



Why the Timing of the Rapture Matters

*Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is...Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming in the evening (**Pre-Trib**), at midnight (**Mid-Trib**), at the crowing of the rooster (**Pre-Wrath**), or in the morning (**Post-Trib**) lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" – Mark 13:33, 35-37 (NKJV)*
(As seen posted on Facebook.)

First of all, just because someone is in error on something— or even a few things— it does not automatically qualify them as a false teacher. There is an old seminary saying that at one time or another we **all** speak heresy, even if it's just temporarily until we know better. The hallmark of a biblically qualified false teacher is someone whose persistent distortion of the Word is accompanied by a lifestyle or behavior that proves they are not actually obedient to God's Word. We can have a different opinion or be outright wrong about the Rapture and still not be a biblically qualified heretic; it will not nullify your salvation.

Secondly, I understand what I have come to call "Rapture Fatigue". I consider the person who posted the above to be a friend and colleague who is in my age group and experienced the Church in much the same way as I have these past 6 decades. Although I am going to use the above example as a teaching moment, I truly do get why many Christians have turned off the "noise" from the extremists in each of these competing eschatologies and retreated to a position that Jesus will come when He comes, so what does it matter? Distortions and confusion in each eschatological camp have convinced them that none of them are correct. The timing of the Rapture— or known by my preferred Greek description as the *Harpazo*— is actually a lesson in the proper handling and interpretation of Scripture so as to be ready.

Are They All Equal & Doctrinally Sanctified?

This passage does not sanctify all eschatologies as being equal or even doctrinally acceptable. Post-Trib holds that the *Harpazo* does not take place until the end of the 70th Week and therefore is in conflict with the unambiguous Scriptures that state Christians are exempt from God's wrath. The final Seven Bowls are specified as "*the wrath of God*", so how can the *Harpazo* come **after** them without violating God's promise to exempt us from that wrath?

*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of **the wrath of God.**"*
— Revelation 16:1

*and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is **Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.***

— 1 Thessalonians 1:10

*For **God has not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

— 1 Thessalonians 5:9

One of the primary rules of sound Bible exegesis is that when an interpretation of one verse conflicts with any other Scripture, the premise is automatically wrong. In the Olivet Discourse as captured by Mark 13, Jesus is not endorsing an eschatology which contradicts other established portions of His Word.

Likewise, Pre-Trib is not endorsed either as they hold that the entire final week of years is God's wrath, and therefore, Christians are exempt from the entire 7 years. This violates Jesus' assertion we will experience the "*birth pangs*", worldwide persecution, and even witness the Abomination of Desolation before being removed. This is an eschatology which narrowly focuses on a few verses to the exclusion of the rest of God's Word which directly contradicts it. But being the favorite of seminaries, it has been the most popular position in the modern Church. (Even the universally acknowledged "father" of Pre-Trib, Dr. Walvoord, admitted in his books that there is no verse plainly describing a Pre-Trib *Harpazo* and it must be gleaned from "between the lines".)

It has been decades since I actually met someone who still holds to the Mid-Trib position which assigns the *Harpazo* to the exact middle of the 70th Week— I believe they have mostly been absorbed into the Pre-Wrath position. But since the exact middle is also the Abomination of Desolation, and Jesus states we will not only witness it but that the *Harpazo* will not occur until shortly thereafter, the classic Mid-Trib position is just as null as both the Pre-Trib and Post-Trib eschatologies. It is not compatible with the whole counsel of God's Word.

But there is another problem with assigning Mid-Trib to "*midnight*" as this betrays a Western cultural bias. A Jewish day actually begins and ends at sundown. This is because in Genesis a day is described as an evening and a morning. Midnight is only in the "middle" on the Western clock. To His original Jewish audience, they would have merely accepted this as meaning in the late hours of the night; the middle of a Jewish day falls sometime in the morning. It's a picky thing but a significant detail nonetheless. The lesson to be learned is that we need to keep Scripture in the proper context both historically and grammatically and refrain from imposing our own cultural assumption that things back then worked the same way as they do now. Both the clock and the calendar were very different.

That leaves Pre-Wrath, which subscribes to the position that the *Harpazo* takes place between the 6th and 7th Seals. They view the Seals as judgments which everyone experiences, but with the removal of the Church, the 7th Seal, which consists of the entirety of the Seven Trumpets and Seven Bowls, there is an escalation to the wrath of God being poured out on those left behind.

*⁹After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and***

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palm branches were in their hands; ¹⁰and they cry out with a loud voice, saying,

“Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying,

“Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, **who are they, and where have they come from?**”

¹⁴I said to him, “My lord, you know.”

And he said to me, “**These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation**, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

— Revelation 7:9-14

For the purposes of complete transparency, while I fully agree with Pre-Wrath where the timing of the *Harpazo* is concerned, although every eschatology names itself based on its timing of the *Harpazo* in relation to the final week of years, there are many other points of contention held by each position other than just that removal. In the case of Pre-Wrath, I strongly disagree with their assertion that the Restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2 is the archangel Michael, and on this point agree with my Pre-Trib brethren that it is instead the Holy Spirit. I think there are particular items each has correctly interpreted even if they do not get the right timing of the *Harpazo*.

But the greater takeaway is not that Pre-Wrath has correctly assessed the timing of the *Harpazo* but that all the major eschatologies have obvious and inherent conflicts with the whole counsel of God’s Word on particular End Times milestones. I see this as the source of “Rapture Fatigue”. The extremists in each position are dogmatic that there is no error or room for compromise on any single point.

When a Scriptural Term is Hi-Jacked

I have mentioned this many times before, and a much more detailed explanation is available in my book, [And THEN the End will Come](#), but the source of much of the confusion stems from the unbiblical use of the term “*tribulation*” itself.

