Lord) and be living during the actual time (the seven years or the end of the age) prior to when Messiah rules over the earth. Christ was simply using the familiar phrase “end of the age” or the ending of earth’s history as it pertains to sinfully depraved man ruling over the earth, to teach His constant companionship with the disciples and Church saints during their difficult lifetimes.

In another sense, the phrase “the end of the world” (age) might also secondarily apply to the ending of the Grace Dispensation which occurs just prior to the Second Coming and establishment of the earthly kingdom or Millennium. Like every other previous dispensation, it ends in judgment. But this does not mean the disciples (representing the future Church) would be living during the judgment phase related to end of the age within the Dispensation of Grace. Christ’s statement broadly and loosely means that His companionship would be with the disciples until the Rapture occurs and the end of the age comes upon the world with the Tribulation judgments and Second Coming following.

- ✓ The fifth seal martyrs do not refer to persecuted Jews living during the Great Tribulation (the second half of the Tribulation) in order to force the Rapture to occur and the Day of the Lord to begin in conjunction with the seventh seal. The persecuted saints refer to tribulation saints in general who are persecuted by the apostate church during the first half of the Tribulation (Rev. 17:6).

- ✓ The seventh seal cannot be the timing of the Rapture and commencement of the Day of the Lord. This is because there is no Biblical evidence in this seal that indicates the Rapture has occurred or the Day of the Lord was just beginning. The Day of the Lord begins with the commencement of the seven-year Tribulation Period (1 Thess. 5:1-2).
- ✓ Prewrathers must divide the Tribulation Period into 3 divisions (Beginning of Sorrows, Great Tribulation, and Day of the Lord) instead of only two divisions as Jesus taught. This is done to keep the Day of the Lord from expanding the entire seven years of Daniel's prophecy. However, Jesus spoke of only two divisions and related both of them to "tribulation" (Matt. 24:8, 15, 21, 29) which encompasses the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. Christ clearly refers to the entire seven-year period when He states, "after the tribulation of those days" (looking back to all seven years).
- ✓ Prewrathers must merge together multiple different events that occur at different times throughout the seven-year Tribulation Period like the cosmic signs (Rev. 6:13; Matt. 24:29) in order to prove their convoluted and complex theory of a prewrath Rapture of the Church. To make their confusing prewrath theory work they must link certain Old Testament prophetic passages to events in the books of Matthew and Revelation which are not associated with these events. As a result, they propose unbiblical conclusions which cannot be supported by proper exegesis and hermeneutics.
- A person's sincerity, conviction, and emotion can be valuable in their place, but these things are not the basis of truth. Any position must be evaluated on the basis of its logic, hermeneutics, and attention to Biblical facts. If one part of the prophetic chain is flawed and broken, the entire conclusion is false. If one errs at the crucial point of the timing of the Rapture, then it paves the way for faulty conclusions. Such is the case with the prewrath Rapture of the Church.

Why is there a tendency for some to adopt and follow the prewrath view of the Rapture? First, sometimes the younger or next generation senses a need to be different in some ways than the previous generation. They want something new to grab hold of and embrace that they can say is theirs and which is different than the past. Second, many embrace other Rapture theories without being well-versed in

the area of prophetic Scriptures. They do not study Bible prophecy and are content to say, "Whatever will be will be."

One man told me that he believed in the "pan out theory." I asked him what he meant by this. He said, "In the end, everything will pan out the way it's supposed to. Until then, we cannot be sure about the timing of the Rapture." Of course, this is surrendering to "every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14) and certainly is not a studious approach to the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15).

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