From the early 1800s until World War II, it is very rare to find anyone commenting at length on what I prefer to call “Daniel’s 70th Week” or the final week of years. When it came to eschatology, the Church was obsessed with Millennialism— the final thousand-year reign of Christ. The arguments were consolidated into positions referred to as Pre-Millennial, Post-Millennial, Pan-Millennial, and even A-Millennial. (Sound familiar?)

But then post-World War II, with the re-establishment of Israel as a nation-state, the focus narrowed to the final week of years which everyone universally accepted as calling **The Tribulation**. The naming convention established in Millennialism seems to have been transferred to Tribulationism. In the process, everyone just accepted that the whole final week of years is **The Tribulation** when the Bible overall, and Christ specifically, never

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endorse that interpretation. The term “*tribulation*” has been lifted from Scripture, isolated from its co-text and the rest of God’s Word, and assigned a meaning not supported by the biblical text. The term is certainly found in Scripture, but never used as an alternative to the entirety of Daniel’s 70th Week.

Jesus begins by explaining that the very first thing we will experience are the “*birth pangs*”.

4And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. 5For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. 6You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.
— Matthew 24:4-8

The important caveat stipulated by Christ is, “*not yet the end*” and “*merely the beginning*”. They will continue to grow more frequent and intense as we continue forward through the final week of years, and mirror those judgments described in the 1st through 4th Seals of Revelation.

9“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.
— Matthew 24:9-14

Notice that it is not the whole world who experiences this phase of tribulation within the final 7 years but is hyper-directed exclusively at the Church. Take note how all the things listed are persecution and deception targeting the Church, not the entire world. This parallels the 5th Seal. And of even greater importance is the purpose of this unprecedented persecution, which is to allow the Church to finally fulfill the mission Christ established at His Ascension to preach the Gospel to the whole world:

8but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.
— Acts 1:8

It is only after this milestone that Jesus states, “*And **then** the end will come*”. The very next milestone which Jesus designates as the starting point for “*the end*” is the Abomination of Desolation, the exact midway point of the 70th Week. It does not begin with the “*birth pangs*” or the phase within the first half of tribulation the world brings upon the Church, but the starting point of the final countdown— that is, the second half

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of the final week of years, is the Abomination of Desolation. That is when “*the end will come*”.

¹⁵“Therefore **when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. ¹⁸Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁹But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

— Matthew 24:15-20

No one holding to any of the aforementioned eschatologies disputes that the Abomination of Desolation takes place at the halfway point of the final week of years. Daniel is unambiguously clear on this point as well as explaining that this is the seminal event when the Antichrist goes into the temple and in an act of self-deification declares himself to be God and demands to be worshiped directly as God. Israel realizes he has betrayed them and flees (Rev. 12) and supporting Scripture indicates that although he allowed himself for a time to be worshiped while keeping the trappings of one’s preferred religion, he does away with that intermediary and demands to be worshiped directly.

In the first half of the final week of years, it is the Church alone who is persecuted and placed under sentence of death for not worshiping the Antichrist; in the second half it turns into the “*great tribulation*” when the whole world is placed under that same sentence should **anyone of any** faith refuse to worship him directly.

²¹“For **then there will be a great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²²Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but **for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short**

— Matthew 24:21-22

Just as the term “*tribulation*” has been improperly lifted out of context to refer to the entire 7 years instead of recognized as just a phase within the first half, “*great tribulation*” is most often misapplied to the whole second half. This is cut short for Christians by their removal during this even shorter phase of the final week of years.

*I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “**These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation**, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

— Revelation 7:14

And now is the precise point when Jesus designates the milestone of the *Harpazo*.

²⁷“For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹But **immediately after the tribulation of those days** THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND

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*THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and **then all the tribes of the earth will mourn**, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds**, from one end of the sky to the other.*

— Matthew 24:27-31

Here we have the *Episunagoge*— the great gathering unto Jesus, or one of the ways Scripture describes the *Harpazo* of the Bride of Christ. These and more atmospheric phenomena are described in the 6th Seal closely followed by the great multitude that suddenly appears in heaven who were just extracted from the great tribulation.

To be sure, Scripture is equally unambiguous in its assertion that no one can know the day or hour of this event. And yet Jesus continues in the Olivet Discourse to explain that we will be able to recognize its imminent occurrence just as we are able to discern the imminent changes from one season to another.

*³²“Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³so, you too, **when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.**”*

— Matthew 24:32-33

But affixing the specific day or hour of His return is not only never promised in Scripture, unlike eventually unlocking some mysteries such as “666”, there are warnings to stay awake, keep alert, and do not be deceived lest our indifference cause us to be ill-prepared.

*⁴²“Therefore **be on the alert**, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴For this reason **you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.**”*

— Matthew 24:42-44

What Mark 13:33-37 is actually saying is, “**When** you recognize the window between the 6th and 7th Seals for the *Harpazo*, you still won’t know the day or the hour. So be ready should it come in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning.” This passage cited on Facebook is not endorsing all eschatologies but warning us to know the season of His return by understanding God’s prophetic Word so well that no eschatology can fool us when it comes to the timing of the *Harpazo*.

It is a commandment of Christ that we should be prepared, ready, and resist all deception so as to know the timing of the Church’s removal. We are going to experience unprecedented persecution while reaching the whole world with the Gospel as unparalleled in all of history. We cannot just say, “I’m tired of the noise— I’ll just wait and see” when Christ has provided so much for which we are supposed to prepare for in advance. There is no conflict between not knowing the day or the hour but knowing the

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the season of its imminency. The timing of the *Harpazo* matters to this generation more than ever before.

In Him,

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